PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analyses.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great part of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

4th Reprint : November, 2017

বি(বিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরি কমিশনের দূরশি(া ব্যুরোর বিধি অনুযায়ী মুদ্রিত।
Printed in accordance with the regulations of the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.

POST-GRADUATE : ENGLISH

[PG : ENG.]

Paper -VI

Module - I

Course Writing	*Editing*
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NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

Post Graduate
Course in English
PG-English-VI

PAPER - VI

Module 1

Module 2

Unit 1 ❐ The Puritan Period in the History of American Literature (1607 - 1700)

Structure

1.0 ❐ Introduction

THE COLONIZATION of the eastern seaboard of America in the early 17th century was as much the end of a long process as the beginning of a new chapter in history. The voyages of Columbus followed soon afterward by these of Amerigo Vespucci and lesser-known explorers from Spain, France, Holland and Portugal defined the trajectories of rival imperialisms. The Spaniards had established the settlement of St Augustine in 1565; a small group of Englishmen, at the behest of Walter Raleigh, had tried to found a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina in 1594; an outpost had briefly been set up on the Maine coast in 1607; Captain John Smith in 1614 had surveyed and mapped the entire New England coastline.

The waves of English immigration which brought the Pilgrim Fathers, among others, to the shores of America in the first half of the 17th century have become the defining displacement of the era, creating as they did a dedicated diaspora on alien shores and generating, in the process, a dialogue of discovery typically expressed in the journals, accounts and diaries of the first colonials. The concepts of flight and dream were as effective for these pioneers as they

were for the later generations of immigrants, impelling them beyond latitudinal limits to a near-mythical map whose boundaries they expected to shape. The awareness of the sheer space that was newly available and the wonder at the beauty and rich diversity of the landscape that captured the imagination of the primary planters remain in their literature to this day.

1.1.0. ❐ Establishment of the Colonies

Between 1607 with the establishment of Virginia (named after the virgin Queen, Elizabeth I of England) the first English colony on American soil, and 1682, which saw the addition of Pennsylvania, the last, there were no less than ten colonies of English blood and speech. They are in the order of their establishment, Plymouth, New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, and South Carolina. The first writers were therefore immigrants who negotiated the new land and the life it offered with a primarily English sensibility and cultural apprehension. This first tract of the pre-national literature may be said to be both of English and American origin in which English agency and American environment came together to give rise to a body of writings that was largely of a historical, religious and descriptive nature.

1.1.1 ❐ The Establishment of the First English Colony at Virginia

In 1607 a company of enterprising Englishmen, empowered with a royal patent left for the eastern shores of America and established in Virginia the first successful colony on American soil. Captain John Smith, the leader of the group, was the writer of the first book in American literature. He wrote three books of which the first, **A True Relation of Virginia** was, as Tyler maintains "not a literary effort" but "a budget of information for the people at home, and especially the stockholders of the Virginia Stock Exchange". (A History of American Literature by Moses Coit Tyler, Collier Books, New York, 1962, p 52)

Most notable among the other early writers of Virginia were George Percy of Northumberland whose **Discourse of the Plantation of the Southern Colony of Virginia by the English** provides a history of the colony from its

departure out of England down to the year 1607. William Strachey's **A true Reportory of the Wrack and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, KT** was published in July 1610. Gates had set sail for Virginia from England with a fleet of nine ships and five hundred emigrants. In a terrible tempest that subsequently broke out Gates' ship was driven ashore on one of the Bermudas and the few passengers who survived the wreck managed to voyage to Jamestown. Strachey gives an account of this in his little book on the calamity, and the emigrants' experience of it.

Good News from Virginia published by Alexander Whitaker in 1613 cast in the mould of a hortatory sermon, was composed for the enlightenment of people in England and consequently describes the country, the climate, the Indians, and the pioneers' struggle with the daunting conditions of immigrant life. The other notable examples of literature produced during this period in Virginia are John Pory's sketches of pioneer life along the James River and George Sandys' translation of Ovid's ' Metamorphosis'.

These writings, perceptively described by Tyler as having "some noteworthy value as literature, and some real significance in the literary unfolding of the American mind..." are historically important in terms of their positioning at the very beginning of the American literary articulation and their consequent value as record and document rather than as works with an intrinsic literary potential.

The Restoration in England did not bide well for Virginia as the navigation acts passed by Charles II's Parliament went against the commercial and agricultural interest of Virginia. The parliamentary and legal injustices that were meted out to Virginia between 1660 and 1676 under Charles II caused widespread resentment in the colony. Moreover the vast tracts of land that were granted by the English sovereign to his favourites aggravated the situation.

An Indian massacre in the spring of 1676 caused panic among the populace and the people prevailed on the royal governor Sir William Berkeley to restore order in the colony. An alternative centre of authority complicated matters when a number of the inhabitants turned to Nathaniel Bacon to provide leadership during this crisis. Berkeley and Bacon became opponents and the split leadership exacerbated an already difficult situation, the instability at the top in the face of the Indian threat adding to the general disorder. The anonymous manuscripts of the period relating to the massacre and the rebellion constitute documents of historical and sociological

importance affording as they do, a glimpse of some of the most disturbing local events of the time.

The intellectual condition of Virginia was further compromised by the religious intolerance practiced by a section of its inhabitants. Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and all those who dissented from the Episcopal Church were discriminated against and were fined for detected trespasses. The feudalistic tilt in social relations along with the narrow sectarian emphasis in matters of religion militated against the growth of a socio-cultural atmosphere in which literature could take root. Hence the first colonial period in Virginia saw the sparse offshoots of a limited literary consciousness struggling to emerge and survive in an inhospitable and largely uncongenial atmosphere.

1.1.2 ❐ The Establishment of the Puritan Colonies at New England

Barely thirteen years after the establishment of the colony in Virginia, four hundred miles to the north of the continent, in that climatically bleaker region of what came to be patriotically christened as New England American civilization planted its second outpost.

The first Puritan colony was founded in Plymouth, Massachusetts by the "pilgrims" who arrived at Cape Cod in 1620 on the Mayflower, The next one was set up at Salem in 1628. The more stable and enduring Massachusetts Bay Colony was established in and around Boston in 1630 by the company that came over on the *Arbella* under the leadership of John Winthrop. In the course of time New England expanded from Massachusetts into Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Maine. These communities grew from the hundred or so persons who came aboard the *Mayflower,* and the 600-odd on the *Arbella* under the leadership of John Winthrop a decade or so laters in the course of time New England expanded from Massachusets into Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Maine. By 1640 some twenty thousand Puritans spread across the landscape.

Additional colonies sprang up in the wake of Virginia and Massachusetts. In 1634, Maryland, founded as a refuge for Catholics, was carved out of northern Virginia. Thirty years later, New Netherland was wrested from the Dutch by the English and renamed New York: in the same year New Jersey

came into existence through a grant from the Duke of York. Pennsylvania was born in 1681 when Charles II ceded a large tract of land to the elder Penn for a debt that he owed the latter.

The social structure of New England was one of concentration while that of Virginia was that of dispersion. In New England families settled down in close proximity to each other thus forming neighbourhoods while in Virginia, each settler in imitation of the English lord, occupied vast tracts of land thereby giving rise to geographical and social isolation. The domestic isolation of the latter, in sharp contrast to personal community enjoyed by the New England settlers, hindered the growth of public and civic institutions, which depend on and in turn foster, a sense of kinship and belonging between the social groups.

The popular notion of the Puritans as pioneers may be ascribed to the fact that they dominate the written records of the time. In the first colonial period generally regarded as the years between 1607 and 1676, a considerable body of writing emanated from New England, recording the colonials' negotiation of the new land. There were the historical writers, namely William Bradford, John Winthrop, Nathaniel Morton and Edward Johnson; the theological ones, prominent among who were Thomas Hooker, John Cotton and Cotton Mather; the descriptive writers and poets such as Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor. 'The one grand distinction between the English colonists in New England and nearly all other colonists in America" maintains Tyler "was this, that while the latter came here chiefly for some material benefit, the former came chiefly for an ideal benefit. In its inception New England was not an agricultural community, nor a manufacturing community, nor a trading community: it was a thinking community". (A History of American Literature by Moses Coit Tyler, Collier Books, New York, 1962, p109)

1.1.3.

"The New England Puritan's difference from the Anglican or Catholic in worship and polity dictated differences in literary theory. His literal attitude toward the Bible left little excuse for any religious art not somehow justified by its text; and the ardor of his Protestantism led him to reject anything traditionally associated with the Church of Rome. Organ music, stained-glass windows, incense, rich vestments, ornate altars, religious images —these were all adjuncts to Catholic, and to some extent to Anglican, worship. Their

"Papist" associations were enough to make them anathema to the Puritan. Catholics commonly held that things which appealed to the senses could be fittingly used in the service of religion. The Puritan could not agree. He distrusted sensuous appeals in worship because they usually involved objects and practices not specifically endorsed by Holy Writ, because they smacked of Rome, and because he believed that "fallen man" was likely to become the prey of his senses, subject to the tyranny of passion rather than the dictates of right reason and faith.

This meant that the Puritan writer could not use, as his Catholic and Anglican contemporaries did, a body of material and a set of devices calculated to charm sensuously and to "adorn" his work—such charming and adornment seemed to him dangerous. He wanted to reach men's reason and to convince them of truth, not to lull them to acceptance by drugging their minds with potions all too likely to stir the carnal passions so powerful in the descendants of fallen Adam. The Puritan usually rejected imagery which served merely to delight, accepting only that which seemed to him to make the truth more easily understood, and preferring that which he could find in the Bible. He would rather talk of plain glass, letting in all the light, than of stained-glass windows, which seemed to him empty adornment symbolizing man's aptness to dim the light of truth. Anything which appealed to the senses so strongly as to endanger concentration on what must be grasped by reason, was dangerous. Good writing was to teach; its method must make directly and clearly comprehensible what man most needed to know.

Naturally, early New England writers of prose concentrated on sound and logical structure, and on clarity. The logic and rhetoric of Peter Ramus, the great French anti-Aristotelian logician of the sixteenth century, were adopted by Puritan pundits partly because they seemed to offer useful rules for good expository prose. But more immediately important than such rules was the Puritan's consciousness of the nature of his audience. It comprised men who were neither trained critics nor expert writers, but were, usually, earnest Christians, eager to learn. They were humanly fallible, and if a page, however clear, seemed dull, their thoughts strayed. Therefore the Puritan preacher and writer, although he advocated the "plain style" and objected to adornment for adornment's sake, seasoned his prose with imagery and used whatever literary devices seemed to him legitimate and necessary to make his instruction palatable. Anything in words which might rouse evil passions was forbidden, but picturesque phrasing and evocative images were allowable

if their associations were innocent or if they had Biblical' precedent.

The last point is important. The Bible had for the Puritan supreme literary value. It was the work of an omnipotent God, who used language perfectly because all that he did was perfect. Allegory, figures of speech— even frankly sexual imagery—crop up often in Puritan writing, sometimes in ways that are startling if we forget that its authors knew that men's "affections" must be charmed if their attention was to be held, and were sure that any literary method used in the Bible had divine sanction. New England authors avoided the rapturous expression of Catholic or Anglican mystics as too sensuous and too redolent of "enthusiasm"; they closed their eyes to much in the great religious literature of seventeenth century England because they did not want to tempt their readers' passions or to cloud their understanding of the truth by too elaborate rhetoric. Moreover, symbols and images, linked with the Mass and with ritualistic forms of worship, were suspect to the Puritan, and, in general, he looked coldly upon the ingenuities of style, the extended similes, the complicated metaphors (often sensuous or even sensual in suggestion), the elaborate prose music, and the rhetorical decoration, which characterized much of the best English writing in the late Renaissance. The Puritan was thus cut off from many sources of literary effect; but mercifully the Bible gave him others. He had no qualms about using its imagery, its rhythms, and its stylistic devices for his own pious purposes.

Part of his success with his audience depended on what he learned from Biblical style; he profited also by his understanding of other means by which he could hold his audience's attention without concessions to its baser appetites. He spoke and wrote principally for fishermen, farmers, woodsmen, shopkeepers, and artisans. However little they knew about classical literature or about rhetorical niceties in English prose and verse, they knew a great deal about the sea, gardens, village life, and the concrete concerns of pioneers busily establishing prosperous colonies in a wilderness. They enjoyed seeing an author drive home his point with a simile or a metaphor that touched their familiar experience; and their experience was rich with homely material. When Thomas Shepard wrote in his *Sincere Convert* (1655 edition), "Jesus Christ is not got with a wet finger," he meant, "Salvation cannot be had by mere study of books"; but his metaphor made a commonplace statement expressive and vivid for his readers by calling up the picture of an earnest student wetting his finger whenever he had to turn a page. Such metaphors and similes abound in Puritan writing. Their purpose is obvious; their effect

is to give to pages which might otherwise be abstract and dull the taste of life.

Some New England writers broke away from the usual Puritan conventions of style. They were all to some extent influenced by non-Puritan ways of writing; many of them were English university men, well trained in literary traditions; and those whose work has merit enough to deserve mention today were individuals never completely subjugated by rigid convention. But the variations from orthodox Puritan practice are usually minor, and, so far as the work of any group can be summed up in a formula, the Puritans' can , be. The formula called for clarity, order, and logic as supreme stylistic virtues. It admitted some concessions to the reader's liking for sensuous appeal, but limited that appeal to what was unlikely to stimulate man's baser nature and distract his mind from truth.'' (Literacy History of the United States, p. 56-58)

1.2.0. ❐ The Historical Writers of New England

The earliest Puritan records were historical and descriptive accounts of the settlers' response to the new land. The envisaged ideal, the actual America and the linguistic apprehension of the same may be seen as being curiously interconnected "Puritan narratives defined a shape for the writing of America, but they also questioned how and whether language could reveal the extraordinary experience. As a result, from the very beginnings America because a testing for language and narrative, a place of search for providential meanings and hidden revelations, part of a lasting endeavour to discover the intended nature and purpose of the New World" (From Puritanism to Postmodernism, Ruland & Broadbery, Penguin Bks, USA, 1991, p-4)

1.2.1 ❐ William Bradford (1590-1657)

The writings of William Bradford and John Winthrop may be regarded as the prototype of this early immigrant canon. The tradition that they initiated accommodates various disciplines and interests and essentially reflects the Calvinist origins of American Protestantism. Bradford of the *Mayflower* and Plymouth Rock, regarded as the father of American history, provides in his **History of Plymouth** Plantation the earliest documentation of this colonial period. Bradford's **History** had been left in manuscript and had been used

by his nephew Nathaniel Morton for his book **New England's Memorial,** after which many writers used it as source-material. It disappeared during the British occupation of Boston and was given up for lost till it surfaced in 1855 in the Fulham Library in London.

Bradford's **History** in its minute and painstaking observation of fact and detail remains a faithjfut chronicle of day-to-day life as it was lived in the colony at Plymouth. During the period of the voyage the history was recorded almost as soon as it was made but upon the completion of the same and with the first sowings of the plantation at Plymouth the entries became less frequent and regular and the observations were largely limited to the more significant of the happenings in the life of the infant colony. This is to be expected in the light of Bradford's growing involvement in the administration of the colony, an exercise that claimed his time and attention to a very large extent.

The exodus of the English Puritans to America has traditionally been likened to the flight of the Israelites to the Promised Land. Like the patriarchs of the Old Testament, William Bradford describes the "choosing" of His people, their exile and wanderings. Inscribed in this primordial parallel are the echoes of previous passages and peregrinations, namely those undertaken by the apostles and missionaries of the early Christian church, men who braved the rigors of strange, often inhospitable, climates and customs to spread their faith across countries. The immigrants from England who, in many cases, had left behind substantial estates, and embarked on a similar project, that of carrying European civilization and Christianity to the New World (as they believed) may, in all justice, be compared to those first missionaries and their rites of passage to the ancient apostolic destinations.

That the patriarchs themselves had a notion of this historic affiliation becomes evident from Bradford's spontaneous identification of the hardships suffered by him and his people with those endured by St Paul. In recalling the plight of the travellers on at last reaching Cape Cod, he observes: "It is recorded in the Scripture as a mercy to the Apostle and his shipwrecked company that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they met with them, were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise." (The American Tradition in Literature, Vol I, ed S. Bradley, R.C. Beatty & E. Hudson, Long, W. W. Norton, New York, 1956)

1.2.2 ❐ John Winthrop (1588-1649)

John Winthrop led the fleet that carried the 600-odd pilgrims across the Atlantic in 1630. One of the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Winthrop, with characteristic scrupulousness, went on to record the minutiae of that migration in his **Journal.** His narrative provides, not only a record of the day-to-day life as it was lived in the colony, but also the workings of the Puritan mind in its negotiation of a changed geographical, historical, social and civil reality on an alien continent. John Winthrop's Journal, which developed into **The History of New England** was begun in 1630 and was added to for the next twenty years till a few weeks before the author's death in 1649. Winthrop seeks to register in plain and unadorned prose, through a balanced and dispassionate manner, the events, both momentous and mundane that unfolded in the life of the colony at Massachusetts Bay

1.2.3 ❐ Edward Johnson (1598-1672)

Edward Johnson, though of humbler stock, yet managed to attain prominence in the governments of Massachusetts Bay. In 1640 he founded the community at Waburn, Massachusetts. He provides his epic account of the trials and tribulations of the Puritan experiment in holy living in the western world in his work **A History of New England** (1653), better known as **The Wonder-Working Providence ofSion's Savior in New England.**

1.2.4. ❐ Nathaniel Morton (1613-1685)

Born in England in 1613 Nathaniel came with his father's family to Plymouth in 1623. In 1645 he was elected secretary of Plymouth Colony and occupied that office till he died in 1685. He published in 1669 **New England's Memorial** based largely on Bradford's History and Winslow's Journal. It enjoyed fame and a readership till the discovery and publication of Bradford's **History.**

1.2.5 ❐ Common Features in the Puritan Mediation of History in New England

These writers, not literary in the usual sense and mainly occupied with subduing a wilderness, building homes and creating the instruments of

government and law, were yet the progenitors of a vigorous prose tradition, foreshadowing interesting developments in later writings, and constituting in embryonic form some of the legal and political manifestos of the American system. *The Mayflower Compact* is important as an early American covenant instituting civil government by common consent with reference to the common good. The *Compact with the Indians,* which like'The Mayflower Compact' a part of Bradford's **History** was the first American treaty with the Wamponaug people and was faithfully kept for 54 years until 1675 when Metacomet began those savage attacks known as King Philip's War and included the Deerfield Massacre. The Narragansett challenge, described in the same book incidentally was an episode that Longfellow had used dramatically in **The Courtship of Miles Standish.**

Though a significant amount of this pre-national literature was produced, it has been argued that it was not in any sense of the term 'American' literature for it did not arise out of an imaginative engagement with America itself- as a society or culture -for America so understood, had not yet been constituted. Which brings one to the paradox that literature existed in America before America (as we understand it) existed a paradox captured by Robert Frost in all its perplexities in his poem *The Gift Outright.*

The land was ours before we were the land's.
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people.

In another interesting twist to the conceptualization of America it is felt that even before the continent was discovered by Columbus America existed as a figment of the European imagination, which had long believed in the existence of a fabulous landmass in the west awaiting discovery and exploration.

With the New England Puritans however, this myth took on a Biblical dimension. Even before they arrived in the New World, they had tended to see the nature and purpose of human life in the light of God's plan and promises. The religious and nationalistic imperatives of the colonists' endeavor are clear from their avowal that they had begun the voyage across the Atlantic "for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith" and for the honor of their "king and country". (A History of American Literature, Tyler, Collier Books, N. Yk, 1962, p 130)

The genesis of such thinking may be traced to the two great European theologians of the previous century — Martin Luther and John Calvin. The

Puritans derived the Lutheran idea that men are essentially wicked and God all-powerful with the corollary that no human action is capable of attaining spiritual redemption. It was Calvin however who was more crucial to the development of Puritan thought and his *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* first published in 1536, was the major text from which the founding fathers drew doctrinal speculation.

Early New England writers operate within the Calvinist theoretical framework, having derived their vision and moral bearings from the attitudes contained therein. Bradford, in his **Of Plymouth Plantation,** presents the Puritan immigration experiment as part of a "great design", and Winthrop, in his sermon aboard the Arbella, emphasized the need to nurture the potential colony as "a model of Christian charity" on the Calvinist assumption that any deviation from it would spell doom. In chapter 32 of his narrative, where Bradford describes the breaking out of wickedness amongst the people, he does so with a typically Calvinistic understanding of human nature. He says: "I say it justly may be marveled at and cause us to fear and tremble at the consideration of our corrupt natures, which are so hardly bridled, subdued and mortified; nay, cannot by any other means but the powerful grace of God's spirit." (American History, p 23)

Bradford and Winthrop were governors of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies respectively for repeated terms and were admirably suited for, and indeed did combine most effectively the roles of spiritual and secular leader, guiding their flock to the hallowed pastures, exhorting them to exemplary action, setting the moral pace as it were and, at the same time, administering justice and laying the foundations of a civil society. In their combination of the two roles both men demonstrate an affinity with the biblical archetype Moses who was spiritual leader, lawgiver and chronicler of Israelite history.

There is a constant striving in both men to discharge their sacred and secular offices with the utmost sincerity. Winthrop, in his Model of Christian Charity, describes his dual concern thus: "For the work we have in hand, it is by mutual consent, through a special overruling providence and a more than an ordinary approbation of the churches of Christ, to seek out a place of cohabitation and consorts, under a due form of government both civil and ecclesiastical." (American History, p 26) In like manner, Bradford, while recounting the first marriage solemnized by him in Plymouth recognizes the civil as well as the sacramental nature of the contract describing the same as

being: " a civil thing upon which many questions about inheritances do depend with other things most proper to their cognizance and most consonant to the Scriptures..." (Colonial and Federal, p 25)

However, the civil was more often than not subsumed within the sacred in a way that is perhaps possible only in a theocratic society. The Puritans with Calvinist leanings who formed the core of the New England clergy subscribed to the view that the church is the state, and should enjoy primacy in all areas of human life. Not unexpectedly then the New England scheme of punishments was a product of theology rather than of jurisprudence. The social intercourse enjoyed by these people along with the sartorial habits sported by them was likewise tempered by a Puritan narrowness of belief and outlook.

A belief in prayer and providence runs through the entire corpus of writings heightening its affinities with biblical prose. In a scenario where every act of survival was construed as a miracle, and every tribulation overcome, a sign of divine sanction and blessing, providence appears as an agency of affirmation. The literalness and logic with which the New Englanders approached everything were applied particularly to prayer and providence, clear from their belief that God was always near at hand, and more than willing to interpose in their smallest affairs. In the words :>f Ruland and Bradbury, Bradford and Winthrop's writings "is the stuff of millenarial epic, but it is epic without known outcome", (Puritanism to Postmodernism, p 11)

1.2.6 ❐ Literary Style of the New England Historians

Bradford renders his account in "the plaine style", with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things". Not only are the boundaries between personal testimony and objective history considerably blurred in Bradford's *History* the constant need to adjust to the changing parameters of pioneer life imbues the narrative with shifts in tone and tempo. Eventually his history takes the shape of a jeremiad, a fundamental Puritan articulation that assesses the gap between professed intention and final accomplishment and calls for a return to the original vision, chronicling in the process, the hardships encountered along the way.

Though for the most part these writers used plain language and a simple

style to "justify the ways of God to man", they did take recourse to the occasional metaphor for greater impact. The vivid biblical imagery finds its most frequent and forceful expression in the metaphor of "the city on the hill". This "city on the hill", of course, is the visible body of Christ or the New Jerusalem; a model community of Christians expected to act as a beacon to the rest. Winthrop's reminder to his flock, "for we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us", (American History, p 27) finds corroboration in chapter 32 of Bradford's narrative where he refers to his people as those who had been "brought into the light, and set in the plain field, or rather on a hill, made conspicuous to the view of all". (Ibid, p 23)

Unlike the elegant, often ornamental prose styles of Catholic or Anglican writers the 'plaine style' of the Puritan historians was language that was 'resacralized by its own congregation, shaped by specific theological, social and political assumptions'. (From Puritanism, p 15) The prose of this period therefore is both a history and story of the epic struggle of people consecrated to a vision, a rhetoric of range yet restraint that rates even as it narrates the experience of early colonial life.

1.3.0. ❐ Descriptive Writing of the Puritan Period.

The first settlers were struck by wonder and excitement at the expanse of land and scenery that confronted them in the new land. Many of them expressed their response to the uncharted continent providing details of the topography, climate, vegetation, fauna and the native inhabitants of the place. The histories written during this period and already referred to are rich sources of such descriptions. The descriptions of land and ocean furnished by the first settlers gain a particular focus from their imperialist assessment and understanding of the same, even as the Puritan, providential view of settlement engendered myths and shaped attitudes regarding the immigrants' relationship to the new land which survive in the American consciousness even today.

1.3.1. ❐ Francis Higginson

Francis Higginson, a minister of the Church of England who reached Salem in June 1629 as a religious teacher had maintained a journal of his voyage across the Atlantic and of his observations on his new environment. The contents of this work were compressed into a slim volume called ***'New England's Plantation'***. In this book both the voyage and the new country are described through the fresh perceptions of the emigrant who is eager to taste the adventures and novelties of scene and custom that necessarily await him. The first glimpse of the New England coast is thus conveyed: "Now, what with fine woods and green trees by land, and these yellow flowers painting the sea, made us all desirous to see our new paradise of New England, whence we saw such fore-running signals of fertility afar off' (A History of American Literature, M.C. Tylor, p 164).

The idealizing thrust of Higginson's survey is clear from his praise for the land and its natural bounty, the physical proportions of the Indians, and most of all for the opportunities for "preaching and diligent catechizing" that it afforded.

1.3.2. ❐ William Wood

"New England's Prospect' by William Wood published in 1634 is yet another specimen of the descriptive literature of the period. Divided into two parts the book sets out to describe the landscape and topography, the seasons, the flora and fauna of New England and the suitability of the English physiognomy to the climate and soil of the place. In the second part Wood dwells extensively on the Indian tribes of New England documenting their habitat and habits, their customs, livelihoods, moral attributes and predilections.

1.4.0. ❐ The Theological Writers of the Colonial Period

As history, theology and political governance have been inseparable in the Puritan ethics and outlook the historical writers of the fledgling colonies invariably used the themes and forms of Protestant, specifically Calvinist discourse to express their views. They drew their images and allusions from the same source to illustrate their point, Despite their religious orientation the Pilgrim Fathers were primarily colonists and administrators, and they directed their energies to that end. The theological writers of New England who have gone down in history as the progenitors of a tradition of religious prose are Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard and John Cotton during the first colonial period and Cotton Mather in the second colonial era.

1.4.1. ❐ Thomas Hooker (1586-1647)

Thomas Hooker was a brilliant preacher in London. Later he became religious lecturer and assistant minister in Chelmsford. His non-conformist views earned him the wrath of Archbishop Laud who effectively put an end to all the avenues open to him for preaching in England, as a result of which Hooker had to flee to Holland where he spent two or three years preaching in Delft and Rotterdam. From Holland Hooker made his way in 1633 to the Puritan colony at Massachusetts Bay in New England where he spent the last fourteen years of his life. He preached in the church at Cambridge for three years after which he led his flock of a hundred families or so to Connecticut where he, along with his devoted followers, helped to build the town of Hartford and found the community there.

During this last phase of his life Hooker poured forth his genius in a succession of religious treatises, which at once established his reputation as a major voice in Puritan literature. The twenty-three titles to his credit were without exception on religious subjects. In common with the prevailing Puritan temper and literary tendencies Hooker filled his works with Scriptural quotations and allusions, and subjected his prose to minute divisions, sub-divisions and classifications. The conviction of tone and the force and vigour of his argument may be seen in the following extract: “There must be subjection or else confusion. Will you outbrave the Almighty to his face, and will you dare damnation...As proud as you have been.crushed and humbled. Where

are all those Nimrods and Pharaohs and all those haughty monarchs of the world? The Lord hath thrown them flat upon their backs, and they are in hell this day". (Tyler, p 189)

1.4.2. ❐ Thomas Shepard (1605-49)

Thomas Shepard arrived in New England in 1635 and took charge of the church in Cambridge. Possessed of a powerful intellect and devotion to his vocation, Shepard achieved fame as a writer and pulpit orator. Shepard's works honoured by a modern edition (Boston, 1853) draw for its core message on the Calvinist belief in the fallen and depraved condition of man, the wrath of God and the promise of redemption through man's repentant humility and divine forgiveness.

A couple of brief extracts from some of his writings may serve to exemplify both his theological theme and literary style. "We are all in Adam as a whole country in a parliament man; the whole country doth what he doth". (Works of Thomas Shepard 1.24); "Every natural man and woman is born full of sin, as full as a toad is of poison, as full as ever his skin can hold; mind, will, eyes, mouth, every limb of his body, and every piece of his soul, is full of sin; their hearts are bundles of sin", (Ibid.28)

1.4.3. ❐ John Cotton (1584-1652)

Archbishop Laud hounded John Cotton from England for his non-conformist views. Cotton arrived in Boston in 1633. He gradually became one of the most powerful leaders of the theocratic society of New England. Cotton's contribution to the Psalter that came to be popularly called the *Bay Psalm Book* is invaluable.

The individualistic streak in the American psyche is seen in the wish of the Puritan leaders to have a Book of Psalms that was at once more literal and Calvinist in its orientation than the several English translations that were available at the time. Accordingly, a project was initiated by the learned divines of the time to bring forth a translation of the scriptural Psalms that would be suited to the particular needs of the colonies, and more in keeping with the beliefs of the colonial citizens.

Eminent theologians such as Richard Mather, John Wilson, Nathaniel Ward,

Thomas Shepard and John Cotton among several others set about the task of diligently translating the Psalms. A collective venture, undertaken in the best spirit of community service this endeavour left little scope for individual claims to authorship except for the instance of John Cotton who was credited with the translation of Psalm 23, and with the composition of the Preface to the ***Bay Psalm Book.***

A Puritan manifesto in miniature, on style and intent, the last paragraph of the Preface virtually approximates the status of a classic in its condensed articulation of its avowed objective, namely the achievement of literal accuracy rather than pleasing sweetness of style.

"If therefore the verses are not always so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect: let them consider that God's altar needs not our polishings...for we have respected rather a plain translation, than to smooth our verses with the sweetness of any paraphrase, and so have attended conscience rather than elegance, fidelity rather than poetry, in translating the Hebrew words into English meter..." (Colonial and Federal, p 223)

There are numerous titles to Cotton's credit but in the words of Tyler his place in early American literary history bears no proportion to his place in the early religious and political history of the country.

1.4.4. ❒ Increase Mather (1639-1723)

Richard Mather, sire of the Mather dynasty contributed sermons, a catechism, letters on church administration and some of the translations in **The Bay Psalm Book** along with various other documents to the contemporary corpus of writings, Increase Mather, the son of Richard Mather had almost a hundred titles to his credit. The one book however that stands out is known by a name not given to it by its author. Called *'Remarkable Providences'* it is a work that was begun in England and Ireland in 1658 and took shape as a compilation of testimonies of Puritan priests about providential interventions in their lives. Discontinued for some time, the work found its way into New York and fortuitously fell in the hands of Increase Mather who developed the project in the new settlement and saw it to its completion, Sound in conception and scientific in implementation, **"Remarkable Providences'** lacked the critical scrutiny that needs to be applied to personal recollections.

1.4.5. ❐ Roger Williams (1603-1683)

Roger Williams was born in England where he acquired a liberal education, receiving his B.A. from Cambridge before going on to study divinity. He was a chaplain in Essex for a brief while. He arrived at the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1631 but was refused appointment to a church in Salem for his opposition to the dominant Congregational polity. Williams then spent two years in the Plymouth region living and working in close proximity with the Indians. He demanded, as a matter of principle, the separation of church from state and questioned the right of the colonial administrators to take away land from the Indians in order to build and expand their colonies. For this bold and radical step Williams was banned from Massachusetts Bay colony in 1635. In 1636 Williams fled to Narragansett Bay where he founded the settlement of Providence.

Two of Williams' work that merits mention are **A Key in to the Language of America** (1643) and **The Bloody Tenent of Persecution (1644).**

1.4.6. ❐ Cotton Mather (1663-1728)

Increase Mather's son Cotton Mather, born in 1663 in Boston followed in the professional footsteps of his father and grandfather. Prodigiously talented, Cotton Mather developed into a scholar and preacher of extraordinary repute. Of the 444 items that Cotton Mather published during his lifetime several are important from a historical point of view. The more important ones among his writings are: ***The Wonders of the Invisible World; Magnalia Christi Americana: Manuducterio***

Ministerium; **and** ***The Negro Christianzed.***

Cotton Mather's one book which established him as a major writer on theological themes, and which to some extent ensured his name for posterity is *Magnalia Christi Americana* or The Ecclesiastical History of New England from its First Planting (1702). The first book of this mammoth literary enterprise is a history of the settlement of New England; the second deals with the lives of the governors and magistrates; the third dwells on the lives of sixty renowned priests of the Puritan churches of New England; the fifth is devoted to an evocation of "the faith and order of the churches"; the sixth

presents remarkable cases of divine intervention in human lives while the seventh provides an account of the "afflictive disturbances" which the churches of New England have suffered at the hands of their various adversaries ranging from the Devil to sectarian enemies to the Indians.

1.5.0. ❐ Poetry of The Puritan Period

The millenarian thrust of the Puritan discourse gave to early colonial literature some of its typical literary forms - history, travel-record, sermon, journals, diaries and jeremiads that do not really qualify as imaginative literature. Believing wholeheartedly in their status as the elect who had been specially called to interpret the divine plan to the multitudes, the New England leaders prized utility over art, and the practical over the imaginative. Imaginative literature was encouraged in so far as it led to the improvement of the moral fibre, and the edification of the people. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that the output of imaginative literature was limited. There is virtually no fiction or drama worth the name. In poetry while Michael Wigglesworth attained renown in his age with his poem **The Day of Doom** the voices that were truly complex, expressing the rich interplay of the old and the new, the Metaphysical and the Puritan, looking back and ahead in a simultaneous sweep of the poetic imagination were those of Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor.

1.5.1. ❐ Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705)

Michael Wigglesworth's poem *'The Day of Doom'* (1662) as the title suggests was an exercise in righteousness completely in agreement with the religious tenets of contemporary New England. Consisting of 224 eight-line stanzas of doctrinal observations in a rousing ballad meter the poem acquired an astonishing popularity in its day. Dealing with the Calvinist themes of depravity, damnation and deliverance, the poem not only provides a key to the Puritan mentality but also illustrates the 'plaine style' of the historians that was perhaps unconsciously adopted by some of the poets as well.

1.5.2. ❐ Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

Born in England, Anne Bradstreet was the daughter of Thomas Dudley the steward of the Earl of Lincoln. Anne who grew up in an elegant and erudite atmosphere acquired a learning that was unusual for a woman of her time. Her first volume of poems was published in England in 1650 under a very long title not of her own choosing -'The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America...by a Gentlewoman of those Parts'. The poems were interesting

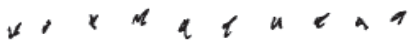
reflections not only on the moral ideas held by her but also on some of the emerging scientific theories of the day.

Anne Bradstreet's poems were surprisingly well received by contemporary New England society given the orthodox tilt of the patriarchal dispensation at the helm. They were actually given a second edition that was brought out in Boston in 1687 under a considerably abbreviated title. The new poems that were added to the original ones in this second edition have, with their depth of feeling and complexity of tone, contributed to the lasting reputation of this pioneering poet who, in some measure, resembled and anticipated another New England woman poet, namely Emily Dickinson who was to appear on the scene 200 years later.

Anne Bradstreet articulates in her poetry the problems of the woman writer who has to reconcile her several roles, balancing domestic duties and literary interests, negotiate the world of professional writing, traditionally regarded as a male preserve, and redefine her image and status in the context of her identity as both woman and poet.

From ***The Prologue*** (Stanzas 1 and 5)

To sing of wars, of captains, and of kings
Of cities founded, commonwealths begun,
For my mean pen are too superior things;
Or how they all, or each, their dates have run;
Let poets and historians set these forth;
My obscure lines shall not so dim their worth,



I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits;
A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
For such despite they cast on female wits.
If what I do prove well, it won't advance;
They'll say its stol'n, or else it was by chance. (Colonial, p 228)

From *Contemplations* (Stanzas 30 and 33)

And yet this sinful creature, frail and vain,
This lump of wretchedness, of sin and sorrow,

This weather-beaten vessel wracked with pain,
Joys not in hope of an eternal morrow;
Nor all his losses, crosses and vexations,
In weight, in frequency and long duration,
Can make him deeply groan for that divine translation.

O Time, the fatal wrack of mortal things,
That draws oblivion's curtains over kings,
Their sumptuous monuments, men know them not,
Their names without a record are forgot,
Their parts, their ports, their pomp's all laid in th' dust,
Nor wit, nor gold nor buildings 'scape time's rust;
But he whose name is graved in the white stone
Shall last and shine when all of these are gone. (Colonial, p 235)

1.5.3. ❒ Edward Taylor (1645-1729)

Born in Leicestershire, England, probably in 1645, Edward Taylor was educated there. He arrived in Boston in 1668 with the aim of acquiring a university education, as British universities were not exactly hospitable to Puritan scholars at the time. He studied in Harvard, graduating from it in 1671 and at Massachusetts started on a dual career as pastor and physician devotedly looking after the needs of his flock for the rest of his life.

When Thomas H. Johnson published selections from Taylor's poems more than 200 years after his death the fusion of an intensely Puritan outlook and a subtly wrought Metaphysical sensibility became apparent. Themes of devotional, piety were mediated in Taylor's poetry through complexities of tone, meter and imagery and a rhetorical fervour that made it significantly different from any comparable poetic expression in colonial America at the time.

The crossing of Puritan priorities with aesthetic ambiguities certainly inflected Taylor's voice and tone with multivalencies of mood and meaning. In the perceptive analysis of Gross and Stern, Taylor "combined the intense sincerity of a William Bradford with the aspiring exaltation of a Jonathan Edwards, merging his fire and humility in the intricate style of the English metaphysicals", (Colonial and Federal, p 259).

Taylor's position in the literary tradition of America is important in that it betokens a heralding of the torn, troubled, questioning metaphysics that came to affect a strain of the American imaginative expression. Ruland and Bradbury explain it thus: "Taylor's poems pass beyond literary artifice to become emblems of transcendent relationships, beyond allegory into the moral, psychological intensity that comes to characterize so much of the richest American writing, from Emerson, Hawthorne and Melville through Emily Dickinson and Henry James to William Faulkner". (From Puritanism to Postmodernism, p 26)

The following excerpts from Taylor's poems may give one an idea of his themes and styles:

Meditation One (Last Stanza)

Oh! That my love might overflow my heart,
To fire the same with love: for love I would.
But oh! my straitened breast! My lifeless spark!
My fireless flame! What chilly love and cold!
In measure small, in manner chilly, see!
Lord, blow the coal! Thy love inflame in me! (Colonial, p 261)

Meditation Six

Am I thy gold? Or purse, Lord, for Thy wealth;
Whether in mine or mint refined for Thee?
I'm counted so, but count me o'er Thyself,
Lest gold washed face, and brass in heart I be.
I fear my touchstone touches when I try
Me, and my counted gold too overly.

Am I new minted by Thy stamp indeed?
Mine eyes are dim; I cannot clearly see.
Be thou my spectacles that I may read
Thy image and inscription stamped on me.
If Thy bright image do upon me stand,
I am a golden angel in Thy hand.

Lord, make my soul Thy plate; Thine image bright
Within the circle of the same enfoil.
And on its brims in golden letters write
Thy superscription in an holy style.
Then I shall be Thy money, Thou my hoard:
Let me Thy angel be, be Thou my Lord.
(Colonial, p 264)

(angel: English gold coin)

1.6.0. Conclusion

The Puritan diaspora by virtue of its sectarian motivations sought to exist within a limited geographical and ideological compass, excluding in the process elements both from within itself and the unexplored mass of the continent that could, in all likelihood, have contributed to its further growth. While Anne Hutchinson earned the wrath of the orthodox ministers of the church for her critical thinking and dissenting views a preacher such as Roger Williams with his progressive sympathies naturally could not be accommodated within the Puritan theological framework. The great wilderness beyond the plantations was viewed, for the most part, with suspicion by the settlers who tended to regard it as a source of both known and unknown dangers and therefore, best left unexplored.

The spiritual orientation of the Puritan mind with its tendency to read prophetic meanings in every manifestation of nature, and the phenomenal world in general, anticipated the transcendentalism of a later epoch of American writing. However, the lack of sensitivity to the beauty of nature, the rigidly moral outlook, the unimaginative temper of mind, and the exclusionary attitude with the consequent propensity for monologic discourse disqualified the Puritan experiment in New England for engaging in heterogeneous and hybrid exercises that could have contributed to a dynamic cultural exchange.

The limitations of the Puritan literary contribution notwithstanding, it has to be conceded that the providential world-view afforded by the same, along with the belief in renewal and redemption associated with the momentous migration that brought this forth in the first place, imbued American literature as a whole with patterns and paradigms that certainly owe much to this

primary perception. “Puritanism may have set certain limits on the American imagination; it was also one of its essential roots”. (From Puritanism, p 32).

1.7.0. ❐ Questions :

1) Examine the moral, political and literary significance of the New England historians.
2) “Puritanism may have set certain limits on the American imagination; it was also one of its essential roots”, Discuss,
3) Comment on the poetic sources as well as contribution of Anne Bradstreet to the poetry of America.
4) Trace the intricate mingling of the Puritan and Metaphysical elements in the poetry of Edward Taylor.
5) Would you agree with the view that the ‘cosmic, transcendental and providential vision” of the New England theological writers “lingers yet in American culture”?

1.8.0. ❐ Suggested Reading:

Colonial and Federal, To 1800 (Ed Milton R. Stern and Semour L. Gross, Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1975)

From Puritanism to Postmodernism, A History of American Literature, Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury (Penguin Books, New York, Copyright R Ruland and M Bradbury, 1991)

A History of American Literature, 1607-1765 by Moses Coit Taylor, Collier Books, New York, 1962)

Literary History of the United States, Editors : Robert E Spiller, Willard Thorp, Thomas H. Johnson, Henry Seidel Caulya Richard M Ludwig, The Macmillan Company 1946.

Unit 2 ❐ The Enlightenment Period in the History of American Literature (1700-1800)

❐ Structure

2.0. ❐ Introduction to the Enlightenment Period

The Reformation world of Aristotle and More gave way to the rational, empirical values of a different physics and metaphysics. The foundation of the Royal Society in London in 1662 with its espousal of the ideas of Locke, Newton and Burke introduced notions that would deeply influence the shape of the emerging nation. With the great western hinterland of the newly discovered continent awakening curiosity and awaiting exploration spatial focus shifted from east to west, from the seaboard to forest and frontier. Theological imperatives began to be broadened by secular concerns, and narrowly moral preoccupations by mercantile interests. The idealizing thrust of the Puritan mind began to be gradually informed by a pragmatist ethics imbibed both from the mother-country England and also from within its own struggle to come to terms with a changing order.

The Puritan mind in its negotiation of the world could not but be touched by some of the scientific theories of the day. Cotton Mather's 'The Christian Philosopher' (1721) shows the stirrings of a scientific awareness but an awareness that is subjugated to his theology.

''Taylor died in 1729. By then New England had changed greatly. The old religious fervor had abated; the concept of a universe centered in God had weakened before that of one centered on man; and more and more colonists, especially in the properous seaboard towns, were interested in trade and in aping the amenities of English society rather than in conquering new lands for Christ. They paid lip service to the old theology, and church membership was still a mark of social respectability; but the zeal for teaching

and the fierce concentration on the dilemma of sinful man had lessened, and literature reflected the change. More and more the grace and urbanity of the English periodical essayists came to be admired; the robust vocabulary and rhetoric of the original colonists were toned down to the level of easy fluency; concrete realism often gave way to well turned generalizations couched in abstract terms. In verse' Taylor's ardor and his love of dramatic contrast were replaced by smooth couplets and neat stanzas obviously reminiscent of Dryden, Watts, and Pope. Between 1700 and 1760 New England produced plenty of good prose and plenty of graceful verse; but much of it seems tame when compared with earlier work because the feeling behind it was less intense. "Good sense" was in vogue; "reasonableness" and "politeness" were more important than they had been to Puritan preachers and tract writers. Compare almost any line of Taylor, or almost any stanza, however clumsy, of The Day of Doom with this bit from a "Poetical Meditation" by Roger Wolcott of Connecticut, published in 1725:

Vertue still makes the Vertuous to shine,
Like those that Liv'd in the first week of time.
Vertue hath force the vile to cleanse again,
So hcing like clear shining after Rain.
A Kind and Constant, Chearful Vertuous Life,
Becomes each Man, and most Adorns a Wife.

True enough, any Puritans would have agreed but few earlier Puritan would have put it so blandy with so little sense of man's helpless vileness before God or of the miracle of God's grace vouchsafed to his elect. The change in attitude—and in style—from the earlier writers, shown in Wolcott and many eighteenth century New Englanders, illustrates some of the ways its which deism, the new rationalism; and changed English literary fashions affected the original puritan outlook.

There were some literary gains. The newer theory flowered in Benjamin Franklin's best essays, skillfully written by a "sensible" man for "sensible" folk, with their eyes on this world more than' on the next, and in the scientific and philosophical works of Jonathan Edwards. The brilliance of the prose in which the Reverend John Wise defended the original New England church polity in *The Churches Quarrel Espoused* (1710) and *Vindication of the Government of New-England Churches* (1717), shows how much he had learned from English stylists of the school of Dryden and Swift.

Furthermore the increasing secularization of society, the relaxing of the old dominant preoccupation with religion, opened the door to pleasant excursions in fields unvisited by the earlier Puritans. Mather Byles, for example, the nephew of Cotton Mather,-was a minister, but achieved almost as much fame for his punning as for his preaching. He was also a rhymer, and an admirer of Pope and of the English poets of his day, and dashed off a few verses which his ancestors would have considered too trivial—or too frivolous —for a divine. The early Puritans had humor, of course—to take but two examples, Samuel Sewall in his diary and Nathaniel Ward in his *Cobler,* showed theirs; but usually the seventeenth century colonial preacher would have considered it a waste of paper and ink to display wit (in the modern sense) or humor in published writings. Nor were there, in the early days of Massachusetts, merchants like Joseph Green, ready to entertain themselves and their less pious neighbors with verses on the joys of drinking, or on the death of Mather Byles' cat, or with even more direct ridicule in rhyme of the minister of the Hollis Street Church. New England's notion of the purpose of literature changed fast after 1700. Good writing was seen no longer as simply a way of serving God by communicating divine truth as directly as possible; there was room for work designed merely to entertain. There was also an increasing interest in discussions of purely literary and stylistic matters. John Bulkeley, in 1725, wrote for Wolcott's *Poetical Meditations* a preface which is pious enough but devotes more attention than do most earlier colonial writings to purely literary values. Cotton Mather's famous essay on style, inserted in his *Manuductio ad Ministerium* (1726), a manual for theological students, takes a broader aesthetic view than the preface to the "Bay Psalm Book" or Michael Wigglesworth's unpublished "Prayse of Eloquence."

It is unlikely that more than a few pages of poetry and prose of New England before 1760 will ever achieve popular literary immortality. There are, none the less, memorable passages not only in the chronicles and histories, but in the great mass of sermons, tracts, essays, poems, and pious verse written by the colonists; and there are hundreds of other passages which lack the stamp of greatness but still have interest for, and may give excitement to, the modern reader who can read them with the understanding they deserve. That understanding involves first of all some knowledge of colonial conditions, some realization of the circumstances under which they were written and of the purpose and the audience for which they were designed.

It involves, too, an appreciation of the literary conventions which were accepted by our forefathers and, in spite of serious limitations, had value. Order, logic, clarity, are still virtues in writing, even though the devices by which we try to achieve them are unlike the Puritans'. Homely imagery, earthy phrasing and the use of simple and realistic figures to make abstract ideas or emotions concretely realizable are traits still characteristic of much of the best American writing. Emerson admired "language of nature." He found it in the speech of a "Vermont drover" and said that "in the 17th century, it appeared in every book." For an example he cited Thomas Shepard's "And to put finger in the eye and to renew their repentance, they think this is weakness." Obviously he was thinking of the homeliness so characteristic of Puritan prose; obviously too, much of his own best work shows the same quality. Emerson, and others, found in the Puritan's stylistic theory something adaptable to the needs of the idealist in any age. The early New Englanders' eyes were on God; but they were busy men with a wilderness to subdue and the divine will to carry out on earth.

Jonathan Edwards wrote on science and philosophy more effectively and more attractively, at least for modern readers, than most of his seventeenth century predecessors. Such men were exceptional, but they profited from some of the new methods in English prose popularized in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries—methods by which many other New England writers before 1760 made their work palatable. The Puritans' literary practice grew out of the search for some way to express both the spiritual emotion that controlled them and their vigorous desire to make practical use of it, and to teach others to do so, in daily life. They never succeeded, perhaps, in realizing their aim, either in literature or in life, but only those of us who are too limited in vision to see the gallantry of their quest will refuse them respect for what they did and wrote.'' (Literary History of the United States P. 68-70)

2.1.0. ❐ The Prose Writers of the Period

In keeping with the rational spirit of the age a body of prose writings gradually came into being. Illustrating the secular tendency of the times much of this earlier writing was matter-of-fact record of travel, an enquiry into contemporary lifestyles, or an examination of the practical and commercial

possibilities that had come to the fore. Benjamin Franklin's deistic preoccupation with the pragmatic imperatives of the changing scenario was a measure of the new beliefs and interests. Where the old Puritan spirit lingered it was tempered by an awareness of the scientific motives and methods of the time as in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. However, it was the political orientation of some of the most important writings of the time, most notably those of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, that inflected the prose with its dominant tone and accent, giving to American literature the fundamental articles of its liberal, secular, democratic polity.

2.1.1. ❒ William Byrd II (1674-1744)

The changing times were perhaps most conspicuously reflected in the outlook and writings of William Byrd II, one of the greatest landowners of colonial America. Byrd founded Richmond on his family estate by the James River.

Having studied law of the Middle Temple in London, and later the rudiments of the tobacco business in Holland, Byrd spent a substantial portion of his life in England mingling with the rich and the influential. Byrd became a regular at the courts, coffee-houses and other haunts frequented by dramatists, writers and poets such as Wycherley, Congreve, Swift and Pope. Not surprisingly then did he imbibe and import some of the dominant values of Restoration England into the colonies when he returned to Virginia in 1705.

A member of the Royal Society, the exploratory and empirical thrust of Byrd's investigations is quite evident in the nature of his themes. **The History of the Dividing Line** chronicles the charting of the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina, a work in which he had been directly involved having been on the commission that oversaw the division. **A Progress to the Mines** grew out of Byrd's visit to several iron mines in Virginia while the third; **A Journey to the Land of Eden** was a record of his visit to North Carolina. All three records of Virginia, meant for private circulation were not printed till 1841.

The love of travel, the negotiation of different places and people, the cartographical delineation of state boundaries, the enquiry into the ethnicity of Indians and the general perception of plantation life as a pastoral idyll where the scholarly aristocrat may attend to cultural and intellectual pursuits

are some of the traits of this body of urbane records.

It was however, the discovery and decoding of Byrd's Secret Diary as late as 1941 that revealed a whole new perspective on the eighteenth century life of the American South. 'The **Diary** does for southern colonial life what the journals of Bradford and Sewall do for New England' (Colonial and Federal, p 297). Like Samuel Sewall Byrd is a transitional figure looking back to the conventions of a leisurely past even as he inspires and anticipates the Jeffersonian ideal of the active, liberal, public-spirited aristocrat. In the words of Ruland and Bradbury 'Byrd brings us remarkably close to the eighteenth century American mind that owed quite as much to contemporary Europe as to its seventeenth century past'. (From Puritanism, p 36)

2.1.2. ❐ St. Jean de Crevecouer (1735-1813)

St. Jean de Crevecouer was born in Normandy, completed his schooling in England and went to Canada at the age of nineteen. In 1765 he became a colonial citizen of New York, got married and settled down to farm life in Orange County. The outbreak of the revolution necessitated an escape to France, as his political views did not make him popular either in England or in the colonies.

The impressions of America that Crevecouer sought to publish were finally brought out in a considerably edited version in 1782 under the title **Letters from an American Farmer.** This agrarian metaphysics traces through an epistolary mode the interaction between nature, society and the evolution of a new human being. Crevecouer's vision of the modern farmer in an open landscape is a Rousseauistic rendering of the American, nourished on civil liberties guaranteed by a just government.

2.1.3. ❐ Samuel Sewall (1652-1730)

It is in the **Diary** of Samuel Sewall that the documentation of everyday life and the domestic vicissitudes of eighteenth century America received a fresh treatment and succeeded in introducing a new tone and register in the prevailing mode of writing. Sewall's **Diary** presents the mingling of two distinct strains-the spiritual aspiration of the Puritan mind with its providential interpretation of history, and the secular imperatives of a social and commercial life. Ruland and Bradbury note the historical importance of Sewall

in the following observation: "His significance goes further however, for he is a figure on the turn: away from the Puritan past, toward the Yankee commercial, empirical spirit of eighteenth century America" (From Puritanism to Postmodernism, p 35)

2.1.4. ❒ Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Born in Connecticut into an illustrious line of clergymen Edwards came to represent an original and speculative temper of mind. Graduating from Yale he stayed on to study theology and went on to accept various preaching posts, becoming in the process, very active in the evangelical movement that took hold of American Protestantism at the time.

In Jonathan Edwards one sees the older Puritan metaphysical strain striving to adapt itself to the secular, subjective, pluralistic ethic that began to manifest itself in the expanding cosmos of the New World. It is his open-minded response to 'contemporary Deism and experimental science' that widened the scope of the original Puritan discourse and helped ignite the great religious awakening of the late 1730s.

Edwards' famous sermons with their emotional intensity and contact with the roots of daily living contributed in no small measure to the revivalist and revisionist movement of the time. His **'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'** remains the most famous of Puritan sermons. His defence of Calvinist doctrine is found in **Freedom of the Will,** in which he "combined an older orthodoxy with the new empirical psychology of Locke in order to unify man's being and knowing". (Colonial, p 149)

Edwards' typological interpretation of cosmic, natural, scientific and other phenomena along with his reliance on the subjective as a means of apprehending truth link him to the symbolist, transcendental, Romantic impulse in American writing of a later age.

An extract from Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God:

"You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but don't see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw His hand, they avail no more to keep you from falling than

the thin air to hold up a person that is suspended in it". (Colonial, p 195)

The development of this early Calvinist strain into a more measured and reasonable argument is seen in the following extract from Edwards' tract **Freedom of the Will.**

"There are two things contrary to what is called liberty in common speech. One is constraint, otherwise called force, compulsion, and coaction, which is a person's being necessitated to do a thing contrary to his will. The other is restraint, which is his being hindered and not having power to do according to his will. But that which has no will cannot be the subject of these things. I need say the less on this head, Mr Locke having set the same thing forth, with so great clearness in his **Essay on the Human Understanding".** (Colonial, p 208)

2.1.5. ❐ Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

Benjamin Franklin was a didactic writer of rational prose enshrining his social and moral precepts. His materialism was a reflection of the "general deistic belief that free reason and full attention to this world of the present moment would result in a social altruism that would be the best service to the world" (Colonial, 372). The founder of several of the foremost civil and academic institutions in America, Franklin upheld the developing liberal values of the colonies.

With his numerous enquiries and enthusiasms, his amazing range of interests, his experimental, entrepreneurial attitude to life, he approached the modern American who may well have answered to the famous description of the same by J. Hector St Jean de Crevecoeur: "He is an American, who, leaving behind all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds....The American is a new man, who acts on new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions". (Colonial, p237-8)

Franklin's ability to successfully transmute his Calvinist roots into an altruistic yet pragmatist philosophy demonstrates the flexible and accommodative nature of the emerging American consciousness which was mature and self-assured enough to question, moderate and revise some of its fundamental tenets to stay in tune with the changing historical circumstances.

Franklin's **The Autobiography,** arguably his best-known book, transcends the genre of personal narrative to acquire the allegorical dimensions of national history as it charts the intellectual and commercial trajectories of the unfolding American psyche.

Influenced by Addison's style in 'Spectator' Franklin sought to cultivate the Augustan virtues of wit, balance and urbanity in his own writings. With the spirit of practical application that characterized his endeavours in everything he did Franklin set to crafting and polishing his literary expressions by diligently enlarging his vocabulary, and modulating the 'plaine' style into a more sophisticated instrument of expression and mediation. Promoting the eighteenth century priorities of sense and science Franklin's prose remains one of the classics of an elegant and edifying specimen of the genre.

❐ From Franklin's The Autobiography

"Before I enter upon my public appearance in business, it may be well to let you know the then state of my mind with regard to my principles and morals, that you may see how far those influenced the future events of my life. My parents had early given me religious impressions, and brought me through my childhood piously in the dissenting way. But I was scarce fifteen, when, after doubting by turns of several points, as I found them disputed in the different books I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. Some books against deism fell into my hands; they were said to be the substance of sermons preached at Boyle's lectures. It happened that they wrought an effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the deists were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations; in short, I soon became a thorough deist". (Colonial, p 405))

2.1.6. ❐ Thomas Paine (1737-1809)

Described as 'the most luminous and heartbreaking figure of the American Revolution' (Colonial, p 440) Thomas Paine followed several occupations in England before making his way to Pennsylvania. The climate of a simmering revolutionary fervour in America was just the element that was required to stimulate Paine's political genius. He began to express his democratic views in Pennsylvania Magazine.

The publication of **Common Sense,** Paine's strident call for immediate

independence from England in 1776 established him as a voice of the Revolution and a political ideologue whose ideas would contribute to the shaping of the emerging nation. **Common Sense** was followed by the sixteen 'Crisis' papers which, appearing at strategic moments in the revolutionary war, served to boost the flagging spirits of the colonial citizens involved in the war effort.

Paine's impassioned rhetoric and powers of persuasion evident in these writings became identifiable features of his literary style. The first part of Paine's **The Rights of Man** was published in 1791. In support of 'France, Revolution and representative republicanism' it was in reply to Burke's **Reflections on the French Revolution.** When the second part of **The Rights of Man** was published the following year, Paine because of his outspoken espousal of revolution and liberty was banished by England. Apprehending this turn Paine had already found asylum in France and remained there till 1802. While in France Paine served a prison sentence for his opposition to the Reign of Terror.

Paine was brought back to America through the kind intervention of his friend Thomas Jefferson. Paine had completed the first part of **The Age of Reason** while he had been imprisoned in France. With the publication of part two in 1796 **The Age of Reason** became ¨the fullest and most radical statement of deistic rational regional" (Colonial and Federal, p 441).

Paine spent the remaining years of his life, vilified for his ideals, which for the most part, were not understood by the majority. He died in 1809 in New York.

❒ From The Age of Reason

"I believe in one God and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. And I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow-creatures Happy lest it should be supposed that I believe in many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslavemankind, and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing or disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe". (Colonial, p 451).

2.1.7. ❐ Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)

Born into the landed and slave-holding aristocracy of western Virginia Thomas Jefferson was a member of the professional elite. In a surprising negation of the circumstances of his birth and upbringing and the entrenched interests appertaining thereunto Jefferson came to sport a comprehensively democratic outlook that militated against many of the privileges that he was used to take for granted as the prerogatives of his class.

Jefferson occupied several legislative and executive offices in the state of Virginia before distinguishing himself in service to the nation as a whole. He was Secretary of State (1790-93), the Vice-President of the United States (1797-1801) and President (1801-1809).

Guiding the young nation at a crucial stage of its development Jefferson, like Franklin came to exercise an inestimable influence on the moral outlook of the republic, laying in the process, the foundations of a liberal, democratic civil society. Insisting that a 'national aristocracy of worth must replace an artificial aristocracy of station' (Colonial and Federal, p 463) Jefferson developed the concept of a 'populistic, agrarian, republican democracy'. (Ibid)

Jefferson led both by personal example and by precept, championing indefatigably for religious, political and intellectual freedom, for the extension of the franchise and educational opportunities. He died on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

The following passage from one of Jefferson's famous writings is illustrative of the main features of his prose style.

From **The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America in Congress,** July 4,1776

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, then to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their fiiture security". (Colonial and Federal, p 465)

2.1.8. ❐ The Federalist (1787-1788)

'The Federalist' consists of 85 letters published in the New York Independent Journal between 1787 and 1788. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay and James Madison wrote the articles under the joint pseudonym 'Publius'. While Hamilton later became the first secretary of the Treasury, Jay was appointed the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Madison went on to become the fourth President of America.

Hamilton and Jay represented conservative opinions on governance and social progress. Sharing the Calvinist belief in the essential depravity of humankind Hamilton in 'The Federalist' articles argued for a strong government to maintain civil order and protect the interests of the ruling class. Jay took the same protectionist stand on the interests and prerogatives of the administrating elite. It was Madison who embodied the liberal views of the Enlightenment arguing for the accommodation of diverse, even conflicting beliefs and values within a centralized form of governance that would strive, at all events, to respect the rights of the individual.

The colloquium of voices in 'The Federalist' represents the multifarious

public debate on the issues of political governance that naturally affected the young republic at this critical juncture of its history. As a source of constitutional law 'The Federalist"[1] remains an invaluable frame of reference for basic information on the subject as well as clarifications on contentious points.

2.1.9. ❐ Poetry in the Period of Awakening and Enlightenment

In eighteenth century America the colonial poets were trying to earnestly emulate the best British models. Mather Byles, a leading poet of the age turned to England for inspiration, raising imitation to an art and denouncing dullness in true neo-classical fashion in his poem 'Bombastic and Grubstreet Style: A Satire' (1745). If Byles turned to Alexander Pope for poetic direction the preacher-poet of New Jersey Nathaniel Evans sought inspiration from Milton, Gray, Cowley or Goldsmith. At any event, poetry of this age lacked originality of vision and method, and depended for the most part, on the established conventions of the older British tradition.

An important theme, that of nation-building began to inform the poetic expression of colonial America at this time with the result that this celebration of colonial achievement peaked in the 1770s. The poem entitled 'Poem...On the Rising Glory of America' written jointly by Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Philip Freneau bearjtestimony to this patriotic tendency.

2.2.0. ❐ The Connecticut Wits

Around this time a group of poets experiencing the turmoil of transition, and sensing the imminent birth of the Republic, began to reflect the promise of a new dawn in their poetry. John Trumbull, Timothy Dwight, Joel Barlow and David Humphrys of Yale, later christened the 'Connecticut Wits' helped usher in an age that trembled on the brink of possibilities.

John Trumbull (1750-1831) wrote a number of poems of which **The Progress of Dulness** (1773) was the most notable specimen. Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) contributed several poems of which **Greenfield Hill** is remembered. Joel Barlow (1754-1812) wrote the long poem 'The Hasty Pudding[9].

Mostly derivative in theme and style these poets "occupy a transitional

and peripheral place in American literary history, and are remembered not so much for the virtues of their own works as for their joint value as representatives of the early stirrings of national literary consciousness". (Colonial, 517)

2.2.1. ❐ Philip Freneau (1752-1832)

Philip Freneau spent the early years of his life in New Jersey, studied in Princeton, and became a friend and supporter of Madison and the liberal viewpoint. Freneau developed strong anti-British feelings since the Revolution, and his punishment in a British prison ship. He had an interesting and varied career as a journalist and a ship worker. For a while from 1790 he concentrated on journalism taking sides in the ongoing war between Jefferson's and Hamilton's views. He staunchly supported the former. In 1791 Freneau went to Philadelphia to start the National Gazette, an instrument for his liberal, democratic opinions. Freneau went to New Jersey and then to New York to launch successive newspapers but these ventures did not succeed. He went back to life on sea to sustain himself.

Freneau's imaginative pieces such as 'The House of Night': A Vision, (1799); 'The Vanity of Existence, 'The Wild Honey Suckle', (1786); 'On the Religion of Nature', (1815) remain some of his best works.

2.3. ❐ Conclusion

The Enlightenment Period in America saw the gradual evolution of the American spirit. The religious motivations of the early settlement era became tempered by a sturdy mercantile outlook, which changed the direction of the socio-economic development of the colonies, and introduced the contradictions that lie at the heart of American life and literature.

The eighteenth century saw the processes that led to the change in the equation between Britain and the American colonies. The staging of the Revolution and the subsequent responsibilities of nationhood called for a new attitude to life, one in keeping with the spirit of science and reason that had overtaken Britain and several other parts of the world.

The study of the physical and natural sciences received a special impetus

from the intellectual contributions of men like John Winthrop of Connecticut regarded as a leading physicist at the time and John Bartram, the Quaker naturalist of Pennsylvania.

This age saw the rise of American journalism. Some early literary magazines were also launched, the first of which, 'The American Magazine' was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1741.

Several prominent American colleges including Harvard and Yale were founded in this era leading to a growth in academic pursuits and scholarly interests in the country.

The eighteenth century in America was an age of change and growth, which saw the development of the secular and scientific spirit and also a practical, mercantile outlook. Like all other ages before and after it, this age too was just a phase in the evolution of the nation, and being subject to the laws of history, was destined to yield to the succeeding era. Stern and Gross are illuminating in their analysis of the changeful nature of American life and literature when they maintain in their General Introduction to **The American Romantics,** "One thing stands out clearly: American literature is a rebellious and iconoclastic body of art. The Puritan rebelled against the Anglican, the deist against the Puritan, the romantic against aspects of deism, the naturalist against aspects of romanticism, the symbolist against aspects of naturalism". (The American Romantics, Light and Life publishers, N. Delhi, 1968)

2.4. ❐ Questions :

1. Examine the European influences on American thought and literature in the eighteenth century.
2. Discuss the prose of Paine, Jefferson, Madison and Hamilton as primarily political writing that aimed to "declare the causes which impel... separation".
3. Comment on the characteristics that made Benjamin Franklin the most multi-faceted and representative individual of that germinal age-the Enlightenment.
4. Trace the gradual change from Puritan ethics to Enlightenment ethos as seen in the works of the leading writers of eighteenth century America.
5. Comment on the literary contribution of Philip Freneau to the political and poetic consciousness of the developing nation.

2.5. ❐ Suggested Reading :

Colonial and Federal, To 1800 (Ed Milton R. Stern and Semour L. Gross Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1975)
From Puritanism to Postmodernism, A History of American Literature, Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury (Penguin Books, New York, Copyright R Ruland and M Bradbury, 1991)

Unit 1.1 ❐ Two Essays—"The American Scholar" and "The Poet" : Emerson

Structure :

1.1.0 ❐ Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is acknowledged to be one of the greatest thinkers of nineteenth century America, was born in Boston, Massachusetts (USA) in 1803. His father (who was a preacher) died when Emerson was still a child, but he was brought up and given a good education by his mother and his aunt. A year after his father’s death in 1811, Emerson started attending the Boston Latin School, and in 1817 was admitted to Harvard College from where he graduated in 1821.

For the first few years of his professional life, Emerson taught at his brother William Emerson’s school before studying for the church and being ordained as a priest in the Second Church, Boston, in 1829. But after the death of his first wife, Ellen he resigned from the Second Church. The year 1833, Emerson spent in visiting Italy, France, and England, before coming back to America and commencing his professional career as a writer, essayist, poet, and public lecturer. He settled down in the New England village of Concord.

Emerson is called “the Father of American Transcendentalism” The term “Transcendentalism” needs explication. Essentially, the Transcendentalist

movement was a movement against the rationalistic thought that had dominated Europe throughtout the eighteenth century. The roots of Transcendertalism go back to English and German Romanticism. Romantic trends reached America around 1820. Rather like the belief of the European Romantics in the spiritual essence of nature, the American Transcendentalists also believed in the oneness of the created world and its creator, God. They also believed that the individual soul of each man was identical to the world itself, that the microcosm of the human soul was the macrocosm of the world. In 1836, the American Transcendentalists organized themselves as a group called the " Transcendental Club", and began publishing a quarterly, *The Dial,* which was edited by first Margaret Fuller and then by Emerson himself.

Emerson's first long essay, ''Nature'', was published in 1836, and in the following year (1837) appeared "The American Scholar" which was an essay that had been originally delivered as the " Phi Beta Kappa Address". Before the students of Harvard. In 1838, Emerson also delivered the " Divinity School Address" at Harvard, and in 1841 and 1843 he published two books of essays, *Essays: First Series* and *Essays: Second Series.* In 1847 appeared the poetry of Emerson in a volume entitled *Poems,* and a further collection of his poems, *May-Day and other Pieces* came out in 1876. *Representative Men* (1850) contains the lectures delivered in Oxford and London. *English Traits(1856)* presents Emerson's opinions about the English character. *The Conduct of life (1860)* and *Society and Solitude* (1870) are two volumes of essays. Throughout his life, Emerson had always maintained a series of journals, and these were published several years after his death. The following discussion will however concentrate on Emerson's two essays,

1.1.1 ❐ "The American Scholar" : Background to the Essay

"The American Scholar" was delivered as a formal lecture at Harvard on 31 August 1837. Emerson was given only about two months notice to prepare this address, but he put into it his ideas about what a scholar in a new nation like America should be, ideas that had been developing in his mind for a long time. " I should write for the Cambridge men [Harvard was a college in Cambridge , Massachusetts] a theory of the scholar's office", Emerson wrote in a journal entry in July 1837. "It is not all books which it behoves him [the scholar] to know," wrote Emerson, "least of all to be a bookworshipper". Rather, what was important was for the scholar to be "able to read in all books that which alone gives value to books.....to read the incorruptible text of truth."

The essay is important, first, because it asserts what has been called a new spirit of American intellectual nationalism. Many earlier American authors had felt that their writings were inferior to the best that was being produced in England and Europe. However, Emerson asserted that "We [i.e., Americans] have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe", and that it was now time for the new American scholar to express his own thoughts and to build up a tradition of American thought. It is because of this spirit of Emerson that the essay became justifiably famous. Emerson's contemporary, the American poet Oliver Wendell Holmes praised the essay and called it an "intellectual Declaration of Independence." Another respected poet and critic of the day wrote in the same strain and declared : "we were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought till Emerson cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and glories of the blue water."

1.1.2 ❐ Central Theme of the Essay

In writing "The American Scholar", Emerson had a two-fold intent–to define not only the truly "American" (and not English or European) scholar, but also to set out his ideas about the work and the functions of such a scholar. These ideas are set out in the first seven paragraphs of the essay and this constitutes a kind of introduction to the whole piece. Emerson begins his discussion by talking about an "old fable" (actually Platonic in origin) which told of the gods dividing "Man" into "men" so that "he might be more helpful to himself", the analogy being of the division of the hand into fingers so that work could be done better. This fable implies that just as there is one hand constituted out of many different fingers, so too there is one man behind all the different kinds of men. However , Emerson laments that in America, Man has become divided into separate individuals each of whom does his own work in isolation from all the other individuals. This has the original unity of the One Man become dispersed, and instead of being " priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier" all together, Man has become many "men", each doing his work in isolation from the work done by the others. As Emerson says about the state of his contemporary society, it is "one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man."

In this condition of the social state in which the "original unit" (man) has been "minutely subdivided", the Scholar has become the "delegated

intellect." Emerson states that while in the right condition, the Scholar should be "Man thinking", now he has degenerated into being "a mere thinker, or still worse, the Parrot of other men's thinking." But, according to Emerson, this negative trend is reversible, and the American scholar may yet become One Man in his thought if he opens himself up to three key influences–those of Nature, of the Past (Books), and the Future (Action). The next few paragraphs of the essay are devoted to a discussion and elaboration of Emerson's thinking on these important influences.

1.1.3 ❐ The Three Influences

About Nature, Emerson says the rising and the setting of the sun, the coming of night and the stars, the blowing of the wind and the growing of the grass all show that Nature is a continuous, never-ending process, a "web" created by God which has neither beginning nor end, and is a "circular power returning into itself." The scholar is the man whom the spectacle of Nature attracts most. The scholar observes Nature and discovers that in it,thousands of most different and even contradictory things are united. And from realizing this, he understands that Nature is not chaotic but has a law of unity within it, which is also a " law of the human mind." Nature then becomes to man " the measure of his attainments", for the less he knows of Nature the less he knows of his own mind. And as Emerson sums up, the "ancient precept 'know thyself' and the modern precept 'Study nature' ’’ thus mean the same thing.

The second crucial influence on the mind of the scholar is that of the Past, whether this is inscribed in or embodied by literature, art, or any other human institution. However, Emerson in his essay singles out books as " the best type of the influence of the past," and he devotes his dicussion to books alone. According to Emerson, books were born of man's experience of the world around him and were the result of a process of sublimation by which "short-lived actions," "business", and "dead fact" were transformed into "immortal thoughts," "poetry", and "quick thought." Yet, no book is totally perfect, and this is why new books have to be written for and by each new generation of men. In fact, if one loses sight of the fact that no book is perfect, then one will be inevitably led to an unthinking worship of books written in the past and mistake dogma for truth. Books written on a credulous acceptance of whatever was stated in the past are works not of "Man thinking" but merely of "men of [lesser] talent" who believe it " their duty to accept the view which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that

Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books." Such men who blindly worship books and hold as truth all that is contained in them, Emerson calls "bookworms".

The right use of books, Emerson argues, is for them to inspire the "active soul" of man. Hence, the really valuable relationship is not between man and book, but man and nature, a relationship which results in the transmutation of "life into truth." Thus Emerson declares unequivocally : " Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings." Of course, Emerson does admit that History and "exact science" must be learnt by "laborious reading", but he indicates that such study is useful only when it contributes to the scholar's ability to think by himself. Therefore, books (like the past too) are useful in so far as they inspire the scholar: "Genius looks forward; the eyes of a man are set in the forehead, not in his hind-head."

Having stated this, Emerson thus moves on to discuss the third important influence on the scholar–that of the Future or of Action. Emerson indicates that a scholar should not be a recluse but rather a man of action, for without the experience of action—"handiwork or public labour"—"thought can never ripen into truth." Action "is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products," and so the scholar who engages himself in appropriate action has the benefit of getting "the richest return of wisdom." And finally, the value of action lies in the fact that if "thinking is the function", then "living is the functionary." Put simply, this means that even if the scholar runs out of thought, he can always live a life of action.

1.1.4 ❐ The Duties of the Scholar

After having spoken about the three influences necessary for the development of the American scholar: "the office of scholar,"writes Emerson, "is to cheer, to raise, and guide them by showing them facts amidst appearances". He must perform "the show, unhonoured and unpaid task of observation." The scholar must also willingly accept a life of poverty and solitude. But what he gets in return is the knowledge that he is " the world's eye....the heart." He is the communicator and announcer of "whatever new verdict reason from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of to-day." The scholar's statements have an effect on his hearer because they know that by "going down into the secret of his own mind, he has descended into the secrets of all minds." Thus the scholar's audience "drink his words, because he fulfils for them their own nature." But the main point that Emerson makes

is that at the root of all the powers of the scholar lies "self-trust" or self-confidence and conviction which "are the keys to success in every sphere of life."

Apart from this, the other duty of a scholar is to be free from fear. " Fear always arises from ignorance," writes Emerson, and the scholar must have self-confidence enough to be able to influence other men with his ideas, illuminate them, and so free them from fear. Most people, explains Emerson, are of "no account", merely "bugs" and "spawn", "the man" and "the herd". Most people too are in thrall to money and power. But if they are woken up, "they shall quit the false good and leap to the true." And Emerson implies that the scholar is the man who can bring about this awakening. This is therefore the scholar's main function—"the upbuilding of a man".

1.1.5 ❐ The Concluding Section of the Essay

The concluding paragraphs of "The American Scholar" have a clearly exhortatory purpose. In writing them, Emerson wished to tell his college audience that they had the ability of discovering themselves, of understanding for themselves "the inexplicable continuity of this web of God," of realizing the process of Nature as a "circular power returning into itself," and finally of living and acting in the light of these perceptions. Emerson in the concluding part of his essay writes as an optimist with unbounded faith in what has been called the American Dream, an idea of progress : that the American Man can accomplish both social reform and material success. The "conversion of the world" is what Emerson visualizes at the end, and the scholar will help to bring about this for he will believe "himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men."

1.1.6 ❐ "The Poet" : Background to the Essay

Emerson's ideas about the nature, role and function of the Poet were first experessed by him in a lecture entitled "The Poet" which he delivered as one of a series in 1841-42. Around the same time he composed a poem called "The Poet" some lines from which he took as an epigraph for his essay, which was published later in his collection *Essays : Second Series* in 1844. The epigraph outlines Emerson's basic idea that the function of the poet is two-fold : first to notice "Through worlds, and races, and terms, and times/.....musical order, and pairing rhymes", and second to communicate this realization to other

men as had done the "Olympian bands who sung/Divine ideas below/ which always finds us young,/And always keeps us so."

1.1.7 ❐ Emerson's Introduction to His Essay "The Poet"

It is in the first paragraph of his essay that Emerson lays out his key ideas. He indicates that both contemporary art criticism as well as literary appreciations show signs of a deep spritual lack. Four categories of men—those esteemed as "umpires of taste," those believed to be "intellectual men", ‘‘the theologians" of the time, and even the ordinary "poet" appear to have "lost the perception of the instant dependence of form upon soul." Those who depend on the "material world" only, says Emerson, fail to understand that behind every "sensuous fact" there are many hidden meanings which are "intrinsically ideal and beautiful". As Emerson declares, all men are "children of the fire, made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted."

The greatest poets and thinkers (and Emerson names Orpheus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Plato, Plutarch, Dante and the Swedish visionary Swedenlong) and even " the fountains hence all this river of Time and its creatures floweth are intrinsically ideal and beautiful."

1.1.8 ❐ Emerson's Ideas about ‘‘The Poet’'s Nature and Functions

After having defined man in the introductory section of his essay in the spirit of a Promethean "child of fire", Emerson broaches the topic of the poet's nature and functions. The poet is truly representative, writes Emerson, for he is the "complete man" among "partial men", and he "appraises us not of his wealth, but of the common wealth." This means that the poet is the only man among ordinary men, an individual who cannot receive and live by truth, but also express the truth for the benefit of ordinary men. Again, since the poet has the unique quality or gift, he stands among the three children of the Universe who may be described (according to Emerson) alternatively as "cause, operation, and effect "or as" Jove, Pluto, Neptune," or as "the Father, the spirit, and the Sun ", or as "the knower, the Doer, and the Sayer." Among these, the poet is the sayer , that is the truth-lover, the namer who represents beauty.

"Poetry was all written before time was,"says Emerson and poet are those who " can penetrate into that region where the air is music," and those who write down what they have heard. These poems, the often imperfect transcripts of the "primal warblings" heard by the poets, become " the songs

of the nations." It is on this ground, too, that the real poet can be differentiated from the man of mere poetical talent, industry and skill in writing verse. Contrary to the man of poetical talent, the true poet "announces that which no man foretold....He is a beholder of ideas and an utterer of the necessary and casual." And following upon this, Emerson holds that the true poem can be identified by its possession of an argument—"a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own."

1.1.9 ❐ The Materials and the Method of ''The Poet''

In so far as all the materials used by the poet are concerned, Emerson speaks of his use of objects as symbols, and of the poet's use of language. He says that "things admit of being used as symbols because nature is a symbol, in the whole and in every part." Borrowing from the Neoplatonic idea of Plotimus that the soul is an ever-flowing fountain of which both nature and the individual's soul are emanations, Emerson writes that " The Universe is the externalization of the soul."In loving nature, ordinary man too actually worships "the symbol nature." Political parties and even nations set great store by symbols or emblems. Men use emblems everywhere, and so even if "people fancy they hate poetry....they are all poets and mystics," according to Emerson.

True poets however have another motivation in using symbols. The original poets were the Namers or the language-makers in the sense that by coining words they "symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer." Or as Emerson goes on to explain, " the etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry." Yet, the poet's powers are not dead but alive and organic, and the poet's expression grows "as a leaf out of a tree". Like the Universal Soul or Spirit which creates the world, the poet creates his poem.

Next, Emerson turns to the means or methods of the poet. One special faculty of the poet by which he is enabled to express his thoughts "Like the metamorphosis of things into higher organic forms," is his imagination or insight which is "a very high sort of seeing." Imaginitive insight however does not come by study or the operation of the "conscious intellect," but from "the intellect released from all service and suffered to take its directions from its celestial life. "This is why", says Emerson, "the bands loved stimulants" like "wine, bread, narcotics, coffee, tea, opium" etc. Yet, Emerson goes on to

say that the true poet does not need such auxiliaries : " The sublime vision comes to the pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body." The common sights and sounds of nature should be enough to inspire the poet, and as "the imagination intoxicates the poet, its effect on the poet's audience is liberating too." And so Emerson describes poets as the "liberating gods", for they "unlock our chains and admit us to a new scene."

Emerson also goes to the extent of stating that the"religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men". But Emerson is suspicious of the mystic who fixes symbols as having one and unalterable meaning. Instead, "all symbols are flexional, "according to Emerson , and it is poetry which is truly religious, "because it encourages and makes possible the passage of the soul into higher forms."

1.1.10 ❐ Conclusion to the Essay : The General Condition of ''The Poet''

In the last part of his essay, Emerson looks for the ideal poet in America. His point in brief is that just as other nations and civilisations had their poetry, so too must America have her own poet—even though there seems to be none in sight. America itself is a poem, says Emerson, for "its ample geography dazzles the imagination," and therefore "it will not wait long for meters." And it is on the basis of this conviction that Emerson sketches a prophetic scenario of the function of the poet. As a man who pursues beauty, as an artist striving to apprehend and express the ideal and the eternal, the poet is exhorted not to doubt but to persist even in the face of opposition and criticism till at last rage will draw out of him that "dream-power" by the "virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity."

Unit 1.2 ❐ *Walden* : Thoreau

Structure :

1.2.0 ❐ Introduction

Notable among the American Transcendentalists is Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) who is the author of *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. An autobiographical narrative published in 1854, *Walden* descibes nearly two years (March 1845 to September 1847) that Thoreau spent away from the town of Concord in the state of Massachusetts where he lived, in the countryside near Walden Pond. In a way, this was Thoreau's individual Transcendentalist experiment, his way of trying to fulfil a plan of self-reliance, of a programme by which the individual spirit may have the opportunity of developing in isolation and solitude. Much of *Walden* which is a book of eighteen essays was written down by Thoreau in the journal that he kept during his stay beside Walden pond. And as a whole the narrative is a complex blend of almost scientifically observed descriptions of the flora and the fauna in the region, and of allegory and parable, discourses on poetry and philosophy. Three important sections are devoted to Thoreau's interactions with an Irish family, a woodcutter of Canadian origin, and a detailed description of a bean field he had planted.

Henry David Thoreau (to give his full name) was born in the town of Concord of French and Scottish parents. His family was poor, and Thoreau had to work to pay for his college education at Harvard. However, Thoreau schooled himself to reduce his wants, and taught himself to live on a very small budget. An idealist and a man of principles, he tried always to live his life in accordance with his nonconformist ideals. In a way, his life became his subject for he wrote about his experiments in living according to his own strict principles.

1.2.1 ❐ Theme of *Walden*

It is acknowledged today that *Walden, or Life in the Woods* is Thoreau's masterpiece. The work is the product of the two years, two months, and two days that he spent in a small cabin he made for himself at the Walden Pond near Concord on some land that belonged to Emerson. However, in *Walden*, the real time of the twentysix months Thoreau spent in his cabin is reduced to a period of one year. Each of the seasons is evoked in turn, and the work is so constructed that there is a progression of themes or concerns from the most simple and concrete to the highest in philosophical or metaphysical amplitude. Hence, while in a section entitled "Economy", Thoreau speaks about how much money it cost to build a cabin, at the end of the book he has gone on to speculate and hold forth on the stars in the sky.

Thoreau was a great reader of travelogues and himself wrote a number of travel books. Yet, *Walden* has been rightly described as an "anti-travel book" in so far as it is about living in one place for a considerably long period of time. In his entry in his journal dated 30 January 1852, Thoreau wrote about his staying rooted in the place and observed : "I am afraid to travel much or to famous places, best it might completely dissipate the mind." Actually, Thoreau seems to have felt that wandering from place to place was inimical to the opening up of one's innerself, for which isolation and rootedness was a must. It is because of this that *Walden* has been called a work that opened up "the inner frontier of self-discovery as no American book had up to this time." Certainly despite all its deceptive simplicity, *Walden* is no less than Thoreau's practical guide to living an ideal life of peace and contentment. The whole essay which is simultaneously both a prose poem and a deeply philosophical treatise involves the reader and challenges him or her to scrutinize his or her own life and to live life fully and meaningfully. Indeed, Thoreau's description of the building of his cabin is an image, a metaphor for the building of a soul.

1.2.2 ❐ Influences

Thoreau, like his contemporaries and fellow-Transcendentalists Emerson and Walt Whitman, was deeply influenced by Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. His collection of books included several Asian classics, and it has been said that he was influenced both in his philosophy of life and in his procedure of withdrawal and meditation by his reading of Indian religious texts. Also, in

so far as Thoreau's use of language and his distinctive style is concerned, it is true that he learnt much from the writing of the Greek and Latin classical authors as well as from the compositions of the seventeenth century English Metaphysical poets. A clear, concise way of expression and the liberal use of puns and metaphors show the extent of Thoreau's inspiration from the writers of the past.

1.2.3 ❐ Thoreau and Transcendentalism

The Transcendentalists were men committed to the ideals of anti-rationalism, a general humanitarianism of spirit, and a belief in the essential unity of the world and god. The Transcendentalists held that the individual's soul was one with God, and this conviction led to the formulation of the Transcendentalist doctrine of committed individualism and, above all, self-reliance. These traits can be seen in Thoreau, particularly in his devotion to the principles of simple living and high thought. Also, like the other Transcendentalists who regarded themselves as pioneering explorers going out of society and breaking with convention, Thoreau too was willing to face the dangers of the unknown on a quest of self-discovery. The wilderness always held a fascination for Thoreau, and in America he saw the spirit of the wilderness, a spirit that he felt had become lost in the civilized societies of ancient Greece or Rome, or even medieval and Renaissance England.

Today, Thoreau is widely read and respected for a number of reasons. In the first place, Thoreau's essay *Civil Disobedience* inspired Mahatma Gandhi to develop his policy of passive resistance as a weapon against the British. This essay also inspired the black American Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King to wrest some measure of equality for his people. Thoreau's ecological consciousness has further become the subject of much recent research in the field of eco-criticism. Finally, Thoreau's stance of independence, his sense of morality and idealism, and even his insightful poetic style have given him a permanent place in the history of American literature.

1.2.4 ❐ Questions

1. Write a brief essay on Emerson as an essayist.
2. What are Emerson's views concerning the nature and function of the poet and poetry? Answer with reference to the essay "The poet".
3. Critically examine what Emerson in his essay "The American Scholar" has to say about the duties and functions of a scholar.

4. "Emerson is an American essayist in that he shows a special concern for the development of an American literary sensitivity."Discuss, with reference to the two essays you have read.
5. What do you understand by Transcendentalism? What features typical of Transcendentalism can you discern in *either* Emerson or Thoreau? answer with reference to the texts you have read.
6. Bring out with reference to *Walden,* the basic premises of Thoreau's thought.
7. Is *Walden* merely an essay in the pastoral genre or a more philosophic work? Give reasons for your answer.
8. With close reference to the ideas of Thoreau as set out in *Walden,* indicate why the work is still one of abiding interest.

1.2.5 ❐ Recommended Reading

1. H.H. Clark (ed.). *Transitions in American Literary History*
2. Robert E. Spiller. *The Cycle of American Literature*
3. F.O. Mathiessen. *American Renaissance*
4. Brian Harding. *American Literature in Context II : 1830-1865*
5. David Morse. *American Romanticism,* Vol. I
6. Robert E. Spiller, *The Literary History of the Uniited States*
7. Milton Konvitz and Stephen E. Whicher (ed.). *Emerson : A Collection of Critical Essays*
8. James McIntosh. *Thoreau as Romantic Naturalist : His Shifting Stance toward Nature*
9. Sherman Paul. *The Shores of America : Thoreau's Inward Explorations*
10. Frederick Garber. *Thoreau's Redemptive Imagination*

Unit 2.1 ❐ Moby Dick : Herman Melville

Structure :

2.1.1 ❐ Objective

The objective of this unit is to introduce an American writer Herman Melville who belongs to the pre-civil war decades. This period may be interpreted as an age of the prophet and an age of the poet. We may refer to Transcendentalism as the significant ideology of the age.

It was an age of idealism with a sincere belief in self-reliance and immense posibilities in man. One of the great writers of the American Renaissance, Melville in *Moby Dick* shows not only an emerging self -reliant individualism and spiritual exploration but also how 'the transcendental identity of Self and Nature' is 'always beyond the grasp of the individual mind' and the pursuit often proves to be a 'dangerously self-reflexive activity'(*Columbia Literary History of the United States*, p. 436)

It was also a new Romantic age with its special emphasis on self. It was further an age of skeptical writers, artists of irony and detachment like Hawthorne and Melville who were closely attached and friends.

2.1.2 ❐ A Brief Sketch of Melville's Life and Works

Herman Melville (1819 - 1891), the author of *Moby Dick* was a Romantic writer in American Literature. He was greatly influenced by Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Goethe and Washington Irving and also by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Robert Southey. Melville was much influenced by the American Revolution, so much so that he may be called the child of American Revolution.

Melville was born in New York City. He belonged to the rooted and distinguished family, the Calvinist Melvilles of Boston in America. Melville's father died as bankrupt, financially ruined. Melville is an uprooted person who had to face a hard and harsh world of alienating social forces. In his writings, Melville's male characters normally move from deprivation to hardship and bitter struggle of life. We may refer to the most famous of them, Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, the classic Wanderer.

Melville struggled through life as bank-clerk, salesman, farmer and school-teacher. In *Moby Dick* the writer Melville, himself is identified with Ismael. His father went bankrupt and then died in debt when Melville was still a boy. Melville began his career on a ship bound as a cabin-boy on a voyage from New York to Liverpool. This was the background of his bleak experience (making him feel extremely alone) behind his work *Redburn* (1849). His unique experience of exploration of the American frontier, down the Eric Canal and the Mississippi led to *The Confidence Man* (1857). In 1941, Melville sailed as seaman aboard the whaler, Acushnet. It was a long voyage into the Pacific. His experience of the Maquesas Islands is portrayed in *Typee*. It is based on his experience as a peer at Polynesian Life (1846). *Typee* was his first book. While joining an Australian ship, Melville faced mutiny on board and was imprisoned in Tahiti. 'Omoo : A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas' (847) was based on this experience. Melville admitted to his friend and guide, the famous American writer of the time, Hawtnorne that he acquired his experience of life and writing at sea and the alternative worlds. A whaling ship and the extensive reading while at sea was for him his Yale and Harvard, the famous institutions of learning.

2.1.3 ❐ Melville's Whaling Sources in *Moby Dick*

Melville had read series of whaling stories in the May 1938 issue of a popular New York magazine, the *Knickerbocker.* It published J. N. Reynolds's "Mocha

Dick : or the White Whale of the Pacific : A Leaf from a Manuscript Journal". There is another story published by the Albany Argus in 1839, "Method of Taking the Whale". The source is Thomas Beale's "The Natural History of the Sperm Whale".

Melville may have thought of writing about whaling in his early age. He thought of shipping on a whaler in Sag Harbor, actually signed on the merchant ship for a voyage to Liverpool. He sailed on the whaler, the Acushnet at the beginning of 1841. He was deeply influenced when he read Owen Chase's account of the sinking of the Essex by a vengeful whale. Melville read books on whaling–Frederick Debell Bennett's "Whaling Voyage round the Globe", J. Ross Browne's 'Etchings of a Whaling Cruise', William Scoresby Jr's "The Voyage to the Northern Whale Fishery". Apart from sources in printed form, Melville shared his personal experiences with those of his shipmates on three whalers and their accumulation of stories from previous voyages. In this process, Melville could plan, at sea, on voyage, a book about the pursuit of a great white whale by the name Mocha Dick. Henry T. Cheever's "The Whale and His Captors'' published in 1849, influenced him.

Moby Dick is an original composition, based on the assimilation of both nautical and non-nautical books. Two most important books that influenced *Moby Dick,* though they are non-nautical books, are the Bible and Complete works of Shakespeare. Some great classics of English literature and some European classics also influenced the making of *Moby Dick.*

2.1.4 ❐ Story-Line of the Novel

The story runs that in the superstition of some whalers, there is a white whale. The whale, Moby Dick possesses supernatural power. People believe that to capture or even to hurt, it is beyond the capacity of man. In the face of this sea-monster, the skill of the whaler is useless : his harpoon does not wound it. The White Whale shows a ferocious strategy when it attacks the boats of its pursuers. Ahab, the mariner and Captain loses his limb while pursuing his chase of the sea-monster. The mono-maniac captain Ahab again pursues the sea-monster as the master of the Pequod, his whaling ship. The loss of the leg exasperates Ahab, his reason is shaken. Under these circumstances, he undertakes the voyage, his only thought is to chase his antagonist, the White Whale. The interest of the novel pivots on Captain Ahab. Ahab's enmity to Moby Dick, the white whale, has been aggravated to

monomania. He thus is predestined to defy his enemy, Moby Dick to mortal strife, in spite of his former defeat in the chase, his loss of leg. Ishmael, the narrator of the story narrates this wild huntman's chase through unknown seas. He is the only one who remains to tell about the destruction of the ship and the doomed Captain Ahab by the victorious, indomitable Moby Dick.

The novel consisting of 135 chapters, may be divided into five major parts :

I Chapters 1-22 Ishmael Queequeg

The entire first part is concerned with the narrator Ishmael and his developing friendship with the harpooner Queequeg. The Christian Ishmael participates in Queequegs religious ceremonies. Their bonds of friendship being sealed, they set out offering their services in a whaler Pequod.

II Chapters 23-45 Ahab and Moby Dick.

Though the spectre-like image of Moby Dick, the whale appears in the first chapter as a 'snow hill in the air' in the second part, still invisible, his huge and menacing bulk looms large. Captain Ahab comes to the forefront, mesmerizes the crew, makes them participate in a diabolical sacrament pledging their vows to kill the whale.

III Chapters 46-72 The Business of the Pequod

As Melville observes Ahab's monomania does not deter him from his main business which is to harpoon whales and collect oil. In an important scene, a sperm whale is converted to oil. As the Pequod comes across several ships, Ahab's passion to seek Moby Dick flares up and Ishmael's insight into the nature of man's fate deepens.

IV Chapters 73-105 Whales and Whaling

Starting with the incident of Stubb's killing of a Right whale, the narrative comes to hault for some chapters as information about whales and whaling is conveyed to the reader, Ahabs gold coin, the 'doubloon' is sailed to the mainpast as prize for the sailor who can first spot Moby Dick.

V 106 – 135 The Search and the Chase

His part is dominated by Ahab as the source of his obsession and the purpose of the voyage is introduced. The crew reafirm their pledge to kill Moby Dick. As Ahab's defiance persists his ego swells, neither Starbuck nor Pip can dissuade him ; he identified with Fedallah and the final three-day chase begins. The Pequod is smashed by the enraged whale. Ahab is killed entangled with the harpoon. Ishmael alone is the sole survivor of the catastrophe ; he appears in the final section floating alone on the sea.

2.1.5 ❐ Critical Analysis

(i) Introduction

Moby Dick is a sea novel, a classic American novel for all time. At first, Melville started the novel as a record of facts of the whaling industry in America, but later on along with his vast reading of Shakespeare, the Bible, American and European classics and his association and involvement with Hawthorne, the great contemporary American writer, he wrote a "wicked" book to interrogate the so-called innocence of his age, he offered a critique of the dominating philosophy of his age. *Moby Dick* became a powerful Romantic Faustian tragedy' of humanity confronting both nature and divine power. *Moby Dick* is a distinctive American novel. It offers a critique of the ambiguity and duplicity of transcendental knowledge and pursuit. Melville creates a tragic novel because Melville considers nature as 'deceitful hieroglyph'. He believes that Captain Ahab's story is the story of *Narcissus* who struggles the lure and fascination of the great sea.

As a sea-novel, *Moby Dick* is an intermixture of naval observation, magazine and article writing, satiric representation and reflection. It is also a critique of conventional civilized life.

The novel is a South-Sea, whaling voyage, narrated by Ishmael, one of the crew of the ship 'Pequod' from Nantucket. The novel consists of details of usual sea-matter in the branch of Industrial marine. It gives us pictures of preparations for the sea-voyage, the trial marine, the chase and capture of whale, the story of the economy of cutting up whale. There are also descriptions and detailed digressions on the nature and characteristics of the

Sperm whale, the history of fishery. Life in American sea-ports is thus broadly depicted in *Moby Dick.*

(ii) Characters in the Novel

Moby Dick has three central characters—the wandering narrator Ishmael, the monomaniac captain Ahab and the White Whale, Moby Dick.

The dynamic force of the novel is of course Captain Ahab. He is the dark protagonist, the maimed supremo of the quarter-deck. His monomania to chase and kill the white whale persists throughout the novel till it drowns and kills all his men, both in mind and body except Ishmael, the narrator. He is the dominant character and source of the action of the novel. Ahab's bitter revenge on an antagonist who represents massivity of nature, results in a mythic struggle, Ahab, "ungodly, God-like man" appears to be a challenger of the universe. Through Ahab, Melville both invokes and challenges the great transcendentalist belief that the cosmos or universe is good. Ishmael as he narrates, wrestles with the complexities of Ahab's language, origin and identity. Ahab is represented as the unique man of tragic proportions. Ahab is steeped in rage and sorrow and because of his torn body and bleeding soul, he became monomaniac and mad. Ishmael constructs images of excavation. Melville delves into the depths of Ahab's being. Ahab is an image of individual and ancestral identities. Ishmael depicts Ahab's schizophrenia as a fierce dialectic. Ahab's essential self falls prey to his frantic self.

There are two other characters who reflect aspects of Ahab's madness —Fedallah and Pip. Fedallah represents the demonic aspect of Ahab's "characterizing mind' and Pip is the insane, distorted, maimed symbol and justification of Ahab's purpose.

The gods also demonstrate a final projection of Ahab's insanity, monomania of chasing and killing the white whale, Moby Dick. Ahab remakes the gods in his own image and language—his rhetoric. He symbolises a self-imposed myth of Prometheus in his extreme suffering. Ahab is the novel's most dramatically resonant character.

Ahab's antagonistic force is *Moby Dick,* himself. He is the particular white whale, "spouting fish with a horizontal tail". Legends and lores have been created round his story. Moby Dick, the white whale looms a huge phantom, a phantasy figure in the restless dreams of the Pequod's Captain and crew. He is the prime antagonist figure in the novel.

At the same time, the story of *Moby Dick* is not only about Captain Ahab or the White Whale, it is also about Ishmael, the narrator, Ishmael, the wanderer. There are two identities of Ishmael. Ishmael as narrator represents the sensibility of the novel, manifests the imagination and poetry of the story, the romance and adventure of the sea-voyage of the whaler. The other Ishmael is a major character in the story. Narrator Ismael grows out of Ishmael, the individual, the young man who is experiencing as he grows old. Ishmael is in the cobbled streets of New Bedford, carpet-log in hand, in a cold winter night ; he is in search of lodgings. Ishmael's rich imagination is stirred by all that is hidden, mysterious and unspoken in the great riddles of mankind. Ishmael also has a unique sense of wonder—wonder of the wide Pacific world, at the creatures of the deep, wonder at man, dreamer, doer, doubter, wonder at the incomparable power of the massive whale.

We may say that Ishmael is also writer Melville in another name. Melville's experience, imagination, poetry and scholarship are identified within the voice of the narrator.

Ishmael the observer and story-teller, dominates the story and the course of action as its speculative and varying narrative voice, rather voices. 'Call me Ishmael' the book begins and grows out of the singleword 'I'. He is also the single voice and single mind, from whose spool of thought the whole story is unwound. His contemplativeness and dreaming contribute to the reflective essense of the story. His gift for speculation explains the terror we come to feel at the fabulousness and whiteness of the whale and the wonder at the terrors of the deep sea. His mind ranges, almost with mad exuberance, though piles of images and in the wonderful chapter on the masthead, his reveries transcend space and time. He is the symbol of man, who is the only survivor of the voyage ; probably it is the necessity to keep one person alive as witness to the story that saves Ishmael from the general wreck.

Ishmael seems absolutely alone at the end of the book floating on the Pacific Ocean. He gives us an impression that life can be confronted only in the loneliness of each heart. The focus seems to be on the sceptical experience—scarred mind of Ishmael, his personal vision and the richness and ambiguity of all events. As in so many 20th century novels the emphasis is on the subjective individual consciousness. His mind is not a blank slate but passively open to events, constantly seeking meaning in everything it encounters. He is an exile, searching alone in the wilderness, suffering from homelessness, but more from doubt, uncertainty and the agony of disbelief.

He is a modern man, cut off from all belief and certainty, constantly in doubt, in the eternal flux like the Sea.

Ishmael's illusion of innocence is the root cause of his isolation. At the beginning of the novel Ishmael envisions Moby Dick, the 'hooded phantom' as innocent, identifies him with the spotlessness of his own immaculate soul. On the other hand he has an acute antipathy toward all human beings, the vast pretense of the world, its mark of innocence—'civilized hypocrisies and bland deceits'. As he enters the Spouter-Inn in New Bedford, he comes across a simple scene which embodies in miniature, all the evil which the world's mask of innocence hides. A beggar lies shivering in the Streets 'Poor hazarus, chattering his teeth against the curbstone for his pillow, and shaking off his tatters with his shiverings. He is struck by the human indifference to the beggar's misery.

In course of the novel, Ishmael is going to make a series of discoveries that consitutes the 'affirmation' of *Moby Dick.* At first Ishmael gloomily perceives that the world is what is promises to be. Ironically, the first step in his development is the companionship he forms not with a Christian, but a cannibal. He gradually overcomes his initial fight at Queequeg's austerity and his repugnance at his cannibalistic tattooing and comes to perceive redeeming qualities : 'Throgh all his unearthly tattooings I thought I saw the traces of a simple honest heart.' Association with this savage expands his knowledge about human beings and their relationships. Queequeg becomes the instrument of the restoration of Ishmael's faith and respect for man as he gradually realises the spiritual possibilities of comradeship. His voyage deepens his awareness of the plight of mankind and the complex human interrelationship and interdependance as well as the value of love. Queequeg restores Ishmael's respect for man. Transfigured by his experience he achieves a balance of intellect and heart, knowledge and love and also wisdom.

(iii) *Moby Dick* as a Tragic Novel

Moby Dick has been called a tragedy and Ahab, a tragic hero of impressive stature. It is a world of moral tyranny and violent action in which the principal actor is Ahab. With the entry of Ahab a harsh new rhythm enters the book. He seeks to dominate nature and inflict his will on the outside world. As Ishmael is all rumination, Ahab is all will and determination. Both are thinkers. But while Ishmael is a bystander who believes in man's utter unimportance

and insignificance in nature, Ahab actively seeks the whale bent on revenge, asserting man's supremacy over nature. The reader watches his sway over his crew with awe, fear and fascination. The question remains, how does the reader judge Ahab's rage against the universe and his monomaniac revenge? Is his determined devotion to an evil purpose his tragic flaw? Is his greatness a kind of disease, with an element of morbidness in it? A commanding figure, he calls together the entire ship's company to exact their total allegiance. Starbuck questions Ahab's motive 'To be engaged with a dumb thing, captain Ahab, seems blasphemous'. The angry Ahab cries out a curse on Moby Dick.

> He tasks me ; he heaps me ; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate ... I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man ; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.

Starbuck is silenced by the sheer force of Ahab's will. Noble by nature, Ahab seems created on the epic scale to act out his role on that high level. A hero of the old type, he tries to reassert man's place in nature by terrible force. But soon his desire for revenge grows beyond the bounds of human containment. Ahab becomes mad, but it is a madness that conserves all its cunning and craft to achieve its end. Ahab realises that his madness is the result not of a disintegrated mind but of a supreme intelligence : 'I'm demoniac, I am madness maddened ! That wild madness that's only calm to comprehend itself.' The self-knowledge ultimate, gives way to self-delusion. Outwardly convinced of his own innocence in his effort to rid the world of evil, he realises deep within him the magnitude of his gradual and awful commitment to the devil. What began as personal revenge becomes an obsessive hatred of evil and a consuming cosmic defiance. His defiance of God as symbolized by the sun, soon follows. After the diabolical ceremony of the rededication of the entire crew to the death of Moby Dick Ahab swears his continued rebellion : 'I now know thee, thou clear spirit (of five), and I now know that thy right worship is defiance'. Drunk with the success of his defiance Ahab moves from one act of dangerous rebellion to another. He even envisions himself as Apollo : 'I drive the sea'. The crew observe him : 'In his fiery-eyes of scorn and triumph, you then saw Ahab in all his fatal pride.' Ahab sins against man and God and like his namesake becomes 'wicked'.

Ahab's harpooner, Fedallah seems an embodiment of Ahab's demoniac subconscious, symbolizing Ahab's dedication to evil. Fedallah's oppressive presence is felt more and particularly when outraged Ahab defiantly challenges God's wisdom. Their relationship becomes so close, intertried

and ambiguous that to the crew, they seem two aspects of the same being : 'as if in the Parsee Ahab saw his forethrown shadow. Towards the end of the novel Ahab becomes Fedallah. Ahab in his dark dedication has transformed himself into his own monstrous impulse for evil–Fedallah. Ahab, as he gazes down into the deep sea, knows that the devil Fedallah possesses his soul and that he himself in his 'fatal pride' has come to embody all the evil he had attributed to Moby Dick.

(iv) Symbolism

Moby Dick may be read as a symbolic fable, Moby Dick, the whale standing for primeval dragons and sea monsters which emody the forces of chaos that rule over Creation. As James E Miller Jr observes : 'all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down ; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shall upon it.'

At the opening of the tale we are confronted with the complexity of Moby Dick's whiteness. Ishmael sees him innocent as Ahab later will identify him with evil. When Moby Dick will be finally unmasked and unhooded he will be revealed as neither innocent nor evil but an 'inextricable entanglement', like life itself. After exploring the full and complex meaning of Moby Dick for Ahab, Ishmael confesses : 'What the White Whale was to Ahab, has been hinted ; what, at times, he was to me, as yet remains unsaid.' Here Ishmael dissociates himself from Ahab's view of the whale, thus giving us important clues as to the real meaning of *Moby Dick*. Chapter 42 ('The Whiteness of the Whale') provides a key to Moby Dick's complex symbolism. Though whiteness is associated with many agreeable things—'the innocence of brides, the benignity of age' 'yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood.' Thus whiteness contains both innocence and terror, both attracts and repels. While exploring the complexity of the meaning of whiteness Ishmael ascribes the colour (or its absence) to the entire universe 'the great principle of light for ever remains white or colourless in itself...would touch all objects, even tulips and roses, with its own blank tinge—pondering all this, the palsied universe lies before us a leper...And of all these things the Albino Whale was the symbol. 'The whiteness of Moby Dick is a reflection

of the inscrutable whiteness of the entire universe.' In him are inextricably bound together both good and evil, innocence and horror.

As a 'poor old whalehunter' Ahab may have posed special problems of elevation and speech. Melville invoked traditional heroic associations of war, royalty, scripture and myth. Ahab is linked to champions like Perseus and St. George, a self-appointed redeemer setting out to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah and 'slay the dragon that is in the sea.' Apart from this universal myth, Melville presents his hero in the resonant idiom of Shakespearean tragedy also, as we have seen. As a contrast to the Ahabian element, we are offered the productive sanity of Ishmael. As Ahab who began as humanity's redeemer grows more furious and becomes a villain Ishmael emerges as a symbol for a new democratic man, redeeming the world from emptiness through his won creative energy.

2.1.6 ❐ Language and Style

The structure, method and style of the novel do not an organic whole, but an unceasing, restless series of movements. To quote Ishmael's own words : "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method."

It was after the publication of *Moby Dick* that victor Hugo's great romances of the sea and land came out. The fantastic learning, the episodic style, the wonderful picturings of the sea in all its beauty and terror emphasize the kinship between Melville's *Moby Dick* and Victor Hugo's "Les Travailleurs dela Mer." Melville may be compared with Coleridge ; he is fantastically poetical, like Coleridge in the ''Ancient Mariner". But *Moby Dick* is far more real than Coleridge's poem. The grief-stricken captain, his eerie monomania, the crew as half-devils, the incessant chase of the ever-elusive, vindictive, ferocious white whale, the storms and calms, the ups and downs of sea-weather, the weird scenery of the pursuit of the white whale in moonlight and daylight are so terrifically real and fantastic. The informations regarding whales, sea-fisheries, within the novel do not interfere with the overall effect of the epic quality of the novel.

We may focus on Melville's use of extraordinary vocabulary. Its wonderful diction may be compared to that of Chapman's translations of Homer.

One of the striking features of the book is its Americanism. Whaling is particularly an American industry, particularly the Nantucketers are the keenest, the most daring and the most successful. In *Moby Dick,* Melville's intimate knowledge of whaling, whale-hunting and his intense interest to recreate the whaler's life in all its details are both comprehensible, interesting and fascinating.

Melville is distinctly American in his style. Ideologically, his treatment is epic-like and expansive ; it has Elizabethan force and freshness. We may locate very distinctively the influence of his extensive reading of the Bible, Shakespeare and other great American and classical literature. Picturesqueness of the New world is represented in the novel. There may be certain mannerisms which may appear tedious like the constant moral tone, use of bombastic language, use of too much allusions. On the whole, Melville may be compared with Walt Whitman in his contribution to American prose. Melville is excellent in creating atmosphere, to present to the people of the land the very salt of the sea-breeze.

2.1.7 ❐ Conclusion

Moby Dick is a great and significant American novel. Melville offers a critique of the ambiguity and duplicity of transcendental knowledge, the light and the dark, the dangers of "craving after the indefinite" in the book. To Melville, nature is a baffling hieroglyph. *Moby Dick* conveys multiple layers of meaning. It conducts its own narrative and linguistic search for the meaning of the 'the whale'. Like any major novel, *Moby Dick* has lent itself to multifarious readings and *Moby Dick* in that sense is a pioneer of the modern novel.

2.1.8 ❐ Questions

1. Analyse *Moby Dick* as a pioneering modern novel.
2. Examine the whaling sources of *Moby Dick.*
3. Write a note on Melville's treatment of two significant characters in *Moby Dick*— Captain Ahab and Ishmael.
4. Comment on Melville's treatment of language and style in *Moby Dick.*
5. *Exam*ine the importance of the role of the narrator in *Moby Dick.*

6. Assess *Moby Dick* as a tragedy or Ahab as a tragic hero.
7. Discuss how Melville uses symbolism in *Moby Dick.*

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Unit : 2.2 ❐ *The Old Man and the Sea* : Ernest Hemingway

Structure :

2.2.1 ❐ A Brief Sketch of Hemingway's Life and Works

Ernest Hemingway, the famous American writer was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1899. At the age of seventeen, he left his home and joined the *Kansas City Star,* the newspaper as a reporter in 1917. During the First World War, he joined war as an ambulance driver on the Italian front, but he was severely wounded and returned home. He was awarded the honour of a brave soldier —the Croce dignerra. Later on, in the year 1921, he moved to Paris. Hemingway became part of the expatriate circle of Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford. His first book, "Three stories and Ten Poems", was published in Paris in 1923. It was followed by the short story selection "In Our Time". When "The Sun Also Rises" was published in 1926, he became the voice, the spokes-person of the "lost generation" and an eminent writer of his time.

This was followed by a series of publications—"Men Without Women" in 1927, "A Farewell to Arms" (1929). Hemingway settled in key West and later in Cuba in 1930s. He travelled widely to Spain, Italy and Africa. He wrote about his varied experiences of life in "Death in the Afternoon" (1935), on bull-fighting in Spain and big-game hunting in Africa. Spanish Civil War was the background of his famous novel, "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (1939). Hemingway hunted U-boats in the Carribean and covered the European front during the Second World War.

The Old Man and the Sea is the most popular novel and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and in 1954 Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature, "for his powerful, style-forming mastery of the art of narration." Hemingway was one of the significant writers of the American fiction in the twentieth-century. He died a tragic death, committed suicide in Ketchum, Idaho in 1961. His other works include "The Torrents of Spring" (1926), "Winner Take Nothing" (1933), "To Have and Have Not" (1937), "The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories" (1938), "Across the River and Into the Trees" (1950) and posthumously, "A Moveable Feast" (1964), "Islands in the Stream" (1970), "The Dangerous Summer" (1985) and "The Garden of Eden" (1986).

2.2.2 ❐ The Making of the *Old Man and the Sea*

In April 1936 issue of Esquire, Hemingway wrote an article entitled "On the Blue Water : A Gulf Stream Letter", Hemingway began with a debate with one of his friends on the relative adventure and thrills of deep-sea fishing and big-game hunting. He describes the joy and beauty of life on the Gulf-Stream. He further goes on to describe his own fishing experiences and also adds stories told to him by his Cuban friend Carlos. One of the stories was about a giant marlin. Three years later, he wrote about a new book of short fiction he was planning to write : "One about the old commerical fisherman who fought the sword fish all alone in his skiff for four days and four nights and the sharks finally eating it after he had it alongside and the fisherman could not get it to the boat. That's wonderful story of the Cuban Coast." It was in January 1951, fifteen years after its first appearance in Esquire that Hemingway returned to the "Santiago Story" as he termed it.

At first Hemingway planned to publish the tale as part of a collection

called 'The Sea Book' which became the novel *Islands in the Stream*. But soon he decided to sever it from the rest of the novel and published it separately as *The Old Man and the Sea.*

The Old Man and the Sea was published in *Life* Magazine. Later, the novel appeared in book-form. It was a great success. Santiago's story describes the loss of a gigantic fish, at the same time it enables its author to win the Nobel Prize, the greatest prize of his career.

2.2.3 ❐ The Background

Ernest Hemingway was committed to his own times. He belonged to his own generation, stricken by the "unreasonable wound" of war. Hemingway believed that the writer is a performing artist. He is the discoverer of his personal being and crisis through action, through experience. In order to express his unique experience, the writer challenges the truth of language and form. As an expatriate in Paris, Hemingway wrote of his multifarious experiences in different parts of Europe, bullfighting in Spain, war on the Italian front, the Spanish Civil War, big game hunting in Africa. His short stories deal with American materials ; many stories deal with the Michigan woods.

Hemingway emphasized inner strength, the things one can not lose. Hemingway's hero crosses the dangerous estate with an air of ease that cloaks but does not entirely conceal what lies behind—tension, insomnia, pain, wounds, the nightmare of the age.

Hemingway believes in tight linguistic economy, he sets his limits on false experience and rhetorical abstractions. It was first displayed in his short stories like "Three Stories and Ten Poems" (1923) and in "Our Time" (1929). Hemingway portrays the wartime violence—"nature consumes its own creations and the corpses of the dead seem no more important than the slaughtered cattle in Chicago stockyards". Hemingway's honesty as a writer is suffused with personal experience, historical loss and tremendous human suffering. His works derive directly from encounter with experience. It implies acquaintance with a new historical condition.

Sometimes, specifically in his later fictions, Hemingway represents the sense of a direct encounter between struggling man and the seemingly implacable universe. According to Hemingway, writing must express the real thing, the sequence of emotion and facts which made the emotion. War

was Hemingway's natural subject. He had become a soldier writer, a heroic stylist. In the anti radical postwar climate, Hemingway's pre-war sense of political commitment faded ; he was left with his own legend and a sense of life's fundamental struggle. This was expressed in the plain, powerful myth of "The Old Man and the Sea" (1952). To quote from *The Old man and the Sea,* "But man is not made for defeat ..... A man can be destroyed but not defeated". As the legendary hero, Hemingway, himself reached his last years, the message took on a darker look. He, a man of action was battered by action, his body was bruised by plane accident, his brain was damaged. Towards the end of his life, Hemingway worked on five more book-length manuscripts, but it was hard for him to complete them. On July 2, 1961, Hemingway killed himself with a shotgun, the victim of depression, paranoia and increasing physical disability. The writer of physical action came to the end of his great strength. His fictional world is complex, nuances of meaning lie under his plain prose surfaces. For every reader of Hemingway, his prose expresses the hard clarity and underlying existential pain which characterized the modern age.

2.2.4 ❐ Story-Line of the Novel

The central action of the story is an old man's trial by the marlin and the sharks. The old man of the title of the book is a Cuban fisherman. He bears the symbolic name of Santiago, his gentle suffering, strength and apparent defeat, transforms him into an image of Christ on the cross. 'Santiago' also is connected literally with Saint James, the apostle, he is the fisherman, and martyr from the Gulf Stream.

Early one morning, after long days of bad fishing luck, the old man rows out into the deep Gulf Stream. It swings in above the long island of Cuba. Towards the noon of the first day, the old man hooks a gigantic marlin. For two days and two nights, the gigantic fish pulls him in his boat far out into the sea. The man hangs for life onto the heavy lines, becomes a human towing bitt, fighting a battle of endurance against the power of the fish. On the third day, he succeeds in bringing the marlin to the surface and killing it with his harpoon. But the fish is too large to put aboard, he lashes it alongside his skiff and sets his small, patched sail for the long voyage home. Then one by one and later in rapacious ripping packs, the sharks move in on his trophy. By the time he has reached his native harbour, there is nothing

left of it except the skeleton, the bony head and the proud, sail-like tail.

In its main outlines, the story is thus apparently simple but actually intricately designed as we shall presently see.

2.2.5 ❐ Critical Analysis

(a) The Code hero : It is a plot familiar to Hemingway's readers. It is almost an epic pattern. The hero undertakes a hard task. He is scarcely equal to it, because of ill luck, hesitation, wounds, treachery or age. With tremendous effort he seems to succeed. But in the process he loses the prize itself, or the final victory or his life. His gallantry, courage or heroism remains. One thinks of Hemingway's special understanding of the hero, his code and his world.

The *Old man and the Sea* moves round such a 'code hero' and a familiar Hemingway theme—the theme of the undefeated—a story of novel triumph under the cover of an apparent smashing defeat. The old fisherman could be traced back to several Hemingway 'code heroes'. As Philip Young observes :

> Particularly he is related to men like..Manuel Garcia, " The Undefeated" bullfighter who lose(s) in one way but win(s) in another. Like Manuel Santiago is a fighter whose best days are behind him and, worse, is wholly down on his luck. But he still dares, and sticks to the rules and will not quit when he is dicked. He is undefeated, he endures, and his loss, therefore, in the manner of it, is itself a victory.

This is the essence of the Hemingway 'code hero'. Santiago is the first of the code heroes to grow old though Hemingway's early short stories did have some aging athletes in them. He reminds us of Jack, the prizefighter and Manuel Garcia, the 'Undefeated' bullfighter. He is a fighter too. One thinks of Francis Macomber in *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* But then his best days are behind him. His will not be the energetic death of the fighter or hunter. He is too old to live upto the demands of his profession ; he is wholly down on his luck. But he still dares, sticks to the rules and he will not quit. Undefeated he endures and his loss becomes a sort of victory.

The unalterable facts of physical destruction scar the surface of Hemingway's. world. As Malcolm Cowley says, no other writer of our time has presented 'such a profussion of copses....so many suffering animals. 'His imagination projects a nascent feeling of terror and anxiety. In fact for him, death is a symbol for the hostile implacability of the universe. Happy endings are rare, the humour is black ; but the novels abound in courage and endurance. The heroes fight against the darkness that threatens to devour them. Young

men like Jakes Barnes *(The Sun Also Rises)* or Robert Jordon *(For Whom the Bell Tolls)* and older men like Santiago acknowledge 'nada'or 'nothingness', hate it and struggle tirelessly against the void. They try to subdue afflictions like insomnia, fear of the dark, passivity and dependence. They never entirely are able to master the art of living. Yet Hemingway's novels are parables about the heroic capabilities of man in general. In fact the central heroic action of *The Old Man and the Sea,* Santiago's trial by the marlin and sharks is reflected in minature actions like man-of-war bird chasing the flying fish, or the hawks threatening the tired warbler on his way to the shore. There are references to Santiago's victory after a diffcult twenty-four hour hand-wrestling contest with the Negro from Cienfuegos and to Santiago's admiration for the great Di Maggio, acting as a champion in spite of his pain or to the Christ figure to which I shall come later. This 'technique of superimposing parallel heroic actions', according to Katherine T. Jobes, implies that 'the heroic ideal symbolized by Santiago can be easily generalized.' Thus every reader can discover 'a personally meaningful image' of moral heroism in this timeless parable. In a remark about his purpose in *The Old Man and the Sea* Hemingway himself confirms such an impression given by the story :

> I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things.

The elemental simplicity of the humble Cuban fisherman and his adventure contribute to a symbolic type of common human experience. Though Santiago the author also seems to explore the stresses of aging and impending death.

(b) Tragic Vision : This brings us to the tragic vision of man projected by Hemingway through the novel. Throughout the novel Santiago with his epic individualism, powerful and wise in craft, is given heroic proportions. He hooks the great marlin, fights him with the epic skill and endurance demonstrating 'what a man can do and what a man endures'. Later when the sharks attack the marlin he is determined to 'fight them until I die' because he wants to prove that 'man is not made for defeat....A man can be destroyed but not defeated.' The theme of the undefeated is central to the story.

And all the qualities that Santiago associates with the fish—courage, calmness, endurance, nobilty and beauty are qualities that are valued most in life, qualities which redeem life from meaninglessness and futility—qualities that Santiago wishes to imbibe in himself. As for dexterity and agilty, again these are characteristics Santiago shares with the marlin, his worthy antagonist.

And Santiago must catch the great fish not just for physical need, but for his pride and his profession. It is pride in his skill and craft as a fisherman : 'I know many tricks'. No fisherman reads sky and sea with greater assurance. Like a fire, proud bullfighter he is alert, methodical, patient and determined. And he is prouder of being a man than of being an expert. 'What a man can do and what a man endures'. Like Juan Belmonte and Manuel Garcia Santigo blends humility with pride.

But is pride his hubris? 'You violated your luck when you went too far outside' the old man thinks. The question of sin and guilt seems to bother him and persists. Santiago tries to deal with it honestly.

'And what beat you? he thought.

'Nothing' he said aloud. 'I went out too far'.

The marlin is a deep water fish. Santiago could not have caught it if he had not gone far inside the sea. And his spate of bad luck, the condition of being a 'salao', looked down upon with pity, would not have come to an end if he had refused to go far out into the sea. Santiago cannot resolve the question of guilt for himself, neither can he, as a fisherman rule out the necessity factor 'you were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish.' 'You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman' (105). The inevitable doom faces all' joined by the necessity of killing and being killed.' After months of failure, does Santiago decide to risk all by reaching beyond man's reach, by going too far out.' In fact, some critics argue that *The old Man and the sea* is much like Greek tragedy. The tale of courage, endurance, pride, humility and death sounds 'classical'. The purity of its design, the fatal flaw of pride and mature acceptance of things as they are, is classical in spirit. Going too far out is typical of the hero Greek Tragedy, so is Nemesis assuming the guise of sharks—the inevitable penalty for hubris. As Philip Young says, 'It is specially like Greek tragedy in that as the hero fails and falls, one gets an unforgettable glimpse of what stature a man may have.' When the sharks begin to devour the fish Santiago thinks that he is violated his luck by going out too far. It is actually humility that leads him to say that. Not that it is an admission of guilt or sin or even regret. Had he not ventured all alone out so bravely, he could not have discovered the grandeur a man may command even in failure. And his past memories, memories of his youth, grace, strength and determination seem to goad him on. To conquer the unconquerable. What stands as an obstacle to his goal is not his prospensity to go too far out but rather the sheer bad luck of being too old. He reminds us of doomed artists whose skills come to nothing.

In fact the sense of failure is an essential ingredient of the predicament of a tragic protagonist. Santiago's admirable qualities can hardly make up for the unredeemable loss resulting from going too far out and the bad luck of being old. The Tourists from the portside café are impressed by the bigness of the fish's skeleton. A man's magnificent performance does not compensate for his failure. The boy weeps and natives shrug as the old man returns to his newspaper-lined bed in his shabby shack.

The qualities which make Santiago a superior individual, are, as we have seen, courage nobility, determination, skill tenacity and also abysmal suffering, fighting spirit and endurance. At the same time he is entirely human, his humanness manifesting itself in small realistic touches like the brown blotch on his face, his peculiar idiom, his love of big-league baseball and his dreams of lions on a yellow African beach. He faces the malice and vengeance of the universe and accepts defeat gracefully and with resignation.

(c) Themes : Since the novel *The Old man and the Sea* has only two characters of any consequence and the principal character Santiago has been already discussed in the previous section, a separate unit on 'characters' seems redundant. The character of Manolin will be taken up in a subsequent unit.

(i) Religious analogies, Christian allusions : The novel abounds in religious analogies. It has been read even as a Christian allegory by some critics. Is there something of the Christian saint in Santiago (St. James in English)? He appears to achieve humility which is possibly the most difficult and saintly of the Christian virtues. There is even a suggestion of St. Francis in response to animal life and especially to birds. As Carlos Baker observes, he is "a man of humility, natural piety and compassion.''

Here one must add that an interesting change is noticed in course of the novel. At the beginning the great fish is associated with Christ. The fish itself is an ancient Christian symbol. Santiago exclaims : 'Christ! I did not know he was so big I'll kill him though...In all his greatness and his glory.' The word Christ is suggestive and the echo in the next sentence is unmistakable 'for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.' Then does it follow that Santiago, who kills his brother, the fish, is here identified with Cain and the crucifiers of Christ ? The old man cannot evade the sense of sin in connection with the killing of the fish. But later, when he leans forward and almost unconsciously tears a piece of the fish and eats it, the fish becomes

a part of his life. The reader experiences, a kind of communion and now onwards the old man's experience is related to the Passion of Christ. There is a transfer of Christian allusions and symbols, so long applied to the giant fish, to the fisherman. The old man in his noble futile struggle to preserve the fish from the sharks, becomes identified with Christ figure.

As Santiago sees the sharks coming to attack the fish, he cries out 'Ay!' The authorial comment runs 'there is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood. As Santiago leaves the skiff, he falls and lies for a moment with the mast across his shoulders and when he reaches the shark he lies down in the attitude of the crucified Christ. His hands are scarred reminding us of the hand of our lord. The mast he carries up the hill resembles the Cross. When in the end, he carries the mast uphill to his cabin, falls exhausted and collapses on his cot, his 'face down...with his arms out straight and palms of his hands up' the allusion is obvious. The figure of Santiago is Christ-like because the novel shows the way the old man is crucified by the forces of a capricious and violent universe leading us on to Christ's lesson of humility and love. Santiago stands out as a fishermen and as a teacher of the younger generation of fishermen like Manolin. The Christian symbols do not transform the novel into a Christian allegory ; the essential humanism stands out. The Christian elements serve to reaffirm the humanist theme of struggle, suffering and triumph. Both Christians and humanists share love and compassion. Apart from the suggestion of Christian martyrdom which comes at the end and humility without self-consciousness and sentimentality, the Franciscan quality of Santiago also comes under the label of Christian analogies.

(ii) Universal brotherhood, kinship with all creatures : Starting with a humble awareness that 'man is not much beside the giant birds and beasts' Santiago feels the same kinship with all living things, the elegant green turtle or the playful lions. It all stems from Santiago's great respect for the whole of life, a reverence for life's struggle and for mankind in general. It is a powerful novel; its power is the power of love and veneration for humanity and sense of kinship with and fellow-feeling for all creatures of the world. Santiago comes to feel his deepest love for the fish, the creature he kills, a worthy antagonist whom he comes to pity, respect and admire :

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more

noble thing than your brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

Santiago is very fond of the flying fish as they are his principal friends on the ocean. He is sorry for the birds specially for the small, delicate dark terns, always flying and looking and never finding what they want to find. He feels deep affection for the porpoises. Lonely as he is, he constantly requires the companionship of others. What comes out is his sense of community with all created things. This includes the stray land bird that perches momentarily on his taut lines, everything above and beneath the blue water and the big fish which becomes his alter ago.

(iii) Contention or fight : The other interpretation of the novel sees it as a fight between two opposite polarities, as a contention of the victor and the victim, the pursuing and the pursued. The dolphin pursues and catches the flying fish ; the dolphin in its turn is caught by the old man who is nourished by the big fish. Each form preys on the other for food and life and then in turn becomes a prey to another. As the first shark attack Santiago, he cries out 'everything kills everything else in some way.'

In fact, all the noble creatures in the novel—the marlin , the mako shark or the turtle (Santiago show empathy for each of them) put up a good fight and demonstrate their fighting spirit, and transcend defeat by displaying intense life and vitality at the moment of death. One remember's Santiago's words. 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated.' And vitality seems to be transmitted through the ritual of eating of the victims, flesh, providing continuing vitality to the victor. Does Santiago nourish himself by the act of killing and eating the flesh of his brother fish, thus becoming the marlin? imaginatively the old man gathers inspiration and vital nourishment from his mythical brothers—the powerful Negro, De Maggio and Manolin who seem to stand for his former youthful self. This seems to be the obverse of Santiago's 'everything kills everything else'—'everything nourishes everything else in someway.'

(iv) Plurality : This is a pointer to the basic assumption in ecology—participation in the same natural rhythms of the universe. This reading is opposed to interpretation of the novel as a 'fight'. In Hemingway's harmonious view of the world, life exists in plurality ; there is no contradiction in that plurality ; there is no contradiction in that plurality and even the sharks have their place. All this contributes to an understanding of the plural nature of the universe.

(d) Santiago Manolin realtionship : Incidentally, one must remember that the relationship between Santiago and the boy Manolin, the second and the only other character in the novel (if we do not count the fish marlin to be one) is of special kind.

Santiago, the old man has a meaningful and memorable relationship with the boy Manolo, his follower and admirer. Manolin undoubtedly heitghtens our sympathy for the old fisherman. At the beginning and end of the story, we watch Santiago through the boy's admiring and pitying eyes. From the charitable Martin who is the owner of the Terrace, Manolo brings Santiago a last supper of black beans and rice, fried bananas, stew and two bottles of beer. In the morning on the day of the journey Manolin arranges for the breakfast of coffee fixes the bait, helps Santiago to launch the skiff and sees him off in the dark with a wish for his luck on this eighty-fifth day. The love of Manolo for Santiago is that of a disciple for his master in the arts of fishing. He also loves Santiago like a father. At the end of the novel Manolo again brings coffee and food for Santiago, ointment for his injured hands, planning to work together in future.

But from Santiago's point of view, the relationship runs deeper. It is true that the old man constantly thinks of the boy white fishing. During the or deal he feels that the boy would be a help in a time of crisis 'I wish the boy was here'. Like many other aging men, Santiago finds something reassuring in the image of the past in the present, in the young manhood of the boy. Through the agency of Manolo, he is able to recapture in his imagination, the same strength, courage and confidence of his own young manhood as a fisherman.

Some critics see in Manolin Hemingway's experiment in symbolic doubling. Manolin is seen to stand for old Santigo's lost youth. In a way the boy provides sentimental education, Santiago enjoys, in his need for love and pity. Thus Manolin takes over some functions hitherto performed by the heroine in Hemingways other novels.

Instead of reading the novel as an allegory of old age longing for the return of youth, it could be read from the boy's point of view. The old man may do without the boy, it is the boy who feels that he cannot do without the old man, who is a wonderful teacher. Manolin is his great admirer. He was with the old man for the first forty days of present run of bad luck. He is intelligent enough to distinguish Santiago, 'a strange old man' who knows 'many tricks' from the other ordinary fishermen and recognizes his

uniqueness : 'There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you.'

(e) Dreams : Santiago's dreams—his actual dreams and daydreams—dreams of Di Maggio, the African sea beaches and the lions are quite significant in the novel. If the novel is about action (fishing) what is the significance of these sleep or dream sequences? They introduce another layer into the novel. They indicate Santiago's longing for inner repose, suggestive of peace and harmony. The lions and Di Maggio are perfection symbols. Santiago longs to identify himself with sources of power.

Biographical reading : The novel has been interpreted as symbolic representation of Hemingway's vision of himself in 1952. Such biographical reading identifies Santiago meticulous craftsman dedicated his vocation with Hemingway, the writer. Santiago's reputation as a champion corresponds to Hemingway's literary reputation in the 1950s. Santiago's suffering due to attacks by evil forces could be compared to Hemingway's sufferings from critics' attacks. Sharks stand for both internal and external forces working against the craftsman. Thus the old man catching fish is also a great artist in the act of mastering his subject.

(f) Ending : The novel ends with the old man sleeping and dreaming of lions. Most readers feel that it ends on a note of hope, new strength and vitality. Others notice hints for the old man's approaching death. In the closing section Manolin is crying, each time, he widthdraws from Santiago's bedside. Is it reverse for contributing to his suffering ? He should have accompanied him and now it is too late. Santiago's excellent performance does not compensate for his failure. Does he lie dying at the end ? The very spectacle of the old man challenging Nature totally disregarding safety seems deliberately stoic, almost recklessly suicidal.

(g) Structure and technique style : The novel takes up the ritual journey as a motif. The journey also forms the structure of the novel—Santiago's three day sojourn on the sea. As for the prose style, it is not static. Hemingway has created his own unique style and language of expression, rooted in his innumerable experiences of life. He addresses the need of his generation. He has developed a 'spare prose', the special features being concrete nouns, few colouring adjectives, a selected vocabulary and a not very complicated

sentence structure. As Jobes remarks 'terse factuality', 'objectivity' and 'emotional control', carried over from journalism were the salient features. The repeated images and symbols are a part of an emphatic stylistic design of repeated serends, words and rhythms, lending a quality incantation and dignity of virtual to routine actions. Some of the vivid interlocking images are those of the sea, marlin and shark. The sea, for example, is not just the background, the Gulf Stream, the means of livelihood of the entire fishing community in Caribbean. It is the sea of life which man has to negotiate. Side by side we have the other aspect of the sea—the inexorable quality that evokes awe and fear, the dangers it stands for. The caprice of the sea is a reflection of the caprice of Nature and the Universe in general. Both the noble marlin and the destructive sharks belong to the sea. It combines benevolence, malice and violence. To Santiago, the sea is not merely a place or an enemy but Lamar—a woman to be loved however cruel. It stands for the unsurmountable obstacle against which Santiago must assert his manhood.

As for narrative technique Hemingway is not an innovator or pioneer but he consolidated and perfected what had been originated by modernists like Conrad, James, Proust and Joyce. He used both omniscient and subjective modes in his novels, In *The Old Man and the Sea* variations are quite interesting, the way he mixes third person narrative with interior monologue. In the first twenty pages he maintains the third person voice, but once Santiago is by himself on the sea we enter his mind. Hemingway excels in skillfully merging the different narrative modes, smoothly gliding over transitions.

2.2.6 ❐ Questions

1. '"The Old Man and the Sea" is an allegory, a fable, a Christian parable.' —Elucidate.
2. '"The Old man and the Sea" is a story of human strength, endurance and suffering.'—Elucidate.
3. Analyse the strength and greatness of the character of Santiago, 'The Old man and the Sea.'
4. Analyse the creative relationship between the old man Santiago and the boy Manolo.

5. Consider Hemingway as a great artist with reference to "'The Old Man and the Sea."

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Unit : 2.3 ❐ *The Sound and the Fury* : William Faulkner

Structure :

2.3.1. ❐ Introduction

William Faulkner is one of the most important literary figures in American literature. He is a Nobel Prize Laureate and recognized worldwide as a stylistic innovator. At first, Faulkner can be confusing and bewildering because of his complex prose style and narrative technique. In order to comprehend and enjoy his writing, we have to locate his origin, cultural and historical background.

2.3.2. ❐ A Brief Sketch of Faulkner's Life and Works

William Faulkner (1897-1962) was born William Cuthbert Faulkner in New Albany, Mississippi on September 25, 1897. He was the first child of Murry Cuthbert and Maud Butler Falkner and the great-grandson of the soldier, author, banker and railroad builder William Clark Faulkner, known as the Old Colonel. He is a legendary figure and resembles Colonel John Sartoris of Faulkner's fictional Jefferson, Mississipi and Yoknapatawpha County.

William Faulkner had served in the Royal Air Force in 1918. After the

War, Faulkner went back to Oxford, Mississippi. At home, his war with his self and consciousness began. He was not able to accept the post-war world of America, particularly its South. At that time he was writing poems and violent and effective stories, he was brooding over his own situation and the decline and decadence of the South. His thought was reconstructed into the whole interconnected pattern. This was the substance and form of all Faulkner's works.

The pattern of his writing was structured on his experience and reminiscences of Oxford, scraps of his family tradition, the Falkners as they spelled the name. Thus Faulkner invented a Mississippi County. The Yoknapatawpha County was like a mythical kingdom and in Faulkner's writing it stands as a parable or legend of all the Deep South *i.e.,* Texas, Mississippi, South Carolina and other states in the southern part of USA.

Faulkner was better equipped by talent and background than he was by schooling and formal education. Faulkner was the oldest of the four brothers. At Oxford, Faulkner attended the public school, but he did not complete his graduation. He was admitted to the University of Mississippi as a war veteran, but he did not complete his course. Faulkner was self-taught, because of his personal experience, his childhood memory and his "undirected and uncorelated reading."

Faulkner took two hard falls from horses in Virginia in 1962. William Faulkner died of a heart attack there at 1:30 on the morning of July 6, 1962.

Faulkner has written several novels and stories concerned with his mythical Yoknapatawpha County and its people. *Sartoris* was the first of the books to be published, in the spring of 1929. *The Sound and the Fury* was published six months later. It recounts the going-to pieces of the Compson family. The books that followed in the Yoknapatawpha series are *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Sanctuary* (1931), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom Absalom!* (1936), *The Unvanquished* (1938), *The Wild Palms* (1939), *The Hamlet* (1940) and *GoDown, Moses* (1942). There are also many Yoknapatawpha stories in *These 13* (1931), *Doctor Martino* (1934) and *Mill Zilphia Gant* (1932).

All the books that Faulkner published after 1945 are concerned with Yoknapatawpha County. The exception is *A Fable* (1954), about a reincarnated Christ in the First World War. The other books, eight in number, are *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), *Knight's Gambit* (1949), *Collected Stories of William Faulkner* (1950), *Requiem far a Nun* (1951), a three-act drama, *Big Woods* (1955), *The Town* (1957), *The Mansion* (1959) and *The Reivers* (1962). In all, sixteen of Faulkner's

books belong to the Yoknapatawpha cycle, as well as half of another book *The Wild Palms* and it is difficult to count how many stories of Faulkner are based on Yoknapatawpha.

2.3.3 ❐ The Background

(i) Faulkner and History

William Faulkner got hold of the almost moribund tradition of the fiction of the American South and brought to it the energy and resources of experimental Modernism. His finest explorations of form and consciousness may be compared with Joyce, Proust or Virginia Woolf. Faulkner represented the distinctive, defeated nature of Southern history, its great chivalric and rural traditions broken apart by the American Civil War. In this sense, Faulkner always remained essentially a Southern writer. The disorders of Reconstruction and the growing predations of industrialization and mercantilism—these are the main sources of Faulkner's Writings. Faulkner was also under the impact of Romantic, Decadent and Modern literature.

Faulkner was greatly influenced by the writing of his own time, especially by Joyce's *Ulysses*. His work also was bred, in his own words, "by Oratory out of Solitude." He linked the Classic Southern romance with the modern sense of experimental form. It is an interrelation of a deep-seated sense of regional history with an awareness of the fracture of historical time. Past and present thus clash eternally in Faulkner's fiction. As a child, he absorbed a living history in the tales of aging Civil war veterans ; he witnessed the final destruction of the wilderness of the Mississippi Chickasaw Indians.

Faulkner's fictional world extends back to the 1790s, when a few thousand Native Americans and Black slaves peopled his Yoknapatawpha county region. By the 1830s, the New World encroaches. It is the great conflict : the conflict of man in nature and in society which echoes through Faulkner's writings. Settlers arrive from east of the Appalachians with their slaves and their notions of ownership. The conflict of the slave society of the South with the powerful and industrialised North culminated in the declaration of several southern states (called "The Confederacy") that they would break out of the USA and form an separate country. This happened during the Presidency of Abraham Lincoln (1860-65) and led to the Civil War in which the South was defeated. Civil war abolishes slavery and destroys the South, but the sins

live on : the legacy of slavery, the destruction of the Big Woods. The old, proud South found itself reduced to the status of an economic dependent of the North after the war. Those who adapted to modern, northern ways stood the best chance of survival. Landless whites displaced the crumbling planter aristocracy, ruthlessly trampling their antique codes and values in the process. Faulkner linked the destruction of the wilderness to the loss of values that bring on decline and ultimate fall.

Faulkner's fictional history closely parallels his family's history. The Civil War ended 32 years before Faulkner's birth, but it lived on still in turn-of-the-century Oxford, Mississippi. What Faulkner has written is basically about the great American divide, the Civil War. Unlike other Southern writers, Faulkner's issues in the post-civil war South were race and history, not gallantry in battle. His south was not noble. It was morally corrupt.

In Faulkner, there is no nostalgia for the past. The modern world overwhelms a society that deserves to collapse. Faulkner offers a critique of the past and the present, it is a parable. The devastation comes from the land itself, from its rich soil, from history, from an error or sin committed long ago and repeated thousands of times ; the doom of civilisation follows this.

With the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s, the past caught up with the South and with America. Faulkner participated in the struggle. The crisis justified the historical vision of Faulkner's writings.

(ii) Faulkner and Time

Faulkner's use of time in the lives of his characters and in the stylistic devices of his narrative, especially the Interior Monologue, is wonderful and intricate. Time in his writings is not a static dimension. It plays a significant role in the depiction of characters seen within a context larger than that of individual experience ; it includes historical reminiscences of the past. Faulknerian treatment of time is not merely chronological : it is more akin to the Greek notion of kairos (time as memorable event) than to chronos (time that can be measured).

In one interview, Faulkner stated : "I agree pretty much with the French philosopher Henri Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future and that is eternity." For Faulkner, apart from the stream of living consciousness, time is merely an abstraction. The French philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre also discusses Faulkner's concept of time.

Faulkner puts historical time to work in his novels. The Yoknapatawpha novels create an informal history of this fictional region of northern Mississippi. Faulkner employs history as a symbolic underpinning to events in the present. To Faulkner, "no man is himself, he is the sum of his past."

(iii) Faulkner and Race

Faulkner's principal theme is the relation between whites and blacks. Faulkner's attitudes on white and black relations in a South with its legacy of slavery were complex and ambiguous. Faulkner would weave miscegenation themes into his fiction : a number of memorable characters in his novels are of mixed parentage. Blacks lived in every section of Oxford in the early 1900s. All familiarity, hysteria about racial matters in Faulkner's novels convulsed the Mississippi of Faulkner's childhood. Lynching became a terrible symptom of white hysteria. More than 200 blacks were killed by the white mobs in Mississippi between 1889 and 1909, more than in any other state.

Faulkner absorbed the atmosphere as a boy. Strict subordination, white over black, governed racial relations in the Oxford of Faulkner's childhood. Faulkner's family, his parents, his brothers, his wife accepted segregation as though it were the natural order of things. In this matter, Faulkner stood apart. He came to be deeply troubled over the South's racial past and present.

Faulkner's attitudes toward individual African Americans were a blend of paternalism, generosity, gratitude and real affection, even love. He regarded the longtime Faulkner servant, Caroline Barr as a second mother. He maintained affectionate relations with the elderly black caretaker Nod Barnett. Faulkner was a patron of the black families who worked at the place under his benign supervision. Faulkner's attitudes toward such black people may reflect what the biographer Frederick Karl diagnoses as his unconscious racism. In the early 1940s, when racial questions had begun to claim Faulkner's attention, he consistently used the epithet 'nigger' in correspondence with his friend and editor Robert Hass. If we analyse Faulkner's writings, Faulkner's views on race in his fiction were hugely sophisticated.

His book *Intruder* is a reflection of Faulkner's confusion about racial questions. We may refer to Faulkner's observation and protest against the lynching in Mississippi of Emmett Till, a 14-year old child for whistling at a white woman and making an obscene remark to her. The killing revolted Faulkner. "Perhaps the purpose of this sorry and tragic error committed in

my native Mississippi by two white adults on an affiliated Negro Child is to prove to us whether or not we deserve to survive. Because if we in America have reached that point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what colour, we don't deserve to survive and probably won't." In the Autherine Lucy case who got admission by court order in the University of Alabama and caused race war in the South when she was not allowed to study there, Faulkner argued for a gradual approach to integration and solution through understanding and conversion. His later utterances had a lecturing, patronizing tone, sometimes offensive and always in sad contrast to the subtlety and empathy of much of his literary output.

2.3.4. ❐ Critical Analysis of *The Sound and the Fury*

(i) Source and Publications

A story called "Twilight" begun by Faulkner in Paris in 1925 became the basis for the novel, which Faulkner earnestly started writing in early 1928. *The Sound and the Fury* is totally different in its style and concept of form. There are different editions of the novel. Much of the last chapter of the novel, April Eight, 1982 was published under the title "Dilsey" in *The Portable Faulkner* (1946) ; the first appearance of Faulkner's appendix to the novel, "1699-1945 the Compsons." also appeared in this volume. The appendix appeared as a foreword, titled "Compson 1699-1945." The complete novel was also published with the appendix at the end in *The Faulkner Reader* (1954), and in 1984, a corrected text edited by Noel Polk was published by Random House, New York.

(ii) Analysis of the Plot

The Sound and the Fury is Faulkner's fourth novel, first published by Cape & Smith, New York on October 7, 1929. It is widely appreciated as Faulkner's best work of fiction. Treated from different points of view, the novel concentrates on the breakdown of the Compson family over a period of three decades, from around 1898 to 1928. Faulkner explained that he started it with the image of a young girl, Caddy Compson, climbing a tree in order to look through the parlour window at her dead grandmother laid out in the house.

Caddy is the central character in the novel and her relationship with her three brothers—Quentin, Jason and Benjy Compson is the novel's integrative theme. Faulkner tells the story from multiple points of view.

Shakespeare's Macbeth, in a famous soliloquy, speaks of life as a "tale/ told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/signifying nothing." The first chapter of Faulkner's novel is literally a tale told by an idiot, Benjy Compson. The more Faulkner writes, "the more elastic the title became, until it covered the whole family." In this chapter, the reader receives direct and immediate impressions of the world as expressed in an Interior Monologue of the longings and sensations of Benjy, the youngest son of Jason Compson Sr. and Caroline Compson. The novel opens on April 7, 1928, Benjy's 33rd birthday. He and his 14-year-old black caretaker, Luster are standing by the fence that separates the yard from the golf course that had once been the Compsons' pasture, where Benjy and his siblings spent much of their childhood. In 1909, the pasture had to be sold to supply the money for Caddy's wedding and Quentin's education at Harvard University. Benjy's reflections flutter back and forth between the present and the past and at times are permeated with unsettling flashback, as when he recalls certain incidents relating to Caddy's wedding. The scenes with Luster take place during the present, while the scenes with T. P. Gibson, Dilsey's youngest son, are set sometime between 1906 and 1912 and those with Versh Gibson between 1898 and 1900 when Benjy was a small child.

Benjy's fragmented narrative begins with Luster searching along the fence for a lost quarter. Benjy thinks back on the death of his grandmother Damuddy. Benjy recalls his name-change from "Maury" to "Benjamin", the loss of Caddy's virginity, the sale of the pasture : Caddy's wedding ; his brother Quentin's suicide and the day his body was brought home from Cambridge, his castration after he attacked a neighbour's daughter : and his father's death and funeral.

The second chapter, "June Second, 1910" takes the narrative back eighteen years and is narrated by Quentin, a romantic idealist and Hamlet-like figure, pensive brooding and guilt-ridden for his incestuous feelings for his sister. Quentin has deeply neurotic thoughts and longings. His actions are symbolic of the self destruction to come. In the end, Quentin commits suicide, thinking about his sister Caddy. Among the three narrators, Quentin alone is aware of the doom of the Compsons.

The third Chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* is narrated by Jason

Compson, Jr, the resentful and hard-hearted son, and it takes place on Good Friday, April 6, 1928. Jason is his mother's favourite and just like his mother, he is self-absorbed. Caddy's disgrace and divorce from Herbert meant the end of Jason's hopes. Caddy's daughter Quentin is despised and ostracized and Benjy is an unnecessary burden whom Jason would like to send to an asylum. Jason represents the final degenaration of the Compsons.

The final chapter is told in the third person and takes place on April 8, 1928. It is Easter morning, a day that begins badly for Dilsey, the Compsons' black servant. The house is cold and there is no firewood. Dilsey begins to make breakfast. Jason interrupts the meal to complain about the broken window in his bedroom through which. Quentin, his sister's daughter ran away.

Meanwhile Dilsey attends Easter services. She takes her daughter Frony, Frony's son Luster and Benjy to the church. The preacher starts off slowly, gradually builds to a crescendo that moves Dilsey to tears. Dilsey says "I read de beginin, en now I sees ending." Dilsey acts as a chorus to the action. Her presence also puts in perspective the whole story of the Compsons.

After lunch, Luster takes Benjy to the cellar and tries to perform a trick. Benjy starts moaning when he hears a golfer call for his Caddie. The sound of the word reminds him of his absent sister. Jason strikes Benjy and tells him to shut up. He commands and warns Luster, "If you ever cross that gate with him again, I'll kill you !" The novel ends with the now quiescent Benjy returning to the Compson home, with serene and empty eyes looking upon each passing object "in its ordered place."

(iii) Theme and Technique

Critics have compared Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury with*, Joyce's *Ulysses* because of its technique of interior monologue and its complex time scheme. The four narratives of the novel are set on four different days, three in 1928, one in 1910 and of course its stream of consciousness technique makes it a Modernist novel. As we analyse the plot, the first fractured story is set in the present of 1928 and belongs to the mind and comprehension of Benjy, an idiot with a mental age of five. We move to the monologue of Quentin Compson on the day of his suicide back in 1910. We next hear the voice of the surviving, opportunistic Jason Compson and finally the enduring voice of the black servant Dilsey.

Faulkner's remarkable Modernist strategies are reinforced by the primary consciousness of a larger history, the history of Yoknapatawpha itself. Faulkner's concept of time has to do with the endless interlocking of personal and public histories and the interrelation of the lost past with the chaotic present. A central theme of *The Sound and the Fury* is Quentin's attempt to arrest both subjective and historical time by defending his sister Caddy's virginity from psychic corruption and time's flow. Benjy himself is locked in a single continuous moment of time. Jason sees matters empirically, Dilsey from a patient sense of human continuity. It is interesting that Dilsey becomes the figure of sustenance at the end of the novel. She is a descendant of the slaves ; through her the black people come into their own while the descendants of the slaveowners disintegrate, dumb, corrupt, guilt-ridden. Themes and images thus multiply and give the novel its symbolic qualities.

2.3.5 ❐ Questions

1. Give a brief sketch of Faulkner's life and works.
2. Analyse the significance of Faulkner's mythical county, Yoknapatawpha.
3. Analyse the title of the novel *The Sound and the Fury* and focus on its interrelation with the underlying theme of the novel.
4. Faulkner is very often compared to James Joyce. Point out the similarities in their technique.
5. Comment on Faulkner's use of 'interior monologue' and 'stream-of-consciousness technique' in *The Sound and the Fury*.
6. Analyse Faulkner's historical consciousness with reference to *The Sound and the Fury*.
7. Faulkner's awareness and perspective towards race in America is both ambiguous and complex. —Elucidate with reference to *The Sound and the Fury*.
9. Time is the major theme, and also the philosophy in Faulkner's writing. —Elucidate with reference to *The Sound and the Fury*.

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Unit 2.4 ❐ *Sula* : Toni Morrison

Structure

2.4.0 ❐ Text : *Sula*

It was too cool for ice cream. A hill wind was blowing dust and empty Camels wrappers about their ankles. It pushed their dresses into the creases of their behinds, then lifted the hems to peek at their cotton underwear. They were on their way to Edna Finch's Mellow House, an ice-cream parlor catering to nice folks—where even children would feel comfortable, you know, even though it was right next to Reba's Grill and just one block down from the Time and a Half Pool Hall. It sat in the curve of Carpenter's Road, which, in four blocks, made up all the sporting life available in the Bottom. Old men and young ones draped themselves in front of the Elmira Theater, Irene's Palace of Cosmetology, the pool hall, the grill and the other sagging business enterprises that lined the street. On sills, on stoops, on crates and broken chairs they sat tasting their teeth and waiting for something to distract them. Every passerby, every motorcar, every alteration in stance caught their

attention and was commented on. Particularly they watched women. When a woman approached, the older men tipped their hats; the younger ones opened and closed their thighs. But all of them, whatever their age, watched her retreating view with interest.

Nel and Sula walked through this valley of eyes chilled by the wind and heated by the embarrassment of appraising stares. The old men looked at their stalklike legs, dwelled on the cords in the backs of their knees and remembered old dance steps they had not done in twenty years. In their lust, which age had turned to kindness, they moved their lips as though to stir up the taste of young sweat on tight skin.

Pig meat. The words were in all their minds. And one of them, one of the young ones, said it aloud. Softly but definitively and there was no mistaking the compliment. His "name was Ajax, a twenty-one-year-old pool haunt of sinister beauty. Graceful and economical in every movement, he held a place of envy with men of all ages for his magnificently foul mouth. In fact he seldom cursed, and the epithets he chose were dull, even harmless. His reputation was derived from the way he handled the words. When he said "hell" he hit the *h* with his lungs and the impact was greater than the achievement of the most imaginative foul mouth in the town. He could say "shit" with a nastiness impossible to imitate. So, when he said "pig meat" as Nel and Sula passed, they guarded their eyes lest someone see their delight.

It was not really Edna Finch's ice cream that made them brave the stretch of those panther eyes. Years later their own eyes would glaze as they cupped their chins in remembrance of the inchworm smiles, the squatting haunches, the track-rail legs straddling broken chairs. The cream-colored trousers marking with a mere seam the place where the mystery curled. Those smooth vanilla crotches invited them; those lemon-yellow gabardines beckoned to them.

They moved toward the ice-cream parlor like tightrope walkers, as thrilled by the possibility of a slip as by the maintenance of tension and balance. The least sideways glance, the merest toe stub, could pitch them into those creamy haunches spread wide with welcome. Somewhere beneath all of that daintiness, chambered in all that neatness, lay the thing that clotted their dreams.

Which was only fitting, for it was in dreams that the two girls had first met. Long before Edna Finch's Mellow House opened, even before they marched through the chocolate halls of Garfield Primary School out onto the playground and stood facing each other through the ropes of the one vacant swing ("Go on." "No. You go."), they had already made each other's

acquaintance in the delirium of their noon dreams. They were solitary little girls whose loneliness was so profound it intoxicated them and sent them stumbling into Technicolored visions that always included a presence, a someone, who, quite like the dreamer, shared the delight of the dream. When Nel, an only child, sat on the steps of her back porch surrounded by the high silence of her mother's incredibly orderly house, feeling the neatness pointing at her back, she studied the poplars and fell easily into a picture of herself lying on a flowered bed, tangled in her own hair, waiting for some fiery prince. He approached but never quite arrived. But always, watching the dream along with her, were some smiling sympathetic eyes. Someone as interested as she herself in the flow of her imagined hair, the thickness of the mattress of flowers, the voile sleeves that closed below her elbows in gold-threaded cuffs.

Similarly, Sula, also an only child, but wedged into a household of throbbing disorder constantly awry with things, people, voices and the slamming of doors, spent hours in the attic behind a roll of linoleum galloping through her own mind on a gray-and-white horse tasting sugar and smelling roses in full view of a someone who shared both the taste and the speed.

So when they met, first in those chocolate halls and next through the ropes of the swing, they felt the ease and comfort of old friends. Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be. Their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on. Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers (Sula's because he was dead; Nel's because he wasn't), they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for.

Nel Wright and Sula Peace were both twelve in 1922, wishbone thin and easy-assed. Nel was the color of wet sandpaper—just dark enough to escape the blows of the pitch-black truebloods and the contempt of old women who worried about such things as bad blood mixtures and knew that the origins of a mule and a mulatto were one and the same. Had she been any lighter-skinned she would have needed either her mother's protection on the way to school or a streak of mean to defend herself. Sula was a heavy brown with large quiet eyes, one of which featured a birthmark that spread from the middle of the lid toward the eyebrow, shaped something like a stemmed rose. It gave her otherwise plain face a broken excitement and blue-blade threat like the keloid[1] scar of the razored man who sometimes played checkers

1. An excessive growth of scar tissue.

with her grandmother. The birthmark was to grow darker as the years passed, but now it was the same shade as her gold-flecked eyes, which, to the end, were as steady and clean as rain.

Their friendship was as intense as it was sudden. They found relief in each other's personality. Although both were unshaped, formless things, Nel seemed stronger and more consistent than Sula, who could hardly be counted on to sustain any emotion for more than three minutes. Yet there was one time when that was not true, when she held on to a mood for weeks, but even that was in defense of Nel.

Four white boys in their early teens, sons of some newly arrived Irish people, occasionally entertained themselves in the afternoon by harassing black schoolchildren. With shoes that pinched and woolen knickers that made red rings on their calves, they had come to this valley with their parents believing as they did that it was a promised land—green and shimmering with welcome. What they found was a strange accent, a pervasive fear of their religion and firm resistance to their attempts to find work. With one exception the older residents of Medallion scorned them. The one exception was the black community. Although some of the Negroes had been in Medallion before the Civil War (the town didn't even have a name then), if they had any hatred for these newcomers it didn't matter because it didn't show. As a matter of fact, baiting them was the one activity that the white Protestant residents concurred in. In part their place in this world was secured only when they echoed the old residents' attitude toward blacks.

These particular boys caught Nel once, and pushed her from hand to hand until they grew tired of the frightened helpless face. Because of that incident, Nel's route home from school became elaborate. She, and then Sula, managed to duck them for weeks until a chilly day in November when Sula said, "Let's us go on home the shortest way."

Nel blinked, but acquiesced. They walked up the street until they got to the bend of Carpenter's Road where the boys lounged on a disused well. Spotting their prey, the boys sauntered forward as though there were nothing in the world on their minds but the gray sky. Hardly able to control their grins, they stood like a gate blocking the path. When the girls were three feet in front of the boys, Sula reached into her coat pocket and pulled out Eva's paring knife. The boys stopped short, exchanged looks and dropped all pretense of innocence. This was going to be better than they thought. They were going to try and fight back, and with a knife. Maybe they could get an arm around one of their waists, or tear . . .

Sula squatted down in the dirt road and put everything down on the ground : her lunchpail, her reader, her mittens, her slate. Holding the knife in her right hand, she pulled the slate toward her and pressed her left forefinger down hard on its edge. Her aim was determined but inaccurate. She slashed off only the tip of her finger. The four boys stared open-mouthed at the wound and the scrap of flesh, like a button mushroom, curling in the cherry blood that ran into the corners of the slate.

Sula raised her eyes to them. Her voice was quiet. "If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you?"

The shifting dirt was the only way Nel knew that they were moving away; she was looking at Sula's face, which seemed miles and miles away.

But toughness was not their quality—adventuresomeness was—and a mean determination to explore everything that interested them, from one-eyed chickens high-stepping in their penned yards to Mr. Buckland Reed's gold teeth, from the sound of sheets flapping in the wind to the labels on Tar Baby's wine bottles. And they had no priorities. They could be distracted from watching a fight with mean razors by the glorious smell of hot tar being poured by roadmen two hundred yards away.

In the safe harbor of each other's company they could afford to abandon the ways of other people and concentrate on their own perceptions of things. When Mrs. Wright reminded Nel to pull her nose, she would do it enthusiastically but without the least hope in the world.

"While you sittin' there, honey, go 'head and pull your nose."

"It hurts, Mamma."

"Don't you want a nice nose when you grow up?"

After she met Sula, Nel slid the clothespin under the blanket as soon as she got in the bed. And although there was still the hateful hot comb to suffer through each Saturday evening, its consequences—smooth hair—-no longer interested her.

Joined in mutual admiration they watched each day as though it were a movie arranged for their amusement. The new theme they were now discovering was men. So they met regularly, without even planning it, to walk down the road to Edna Finch's Mellow House, even though it was too cool for ice cream.

Then summer came. A summer limp with the weight of blossomed things. Heavy sunflowers weeping over fences; iris curling and browning at the edges far away from their purple hearts; ears of corn letting their auburn

hair wind down to their stalks. And the boys. The beautiful, beautiful boys who dotted the landscape like jewels, split the air with their shouts in the field, and thickened the river with their shining wet backs. Even their footsteps left a smell of smoke behind.

It was in that summer, the summer of their twelfth year, the summer of the beautiful black boys, that they became skittish, frightened and bold—all at the same time.

In that mercury mood in July, Sula and Nel wandered about the Bottom barefoot looking for mischief. They decided to go down by the river where the boys sometimes swam. Nel waited on the porch of 7 Carpenter's Road while Sula ran into the house to go to the toilet. On the way up the stairs, she passed the kitchen where Hannah sat with two friends, Patsy and Valentine. The two women were fanning themselves and watching Hannah put down some dough, all talking casually about one thing and another, and had gotten around, when Sula passed by, to the problems of child rearing.

"They a pain."

"Yeh. Wish I'd listened to mamma. She told me not to have 'em too soon."

"Any time atall is too soon for me."

"Oh, I don't know. My Rudy minds his daddy. He just wild with me. Be glad when he growed and gone."

Hannah smiled and said, "Shut your mouth. You love the ground he pee on."

"Sure I do. But he still a pain. Can't help loving your own child. No matter what they do."

"Well, Hester grown now and I can't say love is exactly what I feel."

"Sure you do. You love her, like I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference."

"Guess so. Likin' them is another thing."

"Sure. They different people, you know . . ."

She only heard Hannah's words, and the pronouncement sent her flying up the stairs. In bewilderment, she stood at the window fingering the curtain edge, aware of a sting in her eye. Nel's call floated up and into the window, pulling her away from dark thoughts back into the bright, hot daylight.

They ran most of the way.

Heading toward the wide part of the river where trees grouped themselves in families darkening the earth below. They passed some boys

swimming and clowning in the water, shrouding their words in laughter.

They ran in the sunlight, creating their own breeze, which pressed their dresses into their damp skin. Reaching a kind of square of four leaf-locked trees which promised cooling, they flung themselves into the four-cornered shade to taste their lip sweat and contemplate the wildness that had come upon them so suddenly. They lay in the grass, their foreheads almost touching, their bodies stretched away from each other at a 180-degree angle. Sula's head rested on her arm, an undone braid coiled around her wrist. Nel leaned on her elbows and worried long blades of grass with her fingers. Underneath their dresses flesh tightened and shivered in the high coolness, their small breasts just now beginning to create some pleasant discomfort when they were lying on their stomachs.

Sula lifted her head and joined Nel in the grass play. In concert, without ever meeting each other's eyes, they stroked the blades up and down, up and down. Nel found a thick twig and, with her thumbnail, pulled away its bark until it was stripped to a smooth, creamy innocence. Sula looked about and found one too. When both twigs were undressed Nel moved easily to the next stage and began tearing up rooted grass to make a bare spot of earth. When a generous clearing was made, Sula traced intricate patterns in it with her twig. At first Nel was content to do the same. But soon she grew impatient and poked her twig rhythmically and intensely into the earth, making a small neat hole that grew deeper and wider with the least manipulation of her twig. Sula copied her, and soon each had a hole the size of a cup. Nel began a more strenuous digging and, rising to her knee, was careful to scoop out the dirt as she made her hole deeper. Together they worked until the two holes were one and the same. When the depression was the size of a small dishpan, Nel's twig broke. With a gesture of disgust she threw the pieces into the hole they had made. Sula threw hers in too. Nel saw a bottle cap and tossed it'in as well. Each then looked around for more debris to throw into the hole : paper, bits of glass, butts of cigarettes, until all of the small defiling things they could find were collected there. Carefully they replaced the soil and covered the entire grave with uprooted grass.

Neither one had spoken a word.

They stood up, stretched, then gazed out over the swift dull water as an unspeakable restlessness and agitation held them. At the same instant each girl heard footsteps in the grass. A little boy in too big knickers was coming up from the lower bank of the river. He stopped when he saw them and picked his nose.

"Your mamma tole you to stop eatin' snot, Chicken," Nel hollered at him through cupped hands.

"Shut up," he said, still picking.

"Come up here and say that."

"Leave him 'lone, Nel. Come here, Chicken. Lemme show you something."

"Naw."

"You scared we gone take your bugger away?"

"Leave him 'lone, I said. Come on, Chicken. Look. I'll help you climb a tree."

Chicken looked at the tree Sula was pointing to—a big double beech with low branches and lots of bends for sitting.

He moved slowly toward her.

"Come on, Chicken, I'll help you up."

Still picking his nose, his eyes wide, he came to where they were standing. Sula took him by the hand and coaxed him along. When they reached the base of the beech, she lifted him to the first branch, saying, "Go on. Go on. I got you." She followed the boy, steadying him, when he needed it, with her hand and her reassuring voice. When they were as high as they could go, Sula pointed to the far side of the river.

"See? Bet you never saw that far before, did you?"

"Uh uh."

"Now look down there." They both leaned a little and peered through the leaves at Nel standing below, squinting up at them. From their height she looked small and foreshortened.

Chicken Little laughed.

"Y'all better come on down before you break your neck," Nel hollered.

"I ain't never coming down," the boy hollered back.

"Yeah. We better. Come on, Chicken."

"Naw. Lemme go."

"Yeah, Chicken. Come on, now."

Sula pulled his leg gently.

"Lemme go."

"OK, I'm leavin' you." She started on.

"Wait!" he screamed.

Sula stopped and together they slowly worked their way down.

Chicken was still elated. "I was way up there, wasn't I? Wasn't I? I'm a tell my brovver."

Sula and Nel began to mimic him: "I'm a tell my brovver; I'm a tell my brovver."

Sula picked him up by his hands and swung him outward then around and around. His knickers ballooned and his shrieks of frightened joy startled the birds and the fat grasshoppers. When he slipped from her hands and sailed away out over the water they could still hear his bubbly laughter.

The water darkened and closed quickly over the place where Chicken Little sank. The pressure of his hard and tight little fingers was still in Sula's palms as she stood looking at the closed place in the water. They expected him to come back up, laughing. Both girls stared at the water.

Nel spoke first. "Somebody saw." A figure appeared briefly on the opposite shore.

The only house over there was Shadrack's. Sula glanced at Nel. Terror widened her nostrils. Had he seen?

The water was so peaceful now. There was nothing but the baking sun and something newly missing. Sula cupped her face for an instant, then turned and ran up to the little plank bridge that crossed the river to Shadrack's house. There was no path. It was as though neither Shadrack nor anyone else ever came this way.

Her running was swift and determined, but when she was close to the three little steps that led to his porch, fear crawled into her stomach and only the something newly missing back there in the river made it possible for her to walk up the three steps and knock at the door.

No one answered. She started back, but thought again of the peace of the river. Shadrack would be inside, just behind the door ready to pounce on her. Still she could not go back. Ever so gently she pushed the door with the tips of her fingers and heard only the hinges weep. More. And then she was inside. Alone. The neatness, the order startled her, but more surprising was the restfulness. Everything was so tiny, so common, so unthreatening. Perhaps this was not the house of the Shad. The terrible Shad who walked about with his penis out, who peed in front of ladies and girl-children, the only black who could curse white people and get away with it, who drank in the road from the mouth of the bottle, who shouted and shook in the streets. This cottage? This sweet old cottage? With its made-up bed? With its rag rug and wooden table? Sula stood in the middle of the little room and in her wonder forgot what she had come for until a sound at the door made her jump. He was there in the doorway looking at her. She had not heard his coming and now he was looking at her.

More in embarrassment than terror she averted her glance. When she

called up enough courage to look back at him, she saw his hand resting upon the door frame. His fingers, barely touching the wood, were arranged in a graceful arc. Relieved and encouraged (no one with hands like that, no one with fingers that curved around wood so tenderly could kill her), she walked past him out of the door, feeling his gaze turning, turning with her.

At the edge of the porch, gathering the wisps of courage that were fast leaving her, she turned once more to look at him, to ask him . . . had he . . . ?

He was smiling, a great smile, heavy with lust and time to come. He nodded his head as though answering a question, and said, in a pleasant conversational tone, a tone of cooled butter, "Always."

Sula fled down the steps, and shot through the greenness and the baking sun back to Nel and the dark closed place in the water. There she collapsed in tears.

Nel quieted her. "Sh, sh. Don't, don't. You didn't mean it. It ain't your fault. Sh. Sh. Come on, le's go, Sula. Come on, now. Was he there? Did he see? Where's the belt to your dress?"

Sula shook her head while she searched her waist for the belt.

Finally she stood up and allowed Nel to lead her away. "He said, 'Always. Always.'"

"What?"'

Sula covered her mouth as they walked down the hill. Always. He had answered a question she had not asked, and its promise licked at her feet.

A bargeman, poling away from the shore, found Chicken late that afternoon stuck in some rocks and weeds, his knickers ballooning about his legs. He would have left him there but noticed that it was a child, not an old black man, as it first appeared, and he prodded the body loose, netted it and hauled it aboard. He shook his head in disgust at the kind of parents who would drown their own children. When, he wondered, will those people ever be anything but animals, fit for nothing but substitutes for mules, only mules didn't kill each other the way niggers did. He dumped Chicken Little into a burlap sack and tossed him next to some egg crates and boxes of wool cloth. Later, sitting down to smoke on an empty lard tin, still bemused by God's curse and the terrible burden his own kind had of elevating Ham's sons,[2] he suddenly became alarmed by the thought that the corpse in this

2. Ham, son of Noah and father of Canaan, was traditionally the ancestor of the black race (cf. Genesis ix: 25-26).

heat would have a terrible odor, which might get into the fabric of his woolen cloth. He dragged the sack away and hooked it over the side, so that the Chicken's body was half in and half out of the water.

Wiping the sweat from his neck, he reported his find to the sheriff at Porter's Landing, who said they didn't have no niggers in their county, but that some lived in those hills 'cross the river, up above Medallion. The bargeman said he couldn't go all the way back there, it was every bit of two miles. The sheriff said whyn't he throw it on back into the water. The bargeman said he never shoulda taken it out in the first place. Finally they got the man who ran the ferry twice a day to agree to take it over in the morning.

That was why Chicken Little was missing for three days and didn't get to the embalmer's until the fourth day, by which time he was unrecognizable to almost everybody who once knew him, and even his mother wasn't deep down sure, except that it just had to be him since nobody could find him. When she saw his clothes lying on the table in the basement of the mortuary, her mouth snapped shut, and when she saw his body her mouth flew wide open again and it was seven hours before she was able to close it and make the first sound.

So the coffin was closed.

The Junior Choir, dressed in white, sang "Nearer My God to Thee" and "Precious Memories," their eyes fastened on the songbooks they did not need, for this was the first time their voices had presided at a real-life event.

Nel and Sula did not touch hands or look at each other during the funeral. There was a space, a separateness, between them. Nel's legs had turned to granite and she expected the sheriff or Reverend Deal's pointing finger at any moment. Although she knew she had "done nothing," she felt convicted and hanged right there in the pew—two rows down from her parents in the children's section.

Sula simply cried. Soundlessly and with no heaving and gasping for breath, she let the tears roll into her mouth and slide down her chin to dot the front of her dress.

As Reverend Deal moved into his sermon, the hands of the women unfolded like pairs of raven's wings and flew high above their hats in the air. They did not hear all of what he said; they heard the one word, or phrase, or inflection that was for them the connection between the event and themselves. For some it was the term "Sweet Jesus." And they saw the Lamb's eye and the truly innocent victim: themselves. They acknowledged the innocent child hiding in the corner of their hearts, holding a sugar-and-butter

sandwich. That one. The one who lodged deep in their fat, thin, old, young skin, and was the one the world had hurt. Or they thought of their son newly killed and remembered his legs in short pants and wondered where the bullet went in. Or they remembered how dirty the room looked when their father left home and wondered if that is the way the slim, young Jew felt, he who for them was both son and lover and in whose downy face they could see the sugar-and-butter sandwiches and feel the oldest and most devastating pain there is: not the pain of childhood, but the remembrance of it.

Then they left their pews. For with some emotions one has to stand. They spoke, for they were full and needed to say. They swayed, for the rivulets of grief or of ecstasy must be rocked. And when they thought of all that life and death locked into that little closed coffin they danced and screamed, not to protest God's will but to acknowledge it and confirm once more their conviction that the only way to avoid the Hand of God is to get in it.

In the colored part of the cemetery, they sank Chicken Little in between his grandfather and an aunt. Butterflies flew in and out of the bunches of field flowers now loosened from the top of the bier and lying in a small heap at the edge of the grave. The head had gone, but there was still no breeze to lift the hair of the willows.

Nel and Sula stood some distance away from the grave, the space that had sat between them in the pews had dissolved. They held hands and knew that only the coffin would lie in the earth; the bubbly laughter and the press of fingers in the palm would stay aboveground forever. At first, as they stood there, their hands were clenched together. They relaxed slowly until during the walk back home their fingers were laced in as gentle a clasp as that of any two young girlfriends trotting up the road on a summer day wondering what happened to butterflies in the winter.

1973

2.4.1. About the Author

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Anthony Wafford in Lorain, Ohio. After graduating from high school she attended Howard University, earning her B.A. in 1953. Two years later, with an M.A. in English from Cornell University, she began a teaching career and left for the Texas Southern University. She stayed there from 1955 through 1957 and then went back to Howard from

1957 to 1964. During these years in Howard, she met and married Harold Morrison and began to write fiction seriously. Accepting an editorial position with Random House, she totally abandoned teaching as a full time career and was soon a senior editor in New York. In 1984 she was appointed to an endowment chair at the State University of New York at Albany and in 1989 to a similar position in Princeton.

Toni Morrison is a pathbreaker : She states :

> The language has to be quite, it has to engage your participation. The reader supplies the emotions. My language has to have holes and spaces to the reader can come into it.

2.4.2 Morrison's Works and Contemporary Milieu

Toni Morrison's novels – *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby* reveal the trauma of the Black experience in America. The discrepancy between 'white' and 'black' perverted social existence at all its levels. The superiority of the 'white' is reinforced by the Christian ideas of fair and foul. We recall the little black boy in Blake's poem who had said ''But I am dark as if bereft of light.'' The pain and the disease of never being accepted spread from the level of unequal social intercourse, into the very core of the beings of the black women Morrison portrays so intensely. June Jordan in her book *Some Changes*, presents an unique vision of black womanhood. She says :

> To be black and to be a woman is to be a double outsider, to be twice oppressed, to be more than invisible. That's a triple vision.

Black women in America are triply burdened by racial, sexual and class prejudices, and are forced to occupy a marginalized place in a patriarchal society.

In each of Toni Morrison's novels unfolds a horrific tale, sagas of pain and disillusionment of a class of people ever prone to racial discrimination. The predicament of the Blacks in America is pitiful.

Among her earliest novels *Song of Solomon* (1977) has received the most praise. A complex narrative, rich in myth and symbol, it follows with Faulknerian intensity a northern man's search for the southern sources of his identity, his most significant clue a folk song about a black man who could fly.

The Bluest Eye (1970) and *Sula* (1973) are much shorter works, are also mythically and symbolically suggestive, with women as the central characters. Together, these three books explore a world mostly rural and black, centred

in a northern town very like Morrison's hometown—Lorain. Weird situations of life, loneliness and pain are everywhere. Sudden, inexplicable violence explodes in all her novels, but endurance and great love are also present, expressed in remarkable ways.

In *Tar Baby* (1981), Morrison examines a more sophisticated society, bringing blacks and whites together in Paris, on a Caribbean Island and in New York.

In the widely acclaimed *Beloved* (1987), where the locale is set in rural Ohio not long after the Civil War, she tells of a mother an escaped slave. This unfortunate woman is haunted by the teenage ghost of the baby daughter she killed to keep it from the slave-catcher's hands. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, *Beloved* is the first novel in an intricately planned triology. It is considered to be a catalyst for Morrison's Nobel Prize for Literature; and differs in both theme and attitude from familiar tales of revolt-leading male slaves (versions of which began in 1853 with Frederick Douglass' *The Heroic Slave.* Sethe, the female ex-slave who had killed her child to save it from slavery, remains one of the most vibrant and memorable of characters ever portrayed in American Literature.

Jazz (1992) revolves around the love, hate and compulsion of Joe, a cosmetic salesman, his sterile wife, Violet, and young Dorcas, the mistress he adores, idolizes and kills.

In *Paradise* (1998) Morrison's first novel since winning the Nobel Prize and one of her most ambitions, she explores race and gender in a story, set in 1976 in an all-black town in Oklahoma, that begins with the murder of four women, outsiders by nine men. Traditional paradise, Morrison holds, are 'male enclaves'. The book is truly striking, for it ''coalesced around the idea of where paradise is, and who belongs in it.''

Morrison's critical works are no less striking than her creative ones. Her essays, first presented at Harvard University, are gathered in the book *Playing in the Dark : Whiteness and Literary Imagination* (1992). She edited and wrote the introduction for *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power : Essays on Anita-Hill, Clarence Thomas and the Construction of Social Realist* (1992). Along with Claudia Brodsky Lacour, she edited *Birth of a Nationhood : Gaze, Script and Spectacle in the O.J. Simpson Case* (1997). It includes an introduction by Morrison.

Black American Literature is prominent and pervasive today, for it has a full life of its own outside the academy. Toni Morrison is clearly not dependent on an academic audience.

2.4.3 As a Black Woman Writer

In the works of Black women writers of America are found intense revelations of the condition of black women in their roles as mother wife and daughter. Pre-marital and extra-marital relationships are depicted. It is women in their social roles that has been explored and exposed by the women writers with energy, anger and insight. Chaudia Tate, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Maya Angelou Audre Lorde, Ntozake Shange, Toni Cade Bambara, Margaret Walker, Paule Marshall and Toni Morrison all struggle for expression in an idiom peculiarly their own. They had to surmount the all-pervasive mainstream white social and literary culture as well as the literary influences of male Black writers—Richard Wright, James Balduisn, Alex Holy and LeRoi Jones.

Toni Morrison's fictional art is marked by four distinct phases—anger, self-discovery, haloing of the African culture and a crystallization of the ethnic experience with Julius Lester, a black writer, Morrison agrees that as an Afro-American, she is an amalgam. It is her responsibility to reflect the African side of the hyphens for the other (American) side has been too much reflected. Black writers, associated with the Black Arts Movement asserted that their ethnic origin was a matter of pride, not embarrassment. The Black Arts Movement proposed a radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic—proposing a separate symbolism, critique mythology and iconology. This distinctness, in fact, forms the basic format of Morrison's novels. She transcends propaganda, racial pride and prejudice and evolves into a narrative out of great excellence and universal dimensions.

Women's literature is attempting to establish a separate ethos and an unique feminine myth as a counterpoint to the existing myth of the male standards. Together, women writers are moving to attain greater aesthetic perfection and a broader perspective on the world. The tragedy of American racism instilled a terrible insecurity and stilted emotions in the Afro-Americans, something that Morrison is intensely concerned about.

Her aesthetic experience of a black culture springs from her association with black life—its music and rhythm, its mystical and mythical contours. Her novels deal with basic issues of black life within a cultural framework. She says in *Black Women Writers at Work* (edited by Claudia Tate) :

> When I view the world perceive it and write about it, its the world of black people. I just know that when I'm trying to develop the various themes I write about, the people who best manifest those themes for me are the black people who I invent.

She deliberately avoids or renounces an imposed narrative form. Her writings stand outside the conventional framework and rise out of a situation that demands a perception of black culture.

As William R. Ferris, Chairman U. S. National Endowment for the Humanities commented–

> Multicultural literature is a major source of insight into the rich cultural dynamics of our society, a primary medium for Americans to comprehend our nation's rich cultural heritage, and for international audiences to fathom life and thought in the United States. In the stories they tell from different points of view, U.S. authors of a multitude of backgrounds build bridges of understanding over which all of us can cross into each other's worlds .... Ultimately the power of multicultural literature affects us all, because literature defines the true essence, and soul, of our country.

In the writings of Alice Walker (*The Color Purple*) and Toni Morrison (*The Bluest Eye)* are bondings of certain common features that are horrific and seems to make an empty word of the positive 'multicultural.' Both Celic in *The Color Purple* and Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* were molested by their fathers —sullen men rendered bestial by their addiction to hard drinking. Illiteracy, racialism and poverty seem to crowd in together to create a hellish world where the Black woman, young or old they are perpetually tormented by the twin forces of racism and sexism. The uncertainity of the Black people constantly juxtapose with the aggressiveness, power and influence of the Whites. The social and psychological demeanour laid down by the superior white culture is forcibly thrust on the blacks. As Toni Morrison says :

> They were given a cloak of ugliness to wear and they accepted it without question. The master had said, ''you are ugly people''. ''Yes'' they had said, ''You are right'' . And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it. (*The Bluest Eye*)

Like *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison's creation –*A Genuine Black Book,* most of her novels betray her concern about the cultural devastation and its repercussion on the future of the country. They, like *The Bluest Eye*, often make an effort through the Afro-Americans to exercise what the divided psyche after holds as the evil of blackness.

Throughout her various novels *Beloved, The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* gaps and spaces are intentionally left for the reader's participation.

2.4.4 Analysis *: Sula*

(i) Introduction

Sula is an account of Eva Peace's matrilinear household. Eva, Hannah Sula—mother, daughter and grand daughter are tied to each other by guilt and a corrupted sense of love, hate and tradition. Morrison exposes this relationship as an idealized and ideological construct. The gulf between mother and daughter is necessitated by patriarchy, so there is 'silence' between them. There is always an 'injury' caused by the mother, that traumatizes the daughter. There is also an echo of the mother's voice, the disciplinarian, as economic helpless, lack of work and alcohol frustrated a man's capacity of parenthood.

(ii) Structure

Like *Song of Solomon*, *Sula* concerns itself with issues that are basically African-American within a mythical framework. The structure into which the novel is cast is more cyclical than linear, more repetative than singular and evidently more oral than written. It is not a 'bildungsroman' that traces the life of the protagonist from birth to death. Here, a dominant culture seeks here to circumscribe black experience through the imposition of very negative values. It is strange that in a 20th Century world where the mystic and the imaginative do not belong to living reality, a Black woman writer like Morrison, substitutes a world that thrives on fantasy in reality.

In an interview by Nellie Mckay, Morrison had explained : ''I think about what black writers do as having a quality of hunger and disturbance that never ends. I want my books to be like that because I want that feeling of something held in reserve and the sense that there is more—that you can't have it all right now.''

The search for an identity, a self-assurance establishes a thematic bonding between major black women writers. Paula Marshall's Silla (of *Browngirl, Brownstone*), Alice Walker's Celic (of *Colour Purple*) or Meridian (of Meridian) pass on the impulse to define oneself. Their self assurance emanates from within. Morrison, too, never judges her characters. Their horrific parts, bitter experiences and sordid deeds are always put in context to the conditioning that their harsh lives had afforded them.

(iii) Character

The focus of Morrison's study in most of her novels is the repeatedly marginalized girl child. The recurrence of this girl-child points to an organization in Morrison own psyche and examines an archetypally feminine growing up process. In its fulfilled form the process often appears symbolical for the assertion of the child against the effacement of personality demanded by an adult. Stretched further, it becomes a metaphor for the process of maturation of feminine art in a millieu of alien, dominant ideologies.

It is the girl-child, in her moment of psychic and sexual awakening, that Morrison highlights. Sula, like her images in the other intense novels, are even traumatized and abused. She is pubescent, half woman, half child—and she is a little of all these others—Pecola, Claudia, Dorcas Felice, Denver, Nel and Beloved. Rebellious and sensitive, she finds herself burdened with a family, children and responsibilities. As a Black, a female and a child, Sula realises that utter powerlessness is her inheritance. Inbuilt into her is a fear of autonomous action—that for her, things can never go right. Subordination is demanded by her mother, as in other novels of Morrison, and Sula refuses. In her world of matrilinearity, the father is a nebulous presence. This implies a rejection of an apotheosis of marriage, motherhood and domestic servitude. She is rebellious, and demands, like Beloved, nothing less than a resurrection or a willed rebirth. Hers is not a passive resistance to victimization or betrayal, and she, in her own capacity, poses a challenge to mainstream racial and patriarchal values. As Sula transgresses many boundaries, she displays a stubborn acceptance of a lack of relatedness with family or immediate society. Her experience engender endurance, tremendous stamina, courage and an ironical wit in her. Against conventional bounds of normalcy and reality, Sula's hysteria, eccentricity and immorality is a common factor we find in other Morrison heroines—poor, degraded, evil-dogged girls.

Sula and her friend Nel are 'solitary little girls of profound loneliness.' They are excited by a mean determination to explore everything that interested them and 'they had no priorities.' Both are 'unshaped, formless things.' She is insecure in her relationship with her mother for she was a daughter with a distant mother and incomprehensible father. Sula's confidence that her mother loved her was shattered when she overheard her maveric say – ''I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference.'' The shock released Sula from any allegiance towards her mother and makes her a maveric. Like her mother, Sula becomes another vicious adult and apathetic mother, ironically completing a pattern that her grandmother Eva had begun. Sula even watches

interestedly as her mother burns. Sula runs away from home and returns ten years later—an emotionless and amoral adult. She fosters her own terrible estrangement as a condition of her rebirth. ''I want to make myself.'' An accidental murder she committed the same day she overheard her mother's hurtful comment fosters a corruptive egoism in her. She would survive but ''she had no centre, no speek around which to grow.''

Like Pecola or Beloved, Sula manufactures herself from this lack of being. When she talks of the 'free fall', the 'full surrender to the downward flight' perhaps at the back of her mind she thinks of her victim, chicken little, whom she had careless tossed into deep waters to be drowned in a childish, mindless act of annihilation.

(iv) Images

Images recur with an intensity that drive home certain truths. Two major images recur in *Sula—fire* and the *circle*.

Eva, the grandmother had set fire to her own son Plum, as she detested his habit of addiction. Yet when her daughter Hannah is on fire and Sula watches dispassionately, Eva jumps out of a first floor window to save her.

The circle returns with various undertones throughout *Sula*. Sula swings chicken little in circles before lotting him fly into the waters to drown, leaving circular ripples in the river—Hannah, before dying, makes circles in her cooking water. Nel laments and her cry is envisaged : ''It had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow.''

It seems that a circular motion draws the outcast black folk into the mainstream of life, making affirmations of their cultural identity. Moral good or evil refuse to be antithetical poles of morality, as the conditions of life draw everything into a vortex, so that the distinct edges are blurred.

(v) Female Bonding

Morrison's *Sula* resonates with repetitive incidents that acquire symbolic undertones. She had explored male friendship in *Song* of *Solomon,* and in *Sula* Morrison reveals an intense feminine friendship that does not disintegrate into lesbianism. She values, unlike many of her contemporaries, friendship at the emotional and spiritual plane. Sula is both a foil and countefoil to Nel Wright her childhood companion. As long as Sula stays within the traditions of the black folks, she is tolerated. But when she returns after many years to

lead a life of sexual freedom, people abhor her She is considered 'evil' and even Nel shuns her. Sula sets up a challenging pattern rather than defensive strategies. She rejects traditional ordering principles as they relate to self and society. Sula is a leitmotif of her grandmother Eva, even towards the end, when she barricades herself in a room upstairs and totally withdraws from society. Eva had found a defense in hate, but Sula challenges reality and is disillusioned, but undefeated. Morrison is critical towards Sula's 'me-ness'. Since her search was perverted, she dies unfulfilled. For Morrison, the wholeness of life lies in sharing and loving, not in isolation or meanness.

2.4.6 ❐ Questions

1. Consider Toni Morrison as an iconoclastic black woman novelist.
2. Comment on the portrayal of women in Morrisons' novel *Sula*.
3. Does Morrison succeed in depicting women who are deviant from social norms by delving into their complex mental fabric? Give a detailed answers, with examples from the novel *Sula*.
4. Comment on the bonding of Nel and Sula.
5. How far does Morrison succeed in giving an intense insight into the world of the child? Is it juxtaposed with the adult world?
6. Morrison reveals dimensions to a world that few black writers even explored. Do you agree?
7. Consider Morrision as an innovation blender of occasion and character in her novel *Sula.*
8. Write a note on the character and tragedy of Chicken Little.

2.4.7 ❐ Select Bibliography

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Unit 2.5 ❐ ''Good Country People'' : Flannery O' Connor

Structure

2.5.0 ❐ Text : ''Good Country People''

Besides the neutral expression that she wore when she was alone, Mrs. Freeman had two others, forward and reverse, that she used for all her human dealings. Her forward expression was steady and driving like the advance of a heavy truck. Her eyes never swerved to left or right but turned as the story turned as if they followed a yellow line down the center of it. She seldom used the other expression because it was not often necessary for her to retract a statement, but when she did, her face came to a complete stop, there was an almost imperceptible movement of her black eyes, during which they seemed to be receding, and then the observer would see that Mrs. Freeman, though she might stand there as real as several grain sacks thrown on top of each other, was no longer there in spirit. As for getting anything across to her when this was the case, Mrs. Hopewell had given it up. She might talk her head off. Mrs. Freeman could never be brought to admit herself wrong on any point. She would stand there and if she could be brought to say anything, it was something like, " Well, I wouldn't of said it was and I wouldn't of said it wasn't,"or letting her range over the top kitchen shelf where there was an assortment of dusty bottles, she might remark, "I see you ain't ate many of them figs you put up last summer."

They carried on their most important business in the kitchen at breakfast. Every morning Mrs. Hopewell got up at seven o'clock and lit her gas heater and loy's. Joy was her daughter, a large blonde girl who had an artificial leg.

Mrs. Hopewell thought of her as a child though she was thirty-two years old and highly educated. Joy would get up while her mother was eating and lumber into the bathroom and slam the door, and before long, Mrs. Freeman would arrive at the back door. Joy would hear her mother call, "Come on in," and then they would talk for a while in low voices that were indistinguishable in the bathroom. By the time Joy came in, they had usually finished the weather report and were on one or the other of Mrs. Freeman's daughters, Glynese or Carramae. Joy called them Glycerin and Caramel. Glynese, a redhead, was eighteen and had many admirers; Carramae, a blonde, was only fifteen but already married and pregnant. She could not keep anything on her stomach. Every morning Mrs. Freeman told Mrs. Hopewell how many times she had vomited since the last report.

Mrs. Hopewell liked to tell people that Glynese and Carramae were two of the finest girls she knew and that Mrs. Freeman was a *lady* and that she was never ashamed to take her anywhere or introduce her to anybody they might meet. Then she would tell how she had happened to hire the Freemans in the first place and how they were a godsend to her and how she had had them four years. The reason for her keeping them so long was that they were not trash. They were good country people. She had telephoned the man whose name they had given as a reference and he had told her that Mr. Freeman was a good farmer but that his wife was the nosiest woman ever to walk the earth. "She's got to be into everything," the man said. ''If she don't get there before the dust settles, you can bet she's dead, that's all. She'll want to know all your business. I can stand him real good," he had said, "but me nor my wife neither could have stood that woman one more minute on this place." That had put Mrs. Hopewell off for a few days.

She had hired them in the end because there were no other applicants but she had made up her mind beforehand exactly how she would handle the woman. Since she was the type who had to be into everything, then, Mrs. Hopewell had decided, she would not only let her be into everything, she would *see* to it that she was into everything—she would give her the responsibility of everything, she would put her in charge. Mrs. Hopewell had no bad qualities of her own but she was able to use other people's in such a constructive way that she never felt the lack. She had hired the Freemans and she had kept them four years.

Nothing is perfect. This was one of Mrs. Hopewell's favorite sayings. Another was : that is life ! And still another, the most important, was : well, other people have their opinions too. She would make these statements,

usually at the table, in a tone of gentle insistence as if no one held them but her, and the large hulking Joy, whose constant outrage had obliterated every expression from her face, would stare just a little to the side of her, her eyes icy blue, with the look of someone who has achieved blindness by an act of will and means to keep it.

When Mrs. Hopewell said to Mrs. Freeman that life was like that, Mrs. Freeman would say, "I always said so myself." Nothing had been arrived at by anyone that had not first been arrived at by her. She was quicker than Mr. Freeman. When Mrs. Hopewell said to her after they had been on the place a while, "You know, you're the wheel behind the wheel," and winked, Mrs. Freeman had said, "I know it, I've always been quick. It's some that are quicker than others."

"Everybody is different," Mrs. Hopewell said.

"Yes, most people is," Mrs. Freeman said.

"It takes all kinds to make the world."

"I always said it did myself."

The girl was used to this kind of dialogue for breakfast and more of it for dinner; sometimes they had it for supper too. When they had no guest they ate in the kitchen because that was easier. Mrs. Freeman always managed to arrive at some point during the meal and to watch them finish it. She would stand in the doorway if it were summer but in the winter she would stand with one elbow on top of the refrigerator and look down on them, or she would stand by the gas heater, lifting the back of her skirt slightly. Occasionally she would stand against the wall and roll her head from side to side. At no time was she in any hurry to leave. All this was very trying on Mrs. Hopewell but she was a woman of great patience. She realized that nothing is perfect and that in the Freemans she had good country people and that if, in this day and age, you get good country people, you had better hang onto them.

She had had plenty of experience with trash. Before the Freemans she had averaged one tenant family a year. The wives of these farmers were not the kind you would want to be around you for very long. Mrs. Hopewell, who had divorced her husband long ago, needed someone to walk over the fields with her; and when joy had to be impressed for these services, her remarks were usually so ugly and her face so glum that Mrs. Hopewell would say, "If you can't come pleasantly, I don't want you at all," to which the girl, standing square and rigid-shouldered with her neck thrust slightly forward, would reply, ''If you want me, here I am—LIKE I AM."

Mrs. Hopewell excused this attitude because of the leg (which had been shot off in a hunting accident when Joy was ten). It was hard for Mrs. Hopewell to realize that her child was thirty-two now and that for more than twenty years she had had only one leg. She thought of her still as a child because it tore her heart to think instead of the poor stout girl in her thirties who had never danced a step or had any *normal* good times. Her name was really Joy but as soon as she was twenty-one and away from home, she had had it legally changed. Mrs. Hopewell was certain that she had thought and thought until she had hit upon the ugliest name in any language. Then she had gone and had the beautiful name, Joy, changed without telling her mother until after she had done it. Her legal name was Hulga.

When Mrs. Hopewell thought the name, Hulga, she thought of the broad blank hull of a battleship. She would not use it. She continued to call her Joy to which the girl responded but in a purely mechanical way.

Hulga had learned to tolerate Mrs. Freeman who saved her from taking walks with her mother. Even Glynese and Carramae were useful when they occupied attention that might otherwise have been directed at her. At first she had thought she could not stand Mrs. Freeman for she had found that it was not possible to be rude to her. Mrs. Freeman would take on strange resentments and for days together she would be sullen but the source of her displeasure was always obscure; a direct attack, a positive leer, blatant ugliness to her face—these never touched her. And without warning one day, she began calling her Hulga.

She did not call her that in front of Mrs. Hopewell who would have been incensed but when she and the girl happened to be out of the house together, she would say something and add the name Hulga to the end of it, and the big spectacled Joy-Hulga would scowl and redden as if her privacy had been intruded upon. She considered the name her personal affair. She had arrived at it first purely on the basis of its ugly sound and then the full genius of its fitness had struck her. She had a vision of the name working like the ugly sweating Vulcan[1] who stayed in the furnace and to whom, presumably, the goddess had to come when called. She saw it as the name of her highest creative act. One of her major triumphs was that her mother had not been able to turn her dust into Joy, but the greater one was that she had been able to turn it herself into Hulga. However, Mrs. Freeman's relish for using the name only irritated her. It was as if Mrs. Freeman's beady steel-

1. In Roman mythology, the lame blacksmith to the gods and husband of Venus, goddess of love.

pointed eyes had penetrated far enough behind her face to reach some secret fact. Something about her seemed to fascinate Mrs. Freeman and then one day Hulga realized that it was the artificial leg. Mrs. Freeman had a special fondness for the details of secret infections, hidden deformities, assaults upon children. Of diseases, she preferred the lingering or incurable. Hulga had heard Mrs. Hopewell give her the details of the hunting accident, how the leg had been literally blasted off, how she had never lost consciousness. Mrs. Freeman could listen to it any time as if it had happened an hour ago.

When Hulga stumped into the kitchen in the morning (she could walk without making the awful noise but she made it—Mrs. Hopewell was certain—because it was ugly-sounding), she glanced at them and did not speak. Mrs. Hopewell would be in her red kimono with her hair tied around her head in rags. She would be sitting at the table, finishing her breakfast and Mrs. Freeman would be hanging by her elbow outward from the refrigerator, looking down at the table. Hulga always put her eggs on the stove to boil and then stood over them with her arms folded, and Mrs. Hopewell would look at her—a kind of indirect gaze divided between her and Mrs. Freeman—and would think that if she would only keep herself up a little, she wouldn't be so bad looking. There was nothing wrong with her face that a pleasant expression wouldn't help. Mrs. hopewell said people who looked on the bright side of things would be beautiful even if they were not.

Whenever she looked at Joy this way, she could not help but feel that it would have been better if the child had not taken the Ph.D. It had certainly not brought her out any and now that she had it, there was no more excuse for her to go school again. Mrs. Hopewell thought it was nice for girls to go to school to have a good time but Joy had "gone through." Anyhow, she would not have been strong enough to go again. The doctors had told Mrs. Hopewell that with the best of care, Joy might see forty-five. She had a weak heart. Joy had made it plain that if it had not been for this condition, she would be far from these red hills and good country people. She would be in a university lecturing to people who knew what she was talking about. And Mrs. Hopewell could very well picture her there, looking like a scarecrow and lecturing to more of the same. Here she went about all day in a six-year-old skirt and a yellow sweat shirt with a faded cowboy on a horse embossed on it. She thought this was funny; Mrs. Hopewell thought it was idiotic and showed simply that she was still a child. She was brilliant but she didn't have a grain of sense. It seemed to Mrs. Hopewell that every year she grew less like other people and more like herself—bloated, rude and squint-eyed.

And she said such strange things! To her own mother she had said—without warning, without excuse, standing up in the middle of a meal with her face purple and her mouth half full—"Woman! do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are *not*? God!" she had cried sinking down again and staring at her plate, "Malebranche was right: we are not our own light. We are not our own light!" Mrs. Hopewell had no idea to this day what brought that on. She had only made the remark, hoping Joy would take it in, that a smile never hurt anyone.

The girl had taken the Ph.D. in philosophy and this left Mrs. Hopewell at a complete loss. You could say, "My daughter is a nurse," or "My daughter is a school teacher," or even, "My daughter is a chemical engineer." You could not say, "My daughter is a philosopher." That was something, that had ended with the Greeks and Romans. All day Joy sat on her neck in a deep chair, reading. Sometimes she went for walks but she didn't like dogs or cats or birds or flowers or nature or nice young men. She looked at nice young men as if she could smell their stupidity.

One day Mrs. Hopewell had picked up one of the books the girl had just-put down and opening it at random, she read, "Science, on the other hand, has to assert its soberness and seriousness afresh and declare that it is concerned solely with what-is. Nothing—how can it be for science anything but a horror and a phantasm? If science is right, then one thing stands firm: science wishes to know nothing of nothing. Such is after all the strictly scientific approach to Nothing. We know it by wishing to know nothing of Nothing." These words had been underlined with a blue pencil and they worked on Mrs. Hopewell like some evil incantation in gibberish. She shut the book quickly and went out of the room as if she were having a chill.

This morning when the girl came in, Mrs. Freeman was on Carramae. "She thrown up four times after supper," she said, "and was up twict in the night after three o'clock. Yesterday she didn't do nothing but ramble in the bureau drawer. All she did. Stand up there and see what she could run up on."

"She's got to eat," Mrs. Hopewell muttered, sipping her coffee, while she watched Joy's back at the stove. She was wondering what the child had said to the Bible salesman. She could not imagine what kind of a conversation she could possibly have had with him.

He was a tall gaunt hatless youth who had called yesterday to sell them a Bible. He had appeared at the door, carrying a large black suitcase that weighted him so heavily on one side that he had to brace himself against the

door facing. He seemed on the point of collapse but he said in a cheerful voice, "Good morning, Mrs. Cedars!" and set the suitcase down on the mat. He was not a bad-looking young man though he had on a bright blue suit and yellow socks that were not pulled up far enough. He had prominent face bones and a streak of sticky-looking brown hair falling across his forehead.

"I'm Mrs. Hopewell," she said.

"Oh!" he said, pretending to look puzzled but with his eyes sparkling, "I saw it said 'The Cedars,' on the mailbox so I thought you was Mrs. Cedars!" and he burst out in a pleasant laugh. He picked up the satchel and under cover of a pant, he fell forward into her hall. It was rather as if the suitcase had moved first, jerking him after it. "Mrs. Hopewell!" he said and grabbed her hand. "I hope you are well!" and he laughed again and then all at once his face sobered completely. He paused and gave her a straight earnest look and said, "Lady, I've come to speak of serious things."

"Well, come in," she muttered, none too pleased because her dinner was almost ready. He came into the parlor and sat down on the edge of a straight chair and put the suitcase between his feet and glanced around the room as if he were sizing her up by it. Her silver gleamed on the two sideboards; she decided he had never been in a room as elegant as this.

"Mrs. Hopewell," he began, using her name in a way that sounded almost intimate, "I know you believe in Chrustian service."

"Well yes," she murmured.

"I know," he said and paused, looking very wise with his head cocked on one side, "that you're a good woman. Friends have told me."

Mrs. Hopewell never liked to be taken for a fool. "What are you selling?" she asked.

"Bibles," the young man said and his eye raced around the room before he added, "I see you have no family Bible in your parlor, I see that is the one lack you got!"

Mrs. Hopewell could not say, "My daughter is an atheist and won't let me keep the Bible in the parlor." She said, stiffening slightly, "I keep my Bible by my bedside." This was not the truth. It was in the attic somewhere.

"Lady," he said, "the word of God ought to be in the parlor."

"Well, I think that's a matter of taste," she began. "I think . . ."

"Lady," he said, "for a Chrustian, the word of God ought to be in every room in the house besides in his heart. I know you're a Chrustian because I can see it in every line of your face."

She stood up and said, "Well, young man, I don't want to buy a Bible and I smell my dinner burning."

He didn't get up. He began to twist his hands and looking down at them, he said softly, "Well lady, I'll tell you the truth—not many people want to buy one nowadays and besides, I know I'm real simple. I don't know how to say a thing but to say it. I'm just a country boy." He glanced up into her unfriendly face. "People like you don't like to fool with country people like me!"

"Why!" she cried, "good country people are the salt of the earth! Besides, we all have different ways of doing, it takes all kinds to make the world go 'round. That's life!"

"You said a mouthful," he said.

"Why, I think there aren't enough good country people in the world!" she said, stirred. "I think that's what's wrong with it!"

His face had brightened. "I didn't inroduce myself," he said. "I'm Manley pointer from out in the country around Willohobie, not even from a place, just from near a place."

"You wait a minute," she said. "I have to see about my dinner." She went out to the kitchen and found Joy standing near the door where she had been listening.

"Get rid of the salt of the earth," she said, "and let's eat."

Mrs. Hopewell gave her a pained look and turned the heat down under the vegetables. "*I* can't be rude to anybody," she murmured and went back into the parlor.

He had opened the suitcase and was sitting with a Bible on each knee.

"You might as well put those up," she told him. "I don't want one."

"I appreciate your honesty," he said. "You don't see any more real honest people unless you go way out in the country."

"I know," she said, "real genuine folks!" Through the crack in the door she heard a groan.

"I guess a lot of boys come telling you they're working their way through college," he said, "but I'm not going to tell you that. Somehow," he said, "I don't want to go to college. I want to devote my life to Chrustian service. See," he said, lowering his voice, "I got this heart condition. I may not live long. When you know it's something wrong with you and you may not live long, well then, lady . . ." He paused, with his mouth open, and stared at her.

He and Joy had the same condition! She knew that her eyes were filling with tears but she collected herself quickly and murmured, "Won't you stay for dinner? We'd love to have you!" and was sorry the instant she heard herself say it.

"Yes mam," he said in an abashed voice, "I would sher love to do that!"

Joy had given him one look on being introduced to him and then throughout the meal had not glanced at him again. He had addressed several remarks to her, which she had pretended not to hear. Mrs. Hopewell could not understand deliberate rudeness, although she lived with it, and she felt she had always to overflow with hospitality to make up for Joy's lack of courtesy. She urged him to talk about himself and he did. He said he was the seventh child of twelve and that his father had been crushed under a tree when he himself was eight year old. He had been crushed very badly, in fact, almost cut in two and was practically not recognizable. His mother had got along the best she could by hard working and she had always seen that her children went to Sunday School and that they read the Bible every evening. He was now nineteen year old and he had been selling Bibles for four months. In that time he had sold seventy-seven Bibles and had the promise of two more sales. He wanted to become a missionary because he thought that was the way you could do most for people. "He who losest his life shall find it," he said simply and he was so sincere, so genuine and earnest that Mrs. Hopewell would not for the world have smiled. He prevented his peas from sliding onto the table by blocking them with a piece of bread which he later cleaned his plate with. She could see Joy observing sidewise how he handled his knife and fork and she saw too that every few minutes, the boy would dart a keen appraising glance at the girl as if he were trying to attract her attention.

After dinner Joy cleared the dishes off the table and disappeared and Mrs. Hopewell was left to talk with him. He told her again about his childhood and his father's accident and about various things that had happened to him. Every five minutes or so she would stifle a yawn. He sat for two hours until finally she told him she must go because she had an appointment in town. He packed his Bibles and thanked her and prepared to leave, but in the doorway he stopped and wrung her hand and said that not on any of his trips had he met a lady as nice as her and he asked if he could come again. She had said she would always be happy to see him.

Joy had been standing in the road, apparently looking at something in the distance, when he came down the steps toward her, bent to the side with his heavy valise. He stopped where she was standing and confronted her directly. Mrs. Hopewell could not hear what he said but she trembled to think what Joy would say to him. She could see that after a minute Joy said something and that then the boy began to speak again, making an excited

gesture with his free hand. After a minute Joy said something else at which the boy began to speak once more. Then to her amazement, Mrs. Hopewell saw the two of them walk off together, toward the gate. Joy had walked all the way to the gate with him and Mrs. Hopewell could not imagine what they had said to each other, and she had not yet dared to ask.

Mrs. Freeman was insisting upon her attention. She had moved from the refrigerator to the heater so that Mrs. Hopewell had to turn and face her in order to seem to be listening. "Glynese gone out with Harvey Hill again last night," she said. "She had this sty."

"Hill," Mrs. Hopewell said absently, "is that the one who works in the garage?"

"Nome, he's the one that goes to chiropracter school," Mrs. Freeman said. "She had this sty. Been had it two days. So she says when he brought her in the other night he says, 'Lemme get rid of that sty for you,' and she says, 'How?' and he says, 'You just lay yourself down across the seat of that car and I'll show you.' So she done it and he popped her neck. Kept on a-popping it several times until she made him quit. This morning," Mrs. Freeman said, "she ain't got no sty. She ain't got no traces of a sty."

"I never heard of that before," Mrs. Hopewell said.

"He ask her to marry him before the Ordinary," Mrs. Freeman went on, "and she told him she wasn't going to be married in no *office*."

“Well, Glynese is a fine girl,” Mrs. Hopewell said. “Glynese and Carramae are both fine girls.”

"Carramae said when her and Lyman was married Lyman said it sure felt sacred to him. She said he said he wouldn't take five hundred dollars for being married by a preacher.”

“How much would he take?” the girl asked from the stove.

“He said he wouldn't take five hundred dollars," Mrs. Freeman repeated.

“Well we all have work to do," Mrs. Hopewell said.

“Lyman said it just felt more sacred to him," Mrs. Freeman said. “The doctor wants Carramae to eat prunes. Says instead of medicine. Says them cramps is coming from pressure. You know where I think it is?”

‘She’ll be better in a few weeks,” Mrs. Hopewell said.

“In the tube,” Mrs. Freeman said. "Else she wouldn't be as sick as she is."

Hulga had cracked her two eggs into a saucer and was bringing them to the table along with a cup of coffee that she had filled too full. She sat down carefully and began to eat, meaning to keep Mrs. Freeman there by

questions if for any reason she showed an inclination to leave. She could perceive her mother's eye on her. The first round-about question would be about the Bible salesman and she did not wish to bring it on. "How did he pop her neck?" She asked.

Mrs. Freeman went into a description of how he had popped her neck. She said he owned a '55 Mercury but that Glynese said she would rather marry a man with only a '36 Plymouth who would be married by a preacher. The girl asked what if he had a '32 Plymouth and Mrs. Freeman said what Glynese had said was a '36 Plymouth.

Mrs. Hopewell said there were not many girls with Glynese's common sense. She said what she admired in those girls was their common sense. She said that reminded her that they had a nice visitor yesterday, a young man selling Bibles. "Lord," she said, "he bored me to death but he was so sincere and genuine I couldn't be rude to him. He was just good country people, you know," she said, "—just the salt of the earth."

“I seen him walk up,” Mrs. Freeman said, “and then later—I seen him walk off," and Hulga could feel the slight shift in her voice, the slight insinuation, that he had not walked off alone, had he? Her face remained expressionless but the color rose into her neck and she seemed to swallow it down with the next spoonful of egg. Mrs. Freeman was looking at her as if they had a secret together.

"Well, it takes all kinds of people to make the world go 'round," Mrs. Hopewell said. "It's very good we aren't all alike."

"Some people are more alike than other," Mrs. Freeman said.

Hulga got up and stumped, with about twice the noise that was necessary, into her room and locked the door. She was to meet the Bible salesman at ten o'clock at the gate. She had thought about it half the night. She had started thinking of it as a great joke and then she had begun to see profound implications in it. She had lain in bed imagining dialogues for them that were insane on the surface but that reached below to depths that no Bible salesman would be aware of. Their conversation yesterday had been of this kind.

He had stopped in front of her and had simply stood there. His face was bony and sweaty and bright, with a little pointed nose in the center of it, and his look was different from what it had been at the dinner table. He was gazing at her with open curiosity, with fascination, like a child watching a new fantastic animal at the zoo, and he was breathing as if he had run a great distance to reach her. His gaze seemed somehow familiar but she

could not think where she had been regarded with it before. For almost a minute he didn't say anything. Then on what seemed an insuck of breath, he whispered, "You ever ate a chicken that was two days old?"

The girl looked at him stonily. He might have just put this question up for consideration at the meeting of a philosophical association. "Yes," she presently replied as if she had considered it from all angles.

"It must have been mighty small!" he said triumphantly and shook all over with little nervous giggles, getting very red in the face, and subsiding finally into his gaze of complete admiration, while the girl's expression remained exactly the same.

"How old are you?" he asked softly.

She waited some time before she answered. Then in a flat voice she said, "Seventeen."

His smiles came in succession like waves breaking on the surface of a little lake. "I see you got a wooden leg," he said. "I think you're real brave. I think you're real sweet."

The girl stood blank and solid and silent.

"Walk to the gate with me," he said. "You're a brave sweet little thing and I liked you the minute I seen you walk in the door."

Hulga began to move forward.

"What's your name?" he asked, smiling down on the top of her head.

"Hulga," she said.

"Hulga," he murmured, "Hulga. Hulga. I never heard of anybody name Hulga before. You're shy, aren't you, Hulga?" he asked.

She nodded, watching his large red hand on the handle of the giant valise.

"I like girls that wear glasses," he said. "I think a lot. I'm not like these people that a serious thought don't ever enter their heads. It's because I may die."

"I may die too," she said suddenly and looked up at him. His eyes were very small and brown, glittering feverishly.

"Listen," he said, "don't you think some people was meant to meet on account of what all they got in common and all? Like they both think serious thoughts and all?" He shifted the valise to his other hand so that the hand nearest her was free. He caught hold of her elbow and shook it a little. "I don't work on Saturday," he said. "I like to walk in the woods and see what Mother Nature is wearing. O'er the hills and far away. Pic-nics and things. Couldn't we go on a picnic tomorrow? Say yes, Hulga," he said and gave her

a dying look as if he felt his insides about to drop out of him. He had even seemed to sway slightly toward her.

During the night she had imagined that she seduced him. She imagined that the two of them walked on the place until they came to the storage barn beyond the two back fields and there, she imagined, that things came to such a pass that she very easily seduced him and that then, of course, she had to reckon with his remorse. True genius can get an idea across even to an inferior mind. She imagined that she took his remorse in hand and changed it into a deeper understanding of life. She took all his shame away and turned it into something useful.

She set off for the gate at exactly ten o'clock, escaping without drawing Mrs. Hopewell's attention. She didn't take anything to eat, forgetting that food is usually taken on a picnic. She wore a pair of slacks and a dirty white shirt, and as an after-thought, she had put some Vapex on the collar of it since she did not own any perfume. When she reached the gate no one was there.

She looked up and down the empty highway and had the furious feeling that she had been tricked, that he had only meant to make her walk to the gate after the idea of him. Then suddenly he stood up, very tall, from behind a bush on the opposite embankment. Smiling, he lifted his hat which was new and wide-brimmed. He had not worn it yesterday and she wondered if he had bought it for the occasion. It was toast-colored with a red and white band around it and was slightly too large for him. He stepped from behind the bush still carrying the black valise. He had on the same suit and the same yellow socks sucked down in his shoes from walking. He crossed the highway and said, "I knew you'd come!"

The girl wondered acidly how he had known this. She pointed to the valise and asked, "Why did you bring your Bibles?"

He took her elbow, smiling down on her as if he could not stop. "You can never tell when you'll need the word of God, Hulga," he said. She had a moment in which she doubted that this was actually happening and then they began to climb the embankment. They went down into the pasture toward the woods. The boy walked lightly by her side, bouncing on his toes. The valise did not seem to be heavy today; he even swung it. They crossed half the pasture without saying anything and then, putting his hand easily on the small of her back, he asked softly, "Where does your wooden leg join on?"

She turned an ugly red and glared at him and for an instant the boy

looked abashed. “I didn’t mean you no harm,” he said. “I only meant you’re so brave and all. I guess God takes care of you.”

“No,” she said, looking forward and walking fast, “I don’t even believe in God.”

At this he stopped and whistled. “No!” he exclaimed as if he were too astonished to say anything else.

She walked on and in a second he was bouncing at her side, fanning with his hat. “That’s very unusual for a girl,” he remarked, watching her out of the corner of his eye. When they reached the edge of the wood, he put his hand on her back again and drew her against him without a word and kissed her heavily.

The kiss, which had more pressure than feeling behind it, produced that extra surge of adrenalin in the girl that enables one to carry a packed trunk out of a burning house, but in her, the power went at once to the brain. Even before he released her, her mind, clear and detached and ironic anyway, was regarding him from a great distance, with amusement but with pity. She had never been kissed before and she was pleased to discover that it was an unexceptional experience and all a matter of the mind’s control. Some people might enjoy drain water if they were told it was vodka. When the boy, looking expectant but uncertain, pushed her gently away, she turned and walked on, saying nothing as if such business, for her, were common enough.

He came along panting at her side, trying to help her when he saw a root that she might trip over. He caught and held back the long swaying blades of thorn vine until she had passed beyond them. She led the way and he came breathing heavily behind her. Then they came out on a sunlit hillside, sloping softly into another one a little smaller. Beyond, they could see the rusted top of the old barn where the extra hay was stored.

The hill was sprinkled with small pink weeds. “Then you ain’t saved?” he asked suddenly, stopping.

The girl smiled. It was the first time she had smiled at him at all. “In my economy,” she said, “I’m saved and you are damned but I told you I didn’t believe in God.”

Nothing seemed to destroy the boy’s look of admiration. He gazed at her now as if the fantastic animal at the zoo had put its paw through the bars and given him a loving poke. She thought he looked as if he wanted to kiss her again and she walked on before he had the chance.

“Ain’t there somewheres we can sit down sometime?” he murmured, his voice softening toward the end of the sentence.

"In that barn," she said.

They made for it rapidly as if it might slide away like a train. It was a large two-story barn, cool and dark inside. The boy pointed up the ladder that led into the loft and said, "It's too bad we can't go up there."

"Why can't we?" she asked.

"Yer leg," he said reverently.

The girl gave him a contemptuous look and putting both hands on the ladder, she climbed it while he stood below, apparently awestruck. She pulled herself expertly through the opening and then looked down at him and said, "Well, come on if you're coming," and he began to climb the ladder, awkwardly bringing the suitcase with him.

"We won't need the Bible," she observed.

"You never can tell," he said, panting. After he had got into the loft, he was a few seconds catching his breath. She had sat down in a pile of straw. A wide sheath of sunlight, filled with dust particles, slanted over her. She lay back against a bale, her face turned away, looking out the front opening of the barn where hay was thrown from a wagon into the loft. The two pink-speckled hillsides lay back against a dark ridge of woods. The sky was cloudless and cold blue. The boy dropped down by her side and put one arm under her and the other over her and began methodically kissing her face, making little noises like a fish. He did not remove his hat but it was pushed far enough back not to interfere. When her glasses got in his way, he took them off of her and slipped them into his pocket.

The girl at first did not return any of the kisses but presently she began to and after she had put several on his cheek, she reached his lips and remained there, kissing him again and again as if she were trying to draw all the breath out of him. His breath was clear and sweet like a child's and the kisses were sticky like a child's. He mumbled about loving her and about knowing when he first seen her that he loved her, but the mumbling was like the sleepy fretting of a child being put to sleep by his mother. Her mind, throughout this, never stopped or lost itself for a second to her feelings. "You ain't said you loved me none," he whispered finally, pulling back from her. "You got to say that."

She looked away from him off into the hollow sky and then down at a black ridge and then down farther into what appeared to be two green swelling lakes. She didn't realize he had taken her glasses but this landscape could not seem exceptional to her for she seldom paid any close attention to her surroundings.

"You got to say it," he repeated. "You got to say you love me."

She was always careful how she committed herself. "In a sense," she began, "if you use the word loosely, you might say that. But it's not a word I use. I don't have illusions. I'm one of those people who see *through* to nothing."

The boy was frowning. "You got to say it. I said it and you got to say it," he said.

The girl looked at him almost tenderly. "You poor baby," she murmured. "It's just as well you don't understand," and she pulled him by the neck, facedown, against her. "We are all damned," she said, "but some of us have taken off our blindfolds and see that there's nothing to see. It's a kind of salvation."

The boy's astonished eyes looked blankly through the ends of her hair. "Okay," he almost whined, "but do you love me or don'tcher?"

"Yes," she said and added, "in a sense. But I must tell you something. There mustn't be anything dishonest between us." She lifted his head and looked him in the eye. "I am thirty years old," she said. "I have a number of degrees."

The boy's look was irritated but dogged. "I don't care," he said. "I don't care a thing about what all you done. I just want to know if you love me or don'tcher?" and he caught her to him and wildly planted her face with kisses until she said, "Yes, yes."

"Okay then," he said, letting her go. "Prove it."

She smiled, looking dreamily out on the shifty landscape. She had seduced him without even making up her mind to try. "How?" she asked, feeling that he should be delayed a little.

He leaned over and put his lips to her ear. "Show me where your wooden leg joins on," he whispered.

The girl uttered a sharp little cry and her face instantly drained of color. The obscenity of the suggestion was not what shocked her. As a child she had sometimes been subject to feelings of shame but education had removed the last traces of that as a good surgeon scrapes for cancer; she would no more have felt it over what he was asking than she would have believed in his Bible. But she was as sensitive about the artificial leg as a peacock about his tail. No one ever touched it but her. She took care of it as someone else would his soul, in private and almost with her own eyes turned away. "No," she said.

"I known it," he muttered, sitting up. "You're just playing me for a sucker."

"Oh no no!" she cried. "It joins on at the knee. Only at the knee. Why do you want to see it?"

The boy gave her a long penetrating look. "Because," he said, "it's what makes you different. You ain't like anybody else."

She sat staring at him. There was nothing about her face or her round freezing-blue eyes to indicate that this had moved her; but she felt as if her heart had stopped and left her mind to pump her blood. She decided that for the first time in her life she was face to face with real innocence. This boy, with an instinct that came from beyond wisdom, had touched the truth about her. When after a minute, she said in a hoarse high voice, "All right," it was like surrendering to him completely. It was like losing her own life and finding it again, miraculously, in his.

Very gently he began to roll the slack leg up. The artificial limb, in a white sock and brown flat shoe, was bound in a heavy material like canvas and ended in an ugly jointure where it was attached to the stump. The boy's face and his voice were entirely reverent as he uncovered it and said, "Now show me how to take it off and on."

She took it off for him and put it back on again and then he took it off himself, handling it as tenderly as if it were a real one. "See!" he said with a delighted child's face. "Now I can do it myself!"

"Put it back on," she said. She was thinking that she would run away with him and that every night he would take the leg off and every morning put it back on again. "Put it back on," she said.

"Not yet," he murmured, setting it on its foot out of her reach. "Leave it off for a while. You got me instead."

She gave a little cry of alarm but he pushed her down and began to kiss her again. Without the leg she felt entirely dependent on him. Her brain seemed to have stopped thinking altogether and to be about some other function that it was not very good at. Different expressions raced back and forth over her face. Every now and then the boy, his eyes like two steel spikes, would glance behind him where the leg stood. Finally she pushed him off and said, "Put it back on me now."

"Wait," he said. He leaned the other way and pulled the valise toward him and opened it. It had a pale blue spotted lining and there were only two Bibles in it. He took one of these out and opened the cover of it. It was hollow and contained a pocket flask of whiskey, a pack of cards, and a small blue box with printing on it. He laid these out in front of her one at a time in an evenly-spaced row, like one presenting offerings at the shrine of a goddess. He put the blue box in her hand. THIS PROPERTY TO BE USED ONLY FOR

THE PREVENTION OF DISEASE, she read, and dropped it. The boy was unscrewing the top of the flask. He stopped and pointed, with a smile, to the deck of cards. It was not an ordinary deck but one with an obscene picture on the back of each card. "Take a swig," he said, offering her the bottle first. He held it in front of her, but like one mesmerized, she did not move.

Her voice when she spoke had an almost pleading sound. "Aren't you," she murmured, "aren't you just good country people?"

The boy cocked his head. He looked as if he were just beginning to understand that she might be trying to insult him. "Yeah," he said, curling his lip slightly, "but it ain't held me back none. I'm as good as you any day in the week."

"Give me my leg," she said.

He pushed it farther away with his foot. "Come on now, let's begin to have us a good time," he said coaxingly. "We ain't got to know one another good yet."

"Give me my leg!" she screamed and tried to lunge for it but he pushed her down easily.

"What's the matter with you all of a sudden?" he asked, frowning as he screwed the top on the flask and put it quickly back inside the Bible. "You just a while ago said you didn't believe in nothing. I thought you was some girl!"

Her face was almost purple. "You're a Christian!" she hissed. "You're a fine Christian! You're just like them all—say one thing and do another. You're a perfect Christian, you're . . ."

The boy's mouth was set angrily. "I hope you don't think," he said in a lofty indignant tone, "that I believe in that crap! I may sell Bibles but I know which end is up and I wasn't born yesterday and I know where I'm going!"

"Give me my leg!" she screeched. He jumped up so quickly that she barely saw him sweep the cards and the blue box back into the Bible and throw the Bible into the valise. She saw him grab the leg and then she saw it for an instant slanted forlornly across the inside of the suitcase with a Bible at either side of its opposite ends. He slammed the lid shut and snatched up the valise and swung it down the hole and then stepped through himself.

When all of him had passed but his head, he turned and regarded her with a look that no longer had any admiration in it. "I've gotten a lot of interesting things," he said. "One time I got a woman's glass eye this way. And you needn't to think you'll catch me because Pointer ain't really my

name. I use a different name at every house I call at and don't stay nowhere long. And I'll tell you another thing, Hulga," he said, using the name as if he didn't think much of it, "you ain't so smart. I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!" and then the toast-colored hat disappeared down the hole and the girl was left, sitting on the straw in the dusty sunlight. When she turned her churning face toward the opening, she saw his blue figure struggling successfully over the green speckled lake.

Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman, who were in the back pasture, digging up onions, saw him emerge a little later from the woods and head across the meadow toward the highway. "Why, that looks like that nice dull young man that tried to sell me a Bible yesterday," Mrs. Hopewell said, squinting. "He must have been selling them to the Negroes back in there. He was so simple," she said, "but I guess the world would be better off if we were all that simple."

Mrs. Freeman's gaze drove forward and just touched him before he disappeared under the hill. Then she returned her attention to the evil-smelling onion shoot she was lifting from the ground. "Some can't be that simple," she said. "I know I never could."

2.5.1 ❐ Introduction

Flannery O'Connor is often uncomfortably put into the category of a woman writer, yet such is her perception, gender bias has very little to do with her art. There is a strength and a leaning towards the grotesque that is her hallmark. Like many other women writers of her generation, whose works have great diversity, she refuses to be strait-jacketed. Toni Morrison's concern for the terrible emotional forces drivens into the coloured people by the tragedy of American racialism and Alix Shulman's sensitive forays into the dominion of male writers — the novel of ideas the cases in point, show that no water-tight compartments are valid for women writers today. They have their own uniqueness, and a wide-ranging sensibility that opens all doors of possibilities to them. Sulamith Firestone in her amazing book, *The Dialect of sex : The Case for Feninist Revolution*, points out, how earlier, women were banished from the male literary tradition.

> Culture is so saturated with male bias that women almost never have a chance to see themselves culturally through their own eyes.

Flannery O'Connor's very sensitive portrayal of sin and suffering does not

stand against her fondness in the portrayal of mothers and daughters. O'Connor's creative energies were often stifled by the terrible degenerative diseases that crippled her through much of her career. It is significant that many of her characters are physically handicapped, or afflicted in some terrible or another. In the short story being analysed — ''Good Country people'', The girl Hulga possesses just one leg, and the wooden leg that supports her, forms a key motif in the story. It is the defect that makes her unique often with horrifying consequences.

O'Connor died at the young age of thirty nine, in 1964. It is miraculous how her courage and fortitude grew with her pain and deteriorating condition. Her courage and her refusal to wallow in despair, made her commitment to her art very special. Her two short novels and thirty short stories all delve into certain uncomfortable regions of the mind, dealing with behaviour patterns that often shack and embarrass us. The stories feel away illusion, foolish selfishness and mindless cruelty and leave the characters to face the harshness of a truth that they cannot bear. Had Flannery O'Connor lived longer, and shared the full impact and effect of the Feminist Movement, her consciousness might have been more violently aroused.

Art was a specific force for O'Connor — a force outside conditions of gender. Yet we discern a softness for a blood-bond of the mother and the daughter. Her stories are given a certain piquancy as this relationship figures largely in most of them. The stories throb with the perplexing issues of spiritual existence. Though O'Connor begins with the trauma and painful experiences of women, she keeps in perspective those experiences that she felt had universal value. Her themes touch many painful areas of female experience. A Southern, Catholic writer, she shows extraordinary powers in depicting the contortions of spirit with a steady eye and relentless pity. Her collection of short stories *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (1955) contains some of the best and most unsettling fiction of the period. Her terrible vision of the world was enhanced by her two religious novels *Wise Blood* (1952) and *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960). Though her avowed interest did not lie in the creation of the grotesque as such, but rather in the disorders that create or deflect spirit, the story we have at hand is a fine study of the grotesque in human nature and also in the turn of events.

2.5.2 ❐ ''Good Country People'' : An Analysis

There are two distinctly disturbing occasions in the story ''Good Country People'' — one, when the salesmen of the holy Bibles takes out his personal copy and reveals that it is nothing but a facade for his baser leanings, and the other, when he cruelly takes away the girl's artificial leg. There are moments both shocking in their intensity, and just as provoking in their play upon the readers' mind.

The young salesman, the ironic player on the words 'good country folk, is a rogue and a hypocrite. He, posing to be 'good', cheats the country folk, who, even to the end believe that he is a nice, dull young man.

Religion and the sham that it often passes for it is explored here. The young man takes out a Bible ''It was hollow and contained a pocket flask of whiskey, a pack of cards, and a small blue box with printing on it ... The boy was unscrewing the top of the flask. He stopped and pointed with a smile to the deck of cards. It was not an ordinary deck but one with an obscene picture on the back of each card.''

Even as she plaintively asks : ''Arn't you just good country people?'' he reveals the utter villainy in a cheap, mediocre man, whose guile is mixed with malevolence.

> I gotten a lot of interesting things. Once I got a womans' glass eye this way. And you needn't think you'll catch me, because Pointer ain't really my name. I use a different name at every house. I call at and don't stay nowhere long.

There is absolute grotesqueness in the way the man collects things— things that are useless to him, but life-supports to their users.

The placidity and simple faith of the two elderly women, Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman are cleverly juxtaposed against the pathetic defiance of Hulga, and the foxy cunningness of the young salesman, who has his eyes on all the main chances, and is a very glib talker.

2.5.3 ❐ Narrative Technique

Inexplicable occurrences are O' Connor's forte. Her story endings are a peculiar blend of the comic (hinging on grotesque) and utter sadness. The grimness of most of her endings pervades the reader's mind for a very long time. Yet in her writings there is a certain element of hope in the recognition of the bleak reality of life and an acceptance, even if the truth hits with a terrible humiliating force.

O'Connor's plots hinge upon these shock interludes. In ''Good Country People'' the story begins in a dead-pan manner, and then twists and turns its way through seemingly simple occasions. Some of the dullness surrounding Hulga, the girl to whom so much happens in so little an interval, seems to pervade the fabric of the story. The 'gloom', that the often associates with O'Connor lurks at every turn of the narrative, becoming more intense as the story progress. The ironic intent of the writer runs between the lines.

Flannery O'Connor's understanding of the problems and results of widowhood is truly profound. She is sensitive, probing and scathing at the same time.

Virginia Woolf had categorised (in *A Room of One's Own*) the distortions we can expect to find in the writings of women. Anxiety, buried confusion and shame, caused by the male-dominated culture makes it extremely difficult for women to feel assured about discussing their own experience. Such attitudes result in portraying women who are too aggressive or too strong, and their ambience too uncomfortable to fit into the assigned place in the fictional world. O'Connor's short story ''The Enduring Chill'' shows the protagonist, a young man, as a pathetic, confused spiritually isolated creature totally unprepared for either life or death ''Good Country People'', too, hinges on the problem of wasted existence. It is not the girl, Hulga, but the personable young man, who is a moral cripple.

2.5.4 ❐ Women Characters

One of her favourite methods, as in this short story, is to explore the plight of intelligent and defiant girls who reject traditional submissive roles.

Joy-Hulga, 'a large blonde girl who had an artificial leg—dull to the view, but with a mind of her own (her interesting naming of the two other girls is a hint). Later, she even does a Ph.D, and has a cache of prophetic sayings.

> To her own mother she had said without warning, without excuse standing up in the middle of a meal with her face purple and her mouth half-full–'Woman, do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are not?'' God !

Hulga is an unusual girl, who is an atheist and declares to the shallow young man quite openly.

> We are all damned, but some of us have taken off their blindfolds and see that there is nothing to see. Its a kind of salvation.

In an intimate interlude with the young man, Hulga agilely climbs into the high loft, surprising him. ''We won't need the Bible'' she tells him.

As he desires to see her artificial leg, he persuades her that it makes her unique. She takes off her leg, her symbol of independence and gives it to him. As he finally discards her, helpless, in the loft and moves off, Hulga maintains her quiet, ''sitting on the straw in the dust.'' The only sign of her heartbreak is the reference to her 'churning face''.

Life, love, hope all touch her and Hulga stoically counter all Trauma. We wonder, though, how she would descend from the loft, the boy having stolen her artificial leg. Expectations of an exciting new life had made her ascend, but as gloom descends upon the despairing girl, her being stuck in the left—an intermediate region, begins to take on symbolic significance.

2.5.5 Conclusion

During the last half-dozen years of life O'Connor enjoyed a growing recognition of her work. Her first collection of short stories, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, appeared in 1955, and her second novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*, in 1960. At the time few reviewers saw beneath the grotesque surface of her fiction (Granville Hicks called *The Violent Bear It Away* "Southern Gothic with a vengeance") but she was almost unanimously regarded as a writer of originality and power. What was to become a substantial body of criticism of her work began to grow in the wake of her essay "The Fiction Writer and His Country" (1957), in which she discussed the apparent contradiction between her belief in spiritual purpose and the fact that her stories are, "for the most part, about people who are poor, who are afflicted in both mind and body, who have little—or at best distorted— sense of spiritual purpose, and whose actions do not apparently give the reader a great assurance of the joy of life." She also began to be invited to lecture at colleges and writers' conferences, where she spoke on such subjects as "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" and "The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South. " (The drafts of these speeches : plus some other essays, were collected and edited by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald under the title *Mystery and Manners*, 1969.)

O'Connor continued to refine the art in which she expressed her vision, but the vision itself did not substantially change from the stories in *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* to those in her final collection, *Everything That Rises Must*

Converge (posthumously published 1965). She spoke once, near the end of her life, of attempting something different from what she had been doing so successfully, but in the final months of her life she was still at work on the stories that were to complete her last collection. Following an abdominal operation in the spring of 1964, her lupus flared up again. She survived its onslaught for a few months, but late in July she suffered kidney failure. She died on August 3, 1964, at the age of 39.

2.6 ❐ ‘‘The Cop and the Anthem" : O' Henry

Structure :

2.6.0 ❐ Text : "The Cop and the Anthem"

On his bench in Madison Squire Soapy moved uneasily. When wild goose honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy’s lap. That was Jack Frost’s card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy’s mind became cognizant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigour. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies or drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell’s had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was

come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed large and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which, though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating Magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady-missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted Island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobblestone and dashed it through the glass. People came running round the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

'Where's the man that done that?' inquired the officer excitedly.

'Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?' said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man halfway down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and tell-tale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

'Now, get busy and call a cop,' said Soapy. 'And don't keep a gentleman waiting.'

'No cop for youse,' said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. 'Hey, Con!'

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a 'cinch.' A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanour leaned against a water-plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the role of the despicable and execrated 'masher.' The refined and elegant appearance of his victim and the contiguity

of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would ensure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her was taken with sudden coughs and 'hems,' smiled, smirked and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the mesher.' With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said :

'Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?'

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a ringer and Soapy would be practically *en route* for his insular haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cosy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat-sleeve.

'Sure, Mike,' she said joyfully, 'if you'll blow me to a pail of Suds I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching.'

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman, overcome with gloom. He seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts vows and librettos. Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of 'disorderly conduct.'

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen :

''tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be.'

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped

inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

'My umbrella,' he said sternly.

'Oh, is it?' sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. 'Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one at the corner.'

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would again run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

'Of course,' said the umbrella man—'that is—well, you know how these mistakes occur—I—if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me—I picked it up this morning in a restaurant—If you recognize it as yours, why—I hope you'll—'

'Of course it's mine,' said Soapy viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene; vehicles and pedestrians were few; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves—for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded

days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire, he would make a man of himself again; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time; he was comparatively young yet; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring down-town district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would—

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

'What are you doin' here?' asked the officer.

'Nothin',' said Soapy.

'Then come along,' said the policeman.

'Three months on the Island,' said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

2.6.1 ❐ The Short Story

Suzanne Ferguson ably discuss this form in *The Rise of the Short Story in the Hierarchy of Gennes.* The tendency in the modern high-brow story to focus upon a moment of illumination near the end of the story, a moment in which apparently disparate threads of the characters' experience are drawn together into an intelligible pattern, rather than a traditionally prepared plot climax, is very much dependent upon, and perhaps readable because of, the prominent popular success of the middlebrow detective story in the preceding decades.

Both of these relatively low-prestige forms contributed importantly to the grooming of the English short story for its assault on the generic high society. Local color did so by foregrounding the detailed local setting, with its emphasis on realistic natural and social scenes (and thus "atmosphere") and with its relative deemphasis on plot. The detective story left its trace in the assumption of the setting into the impetus of plot and in the omission of certain expected elements in the plot that were simply deduced and tacitly supplied by the reader, never actually told in the story. In both, the importance of setting seems to have influenced the modern short story, where it is

frequently made to convey ideas about characters and feelings as well as merely place, simply through being given extraordinary prominence while other elements are left obscure and undeveloped. This very obscurity, which requires of the audience special reading techniques, became essential to the "glamor" of the short story for its modern writers and readers.

Emerging in the last two decades of the century, the aesthetic story put the finishing touches on the restyling of the English short story for modern tastes. Another variation of the romance, this type utilized the descriptive techniques and gradual heightening of psychological tension of the sensation story and the concealment of meaning associated with the detective story, along with "fine writing," to make an overt bid for high prestige. Its preoccupation with its own preciosity, together with its frequently morbid themes, earned it the epithet "decadent" as well as "aesthetic."[1] Writers and critics began to claim this type of story to be superior to the novel in artistry because the short story was more controlled, intense, and, finally, reflective of life itself.

Writers for glossy, arty magazines such as the *Yellow Book* and *Savoy*, many of the "aesthetes" were drawn to poetry as well as prose. Ernest Dowson, and even Yeats, on occasion, wrote stories utilizing what are usually considered poetic stylistic devices: figures of speech, metaphorical imagery, purple descriptions, deliberately stylized rhythms and aural tropes. Others of this loosely identifiable group, such as Frederick Wedmore, Hubert Crackanthorpe, Ella D'Arcy, and George Egerton, concentrated on developing sketchy, psychologically complex plots in addition to poetic prose.[2] Influenced by Russian writers, especially Turgenev, George Moore wrote identifiably impressionist stories in his local-color collection, The *Untied Field* (1901 in Gaelic, 1903 in English), which in turn inspired, or influenced, *Dubliners.* The self-consciousness of aesthetic artistry in the short story, encouraged by Flaubertian novelist-critics such as Henry James, Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford, influenced the next generation of short story writers, who "invented" for England the modern, prestige short story: Joyce, Mansfield, Lawrence, the later Kipling, and then the generation of Elizabeth Bowen, A. E, Coppard, V. S. Pritchett, and Sean O'Faolain. Significantly, James later wrote of the *Yellow Book*, in his preface to Volume XV of the New York Edition of his works, that it "opened up the millenium to the 'short story.'" Wells, in the

1. See John R. Reed, *Decadent Style* (Athens, Ohio, 1985), for a full discussion of the relationship.
2. An art critic as well as a writer, Wedmore wrote an important essay on the artfulness of the highbrow short story in his *On Books and Arts* (London, 1899), 1-24.

preface to his collection of short stories, *The Country of the Blind* (1911), approvingly characterized a catalog of short story writers from the nineties as "a mixed handful of jewels drawn from a bag."

More than any other single quality, artistry itself, as a highbrow value, pitched the short story genre above the popular, middlebrow status it had throughout most of the nineteenth century. The mysteriousness of the modern short story, its being written in a code of generic and stylistic conventions that only the initiate of modern art could decipher, was part and parcel of this success. Although the highbrow novel for a time certainly shared not only the emphasis on artistry but the precise techniques of literary impressionism—fragmentation, sketchiness, time shifts, exploitation of unusual points of view, stylistic foregrounding—its length permitted a fuller and ultimately more traditional development. I have contended that it is primarily that difference in length, and what goes into the impressionist novel to create that length, that differentiates it from the impressionist short story, rather than some essential difference in vision, form, or technique.[3] The elaboration of formal and stylistic elements in the smaller space of the short story contributed to a certain element of detachment, "coolness" in the aesthetic medium, that made clear to the story's audience the intellectual effort necessary to decipher its meaning, in contrast to the "warm" emotional milieu of the longer, more experiential novel.

Moreover, in the early decades of the twentieth century, moral uncertainties about existing class structures allowed rhetorically powerful "post-aesthete" writers and critics such as Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford the opportunity to argue for a modernist aristocracy in the arts, which, though not specifically concerned with the short story, benefited it as a modern form. In this view, artists and intellectuals rather than the politically or economically powerful are the possessors of a superior vision, which they exhibit in the secret, refined languages of their art. The codes of this art were so esoteric (and often so deliberately offensive to middlebrow taste) that the general public was sometimes moved to assault exhibits or performances verbally and even physically, in notorious outbursts that now seem merely quaint. A less public art than music, painting, or sculpture, the short story escaped such demonstrations, (Perhaps excepting the destruction of the plates and type for what was to have been the first edition of Joyce's *Dubliners*, in a printer's objection to its content, rather than its form.) Rejection by the lowbrow became a touchstone of high modernist art, and to be too popular,

3. Suzanne Ferguson, "Defining the Short Story: Impressionism and Form," *Modern Fiction Studies*, XXVIII (1982), 13-24.

as Dickens was, or Kipling in his early years, was to court critical deprecation. Appreciation of the short story, along with that of other modernist art forms, became connoisseurship.

But beyond the formal changes, beyond the changes simply deriving from the short story's imitation of twentieth- rather than nineteenth-century behavior, speech, and details of everyday life, the pre-eminence of the short story as a modernist genre grew out of the modern, highbrow audience's acceptance of fragmentation as an accurate model of the world, with a concomitant focus on "being"—as in Woolf's "moments of being"—-rather than the "becoming" that characterizes the plot of the Romantic and the Victorian novel. The brevity that marked "minor" to earlier generations became a badge of the short story's superior representational capacity. For a brief period, in English literature, at least, the short story became not just a prestige genre but the genre that could be said to best represent the essence of the age, as did drama at the end of the sixteenth century.

Thus, by persistently trying to move into the prestige circles of the genres ... poetry, drama and the novel...the short story came into its own 'social' success, producing a highbrow heir to low and middlebrow heir."

2.6.2 ❐ About the Author

William Sydney Porter used O' Henry as his *nom de plume*. He wrote humorous, poignant tales with a twist at the end. Some of his tales were out-landish, but always meticulously plotted.

O' Henry specialised in the human of incongruity and surprise, in his endings and in his humorous combinations and distortion of words. He used malapropisms, comic companions and tall tale conceits.

The tall tale was traditionally a fictional narrative told as fiction, but it masqueraded as true narration of a personal narrative. It was the narrator's design to present it as true and the listeners acted as though they believed it to be true. O' Henry in his stories often used the tall tale atmosphere and the tall tale technique. Many of the hundreds of stories he wrote continue to delight readers to this day.

O' Henry died in 1910 at the age of 48. The O' Henry Prize—an award instituted in his honour is considered America's most prestigious award for short fiction.

2.6.3 ❐ "The Cop and the Anthem" : Analysis

The boundless charity that O'Henry had for his fellow human beings is revealed in this short story. Almost Biblical in its references to crime and punishment, views of sin and absolution and profound sympathy, the story has universal scope. The racy style and colloquial language, as well as the intimate tone of narration have endeared O'Henry's stories to generations readers.

2.6.4 ❐ The Story

Soapy, a petty criminal is the hero of this brilliant short story. Soapy had no faith in charity.

> As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its tall of a bath, every loaf of bread it's compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

O'Henry loves the Mamhattan and his tongue in cheek humour plays around this urban centre and its busy denizens. The very vulnerable individual is mostly juxtaposed against heartless institutions. O'Henry's faith in mankind is palpable in most of his stories—virtuous and flawed, all men share his warm acceptance, and this endears him to readers round the globe and down the years.

The story begins with a tramp, Soapy, panicking at the premonition of the oncoming winter, and trying to get himself into the jail's security for the winter months.

Soapy looks at the glittering cafe, where, in O'Henry's inimitable language :

> ... are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

In a hilarious manner, the writer presents the plight of Soapy who does one petty crime after another so that he would be arrested and put into prison for most of the harsh winter months. His plan to gatecrash an expensive restaurant fails and even when he smashes a shop window and confesses to the misdeed the police do not arrest him. When, desperate, he finally eats a hearty meal and declines to pay, the waiters manhandle him and throw him out.

''Arrest seemed but a rosy dream, The Island seamed very far away.''

His attempt at eve-teasing, with a policeman looking on, was doomed. The elegant lady turned out to be a common street-walker and began seriously propositioning him.

All his attempts failed. He raved, ranted and created a terrible nuisance. But the police mistook him for a celebrating Yale student and ignored him. He pilfered a man's umbrella, and declared his offence. The man, who was not really the owner of the umbrella, sheepishly gave up all claims. Soapy just could not get himself arrested.

As he came upon an old church, Soapy was transfixed by the sweet music coming from within.

> The anthem the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

Soapy in a trance, looked back in distaste upon his present degradation, and effect of the music swayed him to the very core. He began promising himself that he would climb out of the self-created rut and that he would vanquish the evil that had possessed him.

> There was time : he was comparatively young yet, he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering.

As the anthem swelled to a crescendo, Soapy's resolutions became firmer. He would be somebody in the world, he decided. Just as he was about to take forth a step as a changed man, The police arrested him on charges of loitering and of being a vagabond. The Magistrate gave him the much-desired sentence of his—three months on the Island, only Soapy did not want it now. The Church music had metamorphased him, he had virtuous intentions. But it was too late.

2.6.5 Conclusion

Irony is O' Henry's forte. Very gently he demonstrates how puny the efforts of human kind are in the face of destiny. Bitter sweet experiences crowd upon a person as he goes through life, and it touches us to the very soul.

Even as the Soviet–American hostilities enhanced, and 'communism' became a dirty word in the U.S., O' Henry remained a perennial favourite with readers. He was popular not only with the masses, but also with many of the Soviet writers, who studied him for his technique so that stories with an O'Henry Twist were being published in Russia at a time when American short-story writers were imitating Chekhov.

The out-of work law clerk, the humble typist, the millioner's girl, the

bell-boy, the small trader with great ambitions—O'Henry's world was crowded with mundane, very urban characters who have a spark of something unique amidst all their mundane existence. The meticulous details of their speech, dress and habits are products of long years of close observation. O' Henry in a very Chaucerian way is infinitely forgiving, very understanding and tolerant of small human flaws.

The cynical wit of George Ade, expressed in slang (in *Fables in Slang,* 1899), found reflection, though in a gentler manner, in the slang often found in O' Henry's stories. It was a slang that gave America a common speech in those days before the radio. The colloquial voice of New York specially Manhattan, rings clearly in most of his stories, landing them a uniqueness and immediacy that is appreciable. His strong belief that mankind is redeemable, even under hopeless conditions, instill hope among his readers and renews faitsh in humanity.

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post-Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Cooperation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

6th Reprint : November, 2017

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Printed in accordance with the regulations of the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.

POST-GRADUATE : ENGLISH

[PG : ENG.]

Paper–VI

Module – 3

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Editing

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NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

Post-Graduate
Course in English
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Module 3

Introduction

Module 3

American Poetry (1819-2000)

Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens and Allen Ginsberg

Introduction to American Poetry

Poetry over the last couple of centuries in America has moved in several directions, from finding a voice and establishing a native tradition, to reclaiming its European roots before returning to an emphatically vernacular viewpoint and idiom. American poetry of the past two centuries ranges from the expansive Emersonian Romanticism of Whitman, as he sang of self and country in his bardic breath to the condensed lines of the reclusive Emily Dickinson. It extends the native line of explorations through the poetic ground broken by Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens, appropriates the influences of European Modernism in the output of Pound and Eliot before diverging significantly to the resounding rhythms of the Beat generation.

Influences and resistances, divergences and convergences, iconization and interrogation, inevitably tangle in the experience of a nation as it went through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the two World Wars, all the while trying to delineate an identity and shape an aesthetics. Whitman, Frost, and Dickinson, despite their individual differences as poets may be traced back to Emerson in the dialectical sweep of their inquiries, which consistently admitted of new vision, and also in the intrinsically spiritual roots of their discourses.

Whitman's use of anaphora links his poetry to the oratorical tradition of 19th century New England, which along with other rhetorical strategies helped his verse to take on important aspects of the contemporary public discourse. In complete opposition to this tendency, Dickinson, who also lived in an age of public speeches and sermons, tended to be generally distrustful of language and its ability to communicate. In fact, in the poetry of their generation, Dickinson's literalism was an obverse of Whitman's rhetoric.

Wallace Stevens carried the native Emersonian tradition through French symbolism and American pragmatism into the epistemological revolution of the mid-twentieth

century. Frost and Stevens were two of the several explorers who pointed the direction of mainstream poetry in the early decades of the twentieth century. If Frost was dialectical in his approach, exploring viewpoints, substituting one idea with another, Dickinson too tended to argue and question. In this sense both Frost and Dickinson were epistemological poets, at times consciously and sometimes unconsciously advancing a theory of knowledge.

Though Stevens absorbed European influences such as the French poetry of Verlaine and Laforgue, and often set his poems against a Mexican background, he remained at core an American poet, deeply concerned about contemporary issues and the nature of poetry. Like Stevens, Ginsberg too had assimilated the influences of European Modernism, particularly those of Kafka, Yeats, Rimbaud and Celine. Yet his basic poetic sensibility was uncompromisingly American. His literary roots ran deep in the soil of his predecessors, so much so, that Ruland and Bradbury are forced to observe that, "his high visibility and popularity among the young seem to measure the decline of Eliot's authority and the waning of Europe's influence on post-war American writing" (Ruland and Bradbury, ***A History of American Literature,*** Penguin, New York, 1001, p 397)

Yet comparisons of American poets with their European predecessors and counterparts is inevitable. Stevens's philosophical engagement with the nature of reality, art and the imagination "made him the one natively American poet among his generation who-as a thinker about, and a thinker in poetry-can seem genuinely comparable to Yeats, Eliot or Valery," (Ruland and Bradbury, p 291). In this regard, he was akin to Dickinson, who was similarly preoccupied with aesthetic speculation, especially its originary dimension, her images sometimes functioning as metapoetic tropes.

If Stevens sought to make his poem "the cry of its occasion," Dickinson wished to tell all but "tell it slant". The abiding attempt on the part of both poets to divine and express in their poetry the complex relationship between meditation and mediation remains an essential component of their poetics. In a sense, this urge to capture the poetry making process, harks back to Whitman's need to apprehend the self as a felt presence within him, and consequently try and become aware of the unconscious mind in its creative endeavour.

The dialogue between American poets across eras extends to structure and style as well. An aspect of such affinity may be located in the correspondences between Whitman's style and Ginsberg's. Whitman's cumulative technique resulting in, what Allen calls an 'enumerative style' finds an echo in Ginsberg's poem 'Howl' where his lines, like Whitman's, are begun and held together by the same word and usually

the same grammatical construction. Both Whitman and Ginsberg go back to the Hebraic roots of this, tradition of accumulation and parallelism, a tradition that Allen has shown to hinge upon a rhythm of thought, "repeating and balancing ideas and sentences (or independent clauses) instead of syllables or accents".

Ginsberg has acknowledged his debt to the older poet by recognizing the latter's contribution to "early XX century organization of new speech-rhythm prosody to build up large organic structures". His best tribute to the earlier poet however, lies in his own poetic use of the Whitmanian equation of the unit of sense with the measure of the line. It is interesting to observe how Dickinson veers from this standard. In her case, the functional unit is not the poetic line, nor the word but the syllable, "a primary unit of sound that becomes a unit of sense as well". (M.K. Biasing, Yale Univ Press, N. Haven & London, 1987, p 178).

While Stevens is said to have Whitmanized Modernism, Ginsberg in his own way claimed the national bard as his mentor. In his poem, ***'Supermarket in California*** Ginsberg imagines Walt Whitman in the alien milieu of metropolitan America. "I saw you Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber/...Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love/past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage? / Ah. dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher..." This tribute from one American poet to another is an eloquent comment on the native links within the chain of influences that characterize the American tradition in poetry.

Unit 1 ❑ Walt Whitman (1819-1892)—'Song of Myself'—'Passage to India'

Structure

1.0 Introduction

Born on May 3, 1819 at West Hills, Long Island, Whitman was a product of those decades just before the Civil War. In the period between 1820 and 1860 American national life, poised as it was on the cusp of crisis and consolidation, came to be associated with a search for novelty, a sense of adventure, and a breadth of vision that understandably, grew out of a climate of exploration and enlightenment.

Transfer and travel characterized the early life of Whitman as his family moved to Brooklyn and shifted from house to house within the district. Since the time he left school in 1830 till 1836, Whitman worked at sundry jobs in and around Brooklyn and New York. In 1836, he returned to rural Long Island where he taught school for a while. On his re-arrival in New York in 1841, Whitman worked as reporter and editor with various journals, lending his voice to the critical colloquia of the age, and helping to forge a new sensibility and aesthetics.

Democrat, poet, pioneer and prophet Whitman came to symbolize the spirit of his age. His poetic genius, Whitman predicted would be "self-liberated like leaves of grass, slowly, painfully, and in due time, after its long dormancy". ***Leaves of Grass,***

published in 1855 represented the germination of a new kind of poetry bearing out Whitman's resolve to write a poem on the "infinite and omnigenous self', redolent with images fresh from the subliminal mind.

1.1 Textual Explication ('Song of Myself')

'Song of Myself' is a long, loosely organized poem on Whitman's experience of a mystical state of being. Untitled when it appeared in the first edition of ***Leaves of Grass*** in 1955, it was called 'Poem of Walt Whitman, an American' in the 1856 edition, and acquired its present title in the 1881 edition. In Sections 1-5, the poet records his preparation for, and entry into mystical consciousness. In Sections 6-49, he likewise records the emotional, moral and spiritual significances that accrue to him while he is in this state of heightened awareness; and in Sections 50-52, he recounts his emergence from the mystical condition.

'Song of Myself' is not about the poet but about each object in creation. It expresses Whitman's belief in cosmic individualism, the notion that every atom in nature, every human being necessarily partakes of cosmic processes, being intrinsically linked to the larger whole of creation. In this context, each blade of grass, the minutest detail in nature and the human world, becomes and remains inscribed with divine meanings.

Section I of the poem being prescribed in the syllabus, the focus of the discussion will be on the opening segment containing several stanzas and ending with the line "You shall listen to all sides and shall filter them from yourself'. The poet begins with a celebration of self, which is in effect, a celebration of the universe, since the self is intimately and indissolubly linked to the cosmic soul. "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." In a passive and receptive frame of mind the poet observes a "spear of summer grass" and issues an invitation to his soul: "I loafe and invite my soul."

Next, he evokes the image of "houses and rooms" which are full of fragrances, the seductive scents of the world he likes and inhales, from whose intoxicating influence he wills himself apart. "The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it." When he affirms, "the atmosphere is not a perfume" he reminds one of the rarefied air the refined essence that he seeks to imbibe. For such a communion to take place, the surroundings have to be congenial. The rhetoric of renunciation is evident in the line, "I will go to bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked"- There has to be the divestment of garb and vesture, of the clothes and perfumes of the world before the soul can receive the 'original energy" of nature.

A reversion to pristine innocence is suggested, by the use of words such as "undisguised" and 'naked' which emphasize an essentialist ethic. The self in its most fundamental or essential aspect, uncamouflaged by accoutrements and acquisitions may go "to the bank by the wood" in order to consummate the communion between the self and nature. The "bank by the wood" as a lineament of landscape assumes a mythical dimension as it develops into a metaphor for a sacred grove, a consecrated spot in the great outdoors sought by pilgrims bent on spiritual regeneration.

The importance of each sense to the anticipated mystical experience is acknowledged by the poet in the catalogue of sensory perceptions provided in the section between lines 17 to 33. The "smoke of my own breath" pertains to taste while "echoes, ripples and buzzed whispers" to sound, the "the sniff of green leaves and dry leaves" to smell, "a few kisses, a few embraces" to touch, and "the play of shine and shade on the trees" to sight.

The poet speaks of his apprehension of natural things, of physiological processes such as the intake and expulsion of breath, and of his delight in simple, elemental phenomena. The phrases and expressions, the scattered images throughout this section gain a measure of completion in the climactic gesture of the poet "rising from bed and meeting the sun".

The beginning of the quest lies in the question. And that is precisely where Whitman locates his search in line 21. A cascade of questions demonstrates his interrogative urgency. The search for knowledge leads one to nature, the land, and the earth. Learning to unravel the mysteries of nature is a .long and laborious process. "Have you practised so long to read?" aptly sums up the rigorous application of faculties needed to decipher the divine hieroglyphic encoded in nature. Nature, feels Whitman, equips one with knowledge, which helps to elucidate the "meaning of poems".

The poet invites the reader to "stop this day and night" with him that he may proceed to the core of all poems. The truth of poetry laboriously sought and diligently discovered, will link the reader to the cosmic good of "the earth and the sun". The poetic voice almost attains a pitch of prophecy in its prescient pronouncement: "You shall no longer take things at second or third hand."

The poet goes on to elaborate, how the reader through a process of elimination, may gradually sift the truth from the surrounding impurities. Not the past, "the eyes of the dead", not the mechanical, inert knowledge in books, "spectres in books", not the poet's perspective, nor even the reader's own perceptions, is singly advocated. The injunction is to consider "all sides" and "filter them" from one's own self.

1.1.1 Analysis

'Song of Myself' has been described as Whitman's "utopian version of the American pastoral myth" ***(Walt Whitman Reconsidered,*** Richard Chase, W. Sloane Associates Inc, N Yk, 1955 p 76). American literature through the fiction of Cooper, Melville, Twain and Hawthorne has sought to present a movement away from society toward seclusion with their protagonist seeking a respite from reality in the wilderness, river or sea.

The first section of "Song of Myself' is to a large extent expressive of delight in the senses. James E. Miller perceptively points out, "Whereas normally the mystical state is achieved only through a mortification of, or escape from, the senses, the poet of 'Song of Myself' asserts that it is *through* the transfigured senses that he reaches mystical consciousness". ***(A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass,*** Univ. of Chicago Press, p 10)

'Song of Myself' strives to present the self in all its dimensions and potentialities. Becoming aware of one's unconscious mind in its creative moments is one way of apprehending the soul. The preoccupation with the 'self' found in the poem was prompted by several factors. In America, the ideals of democracy and freedom had bred a national outlook that favoured the principle of individualism with its accent on the self. The speculative tendency of the age, moreover, with its emphasis on Transcendentalism had exalted the self into a Godlike power imbuing it with special attributes.

At a personal level, Whitman was acutely conscious of a division in his self and tended to see himself as "two"—"my soul and I". In his notebook Whitman had written as early as 1847, "I cannot understand the mystery, but I am always conscious of myself as two". The "I" for its part, has a gendered split, the lonely, vulnerable and 'feminine' voice along with the weathered, 'masculine', rough voice. (Chase, p 50) Whitman, true to his ideological orientation was taken up with the relationship between the self and the world. W.R. Johnson in his essay. *The Idea of Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry,* p 29 corroborates the idea: "The organic dynamism and diversity are made possible through a mutual modification between the part and the whole."

The tone prevailing throughout the poem and noticeable from the outset is one of sacramental communion. As the poet commences to celebrate aspects of the natural, elemental, physical and sensory world, prior to his entry into a trance-like state, his language assumes an almost incantatory quality, the observations following, one after

the other, in close succession. The poet is both observer and absorber. He is creator and communicant, partaking of and ritualistically sharing with his readers, the stages of his mystical experience.

1.1.2 Structure and Style

Whitman, following Emerson, believed in the metaphorical origin and spiritual essence of all words. Such a philosophy of language, held by the poet himself naturally prompts the reader to search for motifs and meanings in his poetry that are far in excess of the literal configurations. Whitman, who believed that colloquial words best unite the natural and the spiritual, is at his ease with words such as "lean", "loafe", "mad", "sniff', "belched" and "wag". At the same time he has a feeling for more elegant or erudite expressions such as "fragrance", "distillation" and "intoxicate". Thus, it is with reason that R. Chase has called him "both semanticist and bard," "...a kind of primitive I. A. Richards and a sophisticated Orpheus" ***(Walt Whitman Reconsidered,*** p 92).

The poem begins with the image of "a spear of summer grass". The leaf of grass is Whitman's image of the mundane and the momentous. It is his metaphorical means of celebrating the transcendent in the immanent. This imagery is intermittently reinforced and reaches a culmination in Section 31 where the poet affirms: "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars." Most of the images in Section I have to do with the natural, elemental order. There are references to leaves, green and dry, to shore and sea rocks, hay in the barn, supple boughs and to fields and hillsides. The images foster associations of the rural and the agricultural world, and help in promoting an awareness of openness and expansiveness.

The overall impact of Whitman's verse is one of rhythmic flow, what Helen Vendler has described as "contagious cadence" and sought to explain in terms of "Hebraic parallelism" ***(Voices and Visions.*** The Poet in America, ed Helen Vendler, Tata McGraw Hill, N Delhi, 1987, p 9). The words, which seem to flow effortlessly from the poet's brain, are caught in a momentum that is steadily fuelled by a train of observations, descriptions and associations. The poet seems to delight in briefly registering his impressions and imaginings without dwelling on the details, thus, at once demonstrating and corroborating his interest in poetic hieroglyphics, that is, using words in their mythical and symbolic capacities.

Vendler's contention, shared by other critics On Whitman is that the Bible had considerably influenced the poet in the articulation of his grand choral Song. It helped him toward amplitude, toward rhythm, rhetoric and reverberation, and toward anaphora and polysyndeton.

Having titled the poem a 'song', the lyrical, celebratory and hymnal nature of the work is as expected as it is unmistakable. The flood of observations and descriptions, selected and sequenced by the poet, rising and falling with the rhythm of the thought yields a tempo of tonalities that is sustained throughout the poem. There are moments when the confessional element in the lyric becomes pronounced, as in stanza 4 of Section I, where the poet vows: "I will go to the bank...with me."

'Song of Myself is imbued with generic and rhetorical multiplicity. Lyric, confessional, hymn, it is at the same time dramatic in its orientation. The poet addresses the reader introducing a lively dramatic element, talking, explaining, describing and recording his impressions of the world around him. The subjective "I", already fraught with a division between the self and the soul expands to accommodate the reader along with the natural organic orders.

1.1.3 Questions

1. What is Whitman's understanding of the 'self' in Section I of 'Song of Myself'?
2. What does Whitman feel about nature's contribution to the "meaning of poems"?
3. Consider the epistemological dimension of the first Section of 'Song of Myself'.
4. Comment on the celebratory quality of the first Section of 'Song' and suggest the sources, which may have stylistically influenced the same.
5. "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you". Examine this statement in the light of Whitman's personal and political beliefs.

1.2 Introduction 'Passage to India'

'Passage to India' is a poem on Whitman's meditations on time, space and death. The first 3 Sections deal with space and man's material achievements therein. Sections 4-6 have to do with time, namely history, while the last 3 Sections seek to go beyond space and time to achieve an imaginative union with God. The poet lauds the ingenious marvels of modem engineering. He specifically mentions the Suez Canal, the transcontinental railroad ("mighty railroad" in line 6), and the Atlantic cable, ("the sea inlaid with eloquent gentle wire" in line 7). These achievements have helped man to span the globe, and bring together worlds till then separated. The Suez Canal linked Asia with Europe; the Atlantic cable connected Europe to the New World; the transcontinental railroad united the New World with Asia.

It is a poem in which the heroic vision of Whitman, dwelling with pride on the advances in modem technology, evokes the echoes of the journeyings of Columbus

referring thereby to a mythopoeia of voyagings and discovery that was embedded in the national consciousness. Spatial zones are overlaid with temporal allusions and associations. Asia, being the cradle of civilization, is identified with the past. Europe evokes the echoes of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, recognizable eras in the development of thought and culture in Western history. The New World, is likewise, a spatial metaphor for the epochs, which mark the colonization of the Americas.

The emphasis is on the interpenetration of space and time, along with that on "spanning", uniting or interconnecting areas of the globe which had been not only geographically, but culturally and psychologically disparate and alien. There is a need to go beyond a simplistic assessment of time zones and arrive at a problematized version of the same. While Asia represents the world's past, the ancient springs of human civilization, Europe is another instance or version of the old. Though younger than Asia by any reckoning, it is nevertheless, regarded as the old, the traditional, and the decadent when compared to the New World.

1.2.1 Textual Explication

It is possible to perceive a cyclical thrust in the interconnections mentioned in the opening stanza, which enables each geographical area mentioned to reach out to and establish links with the other. Asia reaches out to Europe through the Suez Canal. Europe, in turn, is attached to the New World through the Atlantic cable, while the New World, for its part, completes the circle by negotiating through the "mighty railroad", a path to Asia.

While the pattern of connectivity in terms of space is circular, in temporal terms it is that of linear progression. Ancient Asia forges links with Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe, and Europe herself looks ahead to the New World of the 19th and 20th centuries. It appears to be a linear movement through the ages, older epochs reaching out to and relating with newer ones in the ongoing dialectic of history.

The mastery of space celebrated by Whitman in Section I is, at the same time, a temporal and spiritual victory. Engineering feats, by making it possible for humankind to reach out to the farthest limits of the globe, have ensured for the species a return to the past as well. Man, in his return to the race's spatial origin in Asia, attains the culmination of his spiritual search as well. The last two lines of the first stanza: "Yet the Past!" with its repetition arid exclamations are expressive of Whitman's ardent desire to realize the true meaning of his travels. The cycle of movement is completed by the return to the past.

The bridging of geographical spaces by modem technological marvels and the spatial compactness consequently wrought is thought to have achieved a similar

condensation in terms of time, with past and present having been closely connected. Whitman describes this interconnection in Section V thus: "All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd and linked together."

The first 3 lines of the second stanza are taken up with a meditation on the past. Enthusiastically hailed as "the dark unfathom'd retrospect" the shadowy, mysterious nature of the past is eloquently averred. The second line of the stanza conceives of the past as a "teeming gulf' which separates the eras and the generations. The "sleepers" and the "shadows" refer to the bygone generations and the oblivion into which they have slipped. The third line is an emphatic, hymnic recapitulation of the greatness of the past, 'The past, the infinite greatness of the past". The fourth line, couched in the reasonable rhetoric of interrogation, "For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?" again testifies to the invincible superiority of the past as a source, which yields the present. Growing organically out of the past, the present is seen as a successor to or an offspring of the parenting past which shapes what it yields or begets.

The fourth line, in fact, facilitates understanding of the last two lines of the stanza: "As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still keeps on/So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past". The impact of this figure renders the categories of past, present and future artificial and quite redundant. Since the present is forever being "impelled", it stands to reason that it bears elements of the past, and will change into the future, and the process is likely to be repeated and infinitum. Thus, arid constructions and conjectures of clock and calendar time are cast aside in favour of a view that sees time as the impulse of a movement. The objectification of time as a projectile continually moving forward combines the notions of space, time and movement within the scope of a single image, and thereby affirms a compaction, that is one of the ideological imperatives of the poem.

1.2.2 Analysis

One of the major thematic preoccupations of the poem 'Passage to India' is movement in its various forms. Singing a paean to the miracles of modem engineering Whitman begins the poem with the notion of circumnavigation. The traffic around the globe, inspired and made possible by the Railroad, the Cable and the Canal, institutes connections and compactions in space and time, linking disparate landmasses and eras and achieving teleological triumphs. The movement is not only around or across the globe, and in terms of time but also one from the material to the spiritual, to the "deep diving bibles and legends of India".

Related to the theme of movement, therefore, is that of connection, a theoretical

premise that has been consistently developed in the poem. While the "marriage of continents" has been carried out with the linkage of Asia, Europe and the New World, the different ages in history have been effectively spanned through the image of the projectile. Paradoxically, the benefits of human science, normally regarded a& futuristic, have enabled the human race access to eastern mysticism and made possible a return to and a union with the past.

l.2.3 Structure and Style

Whitman begins 'Passage to India' on a note of euphoric admiration for the "great achievements of the present". His is the bardic voice of 19th century America extolling the accomplishments of his age. The repetition of a single idea and similar words in the first 3 lines makes for a hypnotic flow of cadences along the lines of a musical composition and brings to mind the "Hebraic parallelism", mentioned earlier.

The verbal repetitions, exclamations and dashes combine to express a note of exultation that is consonant with the bardic mission of the poet. Deeply motivated and spiritually elevated, the poet seeks to communicate his discovery of the organic dynamism present in time and place through lyric intensity and rhetorical urgency. Striving to metrically replicate the phenomenological continuity of the engineering feats spanning the world. Whitman develops his powerful choral rhythms. Observes W. R. Johnson, "Laid end to end, Whitman's long lines would form their own virtual transcontinental railroad" ***(The Idea of Lyric,*** p 22).

The first section is noted for its vivid and arresting images, which advance the themes of the poem. Words and phrases such as "projectile", "impelled" and "still keeps on" heighten the notion of dynamism that is at the core of the poem, and suggest that time is simply an ontological onrush, the inveterate impulse to move on, impelled as it is with what has gone by. The "eloquent gentle wires", a metaphor for the Atlantic Cable linking Europe with the New World develops into the defining symbol of the interconnections that too are integral to the poem. The subtle circuitry between past, present and future is suggested through the image of the "wires", while the adjective "eloquent" tells of the dialogue or communication between the continents and ages that was made possible by the same.

The past, spatially apprehended as "the dark unfathom'd retrospect", acquires the lineaments of a landscape, a vista that one looks back on. In the very next line when the same past is called "a teeming gulf", the image changes in its geographical orientation from land to sea. Both images testify to the spatialization of time that has been undertaken and achieved by the poet.

1.2.4 Questions

1. Which "modern wonders" described by Whitman in the first section of 'Passage to India' have successfully linked the world according to the poet?
2. How does Whitman describe the past? Why does he conceive of it as a "dynamic and inclusive category"?
3. How, according to Whitman, do the means of geographical linkage help to unite the ages?
4. Do you think the style of the poem is suited to the expression of its theme? Give reasons for your answer.

Suggested Reading

The works, which have been cited by way of reference, should be useful sources of criticism.

Unit 2 ❑ Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Structure

2.0 Introduction

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 in Amherst, a quiet village in the Connecticut valley of Massachusetts. Though unpublished in her lifetime and unknown at her death, Dickinson attained a posthumous recognition that established her as one of the more important poetic voices in America. Occupying a pivotal position between the Puritans and the modems, Dickinson was a creative conduit in whom 19"' century Romanticism is seen to give way to the ambiguities and subtleties of 20th century Modernism.

Dickinson, who did not marry, lived in the parental home enjoying the affection of her brother and sisters, tending her garden and corresponding copiously with friends. She spent two years at Amherst Academy and one at Holyoke Seminary. Inspired by a Philadelphia clergyman Charles Wadsworth, Dickinson strove to locate answers to the many questions plaguing her at the time. She began to write seriously from the year 1846 and in 1862 sent four of her poems to her mentor, Thomas Wentworth Higginson for his comment on her work.

Though outwardly content within the circle of family and friends, the poet was not without tensions, ideological and emotional, within the patriarchal set-up which

sanctioned considerably more recognition to the male both in terms of domestic and professional power. In the larger world of Massachusetts, Calvinism was gradually giving way to Unitarianism, engendering in the process changes in the theological climate of the region. While intense political disturbances such as the Civil War did not directly enter Dickinson's themes, they remained an oblique presence in the background, investing her poetry with a residue of pain, horror and futility.

As time went on, Dickinson gradually became a recluse. She withdrew from society and preferred to spend her time tending her garden. She became obsessed with death around this time. After Dickinson's death in 1886, her sister Lavinia, who discovered her poems, sent them to Mabel Loomis Todd, the brilliant young wife of an Amherst professor. With the help of T.W. Higginson, Mabel Todd completed the deciphering and typing of the manuscripts, and finally had them ready for posterity.

Only seven of Dickinson's poems had been published in her lifetime, and the rest, close to 18,000 poems were published in 1890. In the Preface to this edition. T.W. Higginson commented that Dickinson's utterances were "like poetry torn up by the roots, with rain and dew and earth still clinging to them". She won recognition posthumously in the 1920s, before the definitive edition brought out by Ò.Í. Johnson in 1955 established her credentials as a truly remarkable voice in the rich and varied accents of the nation.

2.1 Textual Explication ('Because I Could Not Stop for Death')

The Dickinson girls often went on carriage rides with their father or brother. The idea for the poem may have originated from a personal experience etched in the poet's consciousness. A distant cousin, Olivia Coleman who had moved from Princeton to Amherst a year earlier, and who was suffering from consumption had died while on a carriage drive in the afternoon of September 28, 1847.

The speaker narrates her experience of a journey, an early evening ride during which Death boarded her carriage. Chaperoned by the comforting presence of Immortality, she rode on through familiar countryside, past the school and fields of grain till they "passed the Setting Sun". The idea of a frontier crossing is introduced only to be contradicted by the observation: "He passed Us." The desertion by the sun brought forth a coldness for which the speaker was not prepared in terms of attire. They paused before a House that turned out to be a grave, "a House that seemed / A Swelling of the Ground. Complexities, both thematic and temporal surface at the end of the poem with the speaker's posthumous apprehension of time, space and

direction, and the mention of Horses' Heads that the speaker had originally thought to have been facing toward eternity.

The deceptively conversational tone of the opening is almost Metaphysical in its capacity to shock the reader with its dramatic content. The logical and explicatory nature of the conjunction "because" that launches the reflective movement of the poem along with the adverb "kindly" assigned to death, serves to enforce a ritual of civility that one does not associate with a mortal intervention. The next two lines of the first stanza similarly corroborate a theme that is quite at variance with the tone. 'The carriage held but just Ourselves/ And Immortality." In 'Because' mortality is presented as a suitor who stops the speaker's carriage in order to board it, and accompany her through the various scenes and stages of life. There is almost a sense of coziness within the carriage, if one overlooks the allegorical aspects of the speaker's companions. Death and Immortality.

The second stanza extends the relaxed conversational tone, the ominous overtones notwithstanding, "We slowly drove- He knew no haste". Biographical parallels provide ballast to the several searches for meaning in this highly symbolic poem. The Dickinson girls often went on carriage rides with their male relatives and friends. The journey recalled in the poem is a leisured one, there having been no need for hurry. V. R. Pollak observes with an irony perhaps not intended. "She has all the time in the world and in other worlds besides". (***Dickinson-The Anxiety of Gender,*** Vivian R. Pollak, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca and London, 1984 p, 191). The encounter between the speaker and death approaches the formality of a social exercise when the former observes in all reasonableness, "And 1 had put away / My labor and my leisure too, / For His Civility".

The third stanza throws up the images of time and space passed by the occupants of the carriage during their leisurely journey. The "school" is not only the local school where "Children strove/at Recess", but is one of the archetypal associations of childhood across nations and ages. The fields of grain symbolize experience and maturity, fertility and fruition, the harvests of knowledge gathered in schools through the seasons of search. Childhood and maturity are inevitably followed by the end of life, a scenario suggested by the last line of the third stanza, which mentioned the speaker's journey beyond the setting sun.

The fourth stanza sets out to contradict this cosmological assumption by clarifying "Or rather- He passed Us"-which is quite a different thing from them passing the sun. The opening line of the stanza sets the tone for a change in the atmosphere, in the meteorological conditions surrounding the carriage. "The Dews drew quivering and chill". The speaker is not suitably clad for the damp and chill that have invaded the

air, as she notably laments "For only Gossamer, my Gown-/ My Tippet- only Tulle". The speaker's gown made of gossamer, a soft, sheer, gauzy fabric, and "tippet" or stole made of tulle, are scarce protection against the cold weather. The sharpness of the atmosphere made the speaker aware of the inadequacy of her clothing (which might have been the costume of a bride) for the inhospitable weather. Helen McNeil ***(Emily Dickinson,*** Pantheon Books. Virago. London, 1986, p 131) sees in the imagery of morbid courtship the speaker's "sexual humiliation" when the latter becomes aware of her transparent clothing. Pollak observes, that the feminine imagery of gown and tippet serve to draw attention to the "fragility of (the speaker's) body, her ego and her psychic defenses" ***(Anxiety of Gender,*** p 191).

It is only in the fifth stanza that the carriage draws to a halt. Movement, slow but continuous, had been the driving force in the four preceding stanzas. Ironies proliferate at this point when one realizes that the sense of culmination suggested by the word "house", a sought after destination reached after a long ride is replaced by a sense of termination enforced through the image of the grave. What ought to have been a refuge or shelter for the living turns out to be a resting-place for the dead. The barely visible roof and the sunken cornice of the house suggest its closeness to the soil, to ruins and remains, and reminds one powerfully of the levelling and reduction of most things to the earth.

The evening ride takes the reader through familiar scenes to the buried home, or the grave where the outward action stops. The last stanza of the poem contains the denouement of the poem. Elizabeth Phillip, tracing literary influences on Dickinson, links the denouement to several expressions celebrated in the Romantic and Victorian canons of England. She refers to the stanza's close affinity with the notion of the "instant made eternity" in Browning's The Last Ride Together'. Though not quite the same in spirit or philosophy, Dickinson's imaginative transformation of time (centuries which seem shorter than a day) approaches the Victorian poet's dictum in its bid to expand the range of time through psychological intensity. Phillip points out Dickinson's indebtedness to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's account of the "enforced journey" to corruption undertaken by Marian Erie in Book VI of Aurora Leigh, and to the tone and mood of Keats' romantic necromancy expressed in his avowal that he was "half in love with easeful death".

The introduction of realistic doubt in the last two lines of the poem, "I first surmised the Horses Heads/Were toward Eternity" lends elements of surprise and piquancy, and adds to the discourse of perception that runs through the poem. A circular thrust to the imagery is-provided by the mention of the carriage, which returns one to the beginning of the poem, and establishes the horse-drawn vehicle as

an image of significance. Distance, direction, and angles of vision come into play at this point with the Horses' Heads not only obstructing the speaker's vision in a practical sense, but actually generating doubt about the direction they face, thus complicating the poetic discourse with competing meanings and perspectives.

2.1.1 Analysis

Writing her own obituary in 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death' Dickinson subverts conventional temporal verities and problematizes attitudes to death and dying. She is unable to imagine the end of the journey because she is unable to imagine the end of death, not having encountered the experience herself. Another view is that the speaker is always aware of death, which lurks in her memory but which cannot guarantee her a passage to eternity since the death is not her own.

Parini and Miller ***(The Columbia History of American Poetry,*** ed. Jay Parini and Brett C. Miller. New York: Columbia UP, 1993) notice the commingling of the conventional promise of Christianity with Gothic tonalities and link the suitor to both the lover of Poe's configuration and the 'Bridegroom' mentioned in the Bible.

2.1.2 Structure and Style

A unique feature of Dickinson's individuality is that she does not give her poems titles, possibly fearing that the latter would limit interpretation by imposing a measure of authorial jurisdiction. The brevity of Dickinson's poetry is compensated by the semantic and symbolic intensification of meaning wrought through her use of words and figures. The carriage doubles up for a hearse, while the gossamer gown and tulle tippet suggest bridal attire and its stark inappropriateness in the funereal context. Such transvaluation is seen in the grave image later in the poem, which is ironically, introduced as a 'house', a construct traditionally associated with security and comfort. The 'Horses Heads' being a synecdoche, not only represents the whole, but potentially subsumes the whole in its alteration and redefinition of vision.

Dickinson favours the hymn stanza, yet she often undercuts its formal norms with her unorthodox punctuation and syntactical disruptions. The colloquial tone employed at the beginning belies the seriousness of theme and sets up a contrast that is sustained in various ways throughout the poem. The rise and fall of the iambic rhythm seems to echo the sound of the carriage wheels as they move over the countryside.

Elizabeth Phillips ***(Emily Dickinson, Personae and Performance,*** Penn State U Press, London, 1991, p 86) sees the mingling of generic forms in the convergence of 'speech', 'soliloquy' and 'narrative' in 'Because'. Beginning with a formal, explanatory, reasonable account of the journey undertaken by the speaker, and

understandably delving into her personal responses to the overture of the morbid suitor, the poet goes on to provide a description of the passing sights. From the third stanza however, the narrative slips into a more interiorized recapitulation of the subsequent experiences, bringing it closer to the soliloquy.

2.1.3 Questions

1. Assess 'Because I Could Not Stop For Death' as a 'posthumous speech' which is effectively sustained as a soliloquy.
2. Analyze the biographical and intertextual echoes in 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death'.
3. Show how Dickinson manipulates rhetorical figures and strategies to achieve intensification of meaning and effect.
4. Discuss 'Because' as a multivalent reflection on death.
5. "I first surmised the Horses' Heads/Were toward eternity". Assess the relevance of this statement in the context of the poem as a whole.

2.2 Introduction 'Flowers'

Flowers occupied a special place in Dickinson's heart. The Dickinson family gardener MacGregor Jenkins describes a memorable encounter with the poet, which centred on the subject of flowers. He reminisces: "She talked to me of her flowers, of those she loved best; of her fear should the bad weather harm them; then, cutting a few choice buds, she bade me take them, with her love to my mother." Dickinson, in fact, spent considerable time in her garden tending to her blooms, personally cherishing the individual characteristics of the flowers she so carefully nurtured.

Though apparently different in theme and tone from the poem discussed earlier, it is linked to the longer poem in an elliptical way. Dickinson looked at death as a counterpart of life, and learnt to accept the former as an adventure recognizing its unfathomable quality. In the process she evolved a response to mortality that Emory Elliott in the Columbia Literary History of the US perceives as the creation of "a cosmology centred on nurturance and generativity" (p 623). The garden, according to this view, appears as the metaphor of a creative cosmos that is seen to counter the threat of destruction and darkness.

2.3 Textual Explication

Poem 137 expresses Dickinson's love for flowers. The beginning of the poem,

conversational in its syntactical and idiomatic cast, lays down a condition at the outset, challenging one to define the joy that flowers can bring to the human being, and promises a reward in the case of success. Having posed the challenge in the first four lines, Dickinson elaborates on the theme in the next (and last) four lines of the stanza. She maintains that if anybody succeeds in finding the source of the inspiration which occasions the "ecstasy", "transport" or the "fountain" of delight evoked by the perfection of flowers, she will gift him "all the Daisies on the hillside"

That the flowers Dickinson so passionately invokes, personally overwhelm her is evident from the first two lines of the second stanza. A surplus of sympathy manifests itself in the confession, that flowers move her more deeply than she cares to document. Butterflies, in themselves, a delicate and fragile embodiment of beauty combine with the image of the flowers to present a paradigm of perfection unsurpassed by the poet's art. The last two lines of the poem which claim that the butterflies sailing over the line of purple flowers "Have a system of aesthetics-/ Far superior to mine", appear to confirm Wolff's contention regarding the metapoetic nature of the flower imagery.

2.3.1 Analysis

C. G. Wolff refers to Dickinson's flowers as one of her "metapoetic tropes", arguing that the poet referred to her poetry as a "veil", "flowers" or "snow" ***(Fictions of Form in American Poetry,*** Stephen Cushman, Princeton Univ. Press, N Jersey, 1993, p 42). Read in this context, the poem can quite clearly be seen to be tending towards a culminating correlationship between the standards of natural and poetic perfection in which flowers are but a metaphor for the poetic blooms yielded by the imagination. The "ecstasy" is the bliss that attends the birth of art. and the "fountain" with all its pagan associations is a source of creative inspiration. The use of the word "line" in the third-last line of the poem, evocative of design and symmetry, brings to mind not only the lines of a poem but also the lines delineating a work of art or craft.

The garden or bower as an extension of the home operates as a domestic space or female sphere with its emphasis on ministration and nurturance. Dickinson affirms the superiority of the values of love and friendship over the so-called male preoccupations of business and politics. According to Helen McNeil, Dickinson did not subscribe to the literary imperialism of the day, which saw the North American continent as a wilderness to be conquered and subjugated. Even when Dickinson evokes her own garden, her patch of her father's estate, she does not possess it. She regards it as a domain of natural beauty and creativity, an aesthetic medium through which she could express herself.

2.3.2 Structure and Style

A variation of the sonnet structure, 'Flowers' is informed with a busy, tripping movement in its conditional proposition as it draws in object and subject in its formulation of a challenge. The epigrammatic precision of Dickinson's language is complicated by her metrical variations and disrupted syntax, which together constitute her counter-poetic of lexical liberties and synaesthetic surprises meant to subvert the utilitarian values of conventional patriarchy.

It has been suggested that Dickinson's poetry is based on the phrase and not the traditional foot. The dashes used so liberally by Dickinson convey a sense of urgent immediacy, and in some cases, the effect of "expressive suspension".

2.3.3 Suggested Reading

In addition to the critical works already referred to. one may look up the following:

The Emily Dickinson Handbook (ed Gudrun Grabher, R Hagenbuchle, C. Miller, Univ. of Mass Press, Amherst, 1998)

American Women Poets: Pioneers of Modern Poetry by Jean Gould, (Dodd, Medd and Co, New York, 1980)

Columbia Literary History of the United States, (ed, Emory Elliott, Gen Ed, Columbia Univ. Press. 1988)

2.3.4 Questions

1. Comment on Dickinson's use of 'flowers' as a metapoetic trope.
2. "The brevity of Dickinson's poems sensitizes us to the minutest literal details of her language". Discuss.
3. What is the tone affected by the speaker in this poem, and what does it reveal about her attitude to her art?

Unit 3 ❑ Robert Lee Frost (1874-1963)

Structure

3.0 Introduction

Robert Frost was born in 1874 to a New England family in San Francisco. As a boy Frost moved to the farm and mill country north of Boston, the backdrop of many of his poems. He went to Dartmouth and Harvard for his education following which he tried his hand at various jobs. He worked as a millhand, taught school for a while, and served as a newspaper editor. Frost spent several years farming before he moved to England where he received literary encouragement. His first book, ***A Boy's Will*** was published in 1913 while ***North of Boston*** which established him as a poet came out the following year. The poetic and the pastoral claimed Frost's attention equally and he returned to a country calling in his native land, settling in a New Hampshire farm.

'Mending Wall' and 'After Apple-Picking' are two of the dramatic lyrics included in Frost's volume of poems, ***North of Boston.*** This volume, containing lyrics, dialogues, dramatic monologues and narratives, is Frost's poetic study of rural New England. Most of the lyrics in this volume are centred around specific incidents that engage the speaker in dramatic conflicts and lead him to what Robert Langbaum has described as "extraordinary perspectives" ***(The Poetry of Experience,*** 1957, rpt N

Yk, W.W. Norton, 1963 p 47). While 'Mending Wall' is situated at the beginning of the volume, 'After Apple-Picking' is found just over halfway through the book.

3.1 Textual Explication ("Mending Wall")

'Mending Wall' is a dramatic narrative involving a country ritual that provokes a conflict of values between the speaker and a second character. Regional incident, local character and rustic imagery combine to create a poem that is ultimately universal in its appeal and scope of meaning. Intimations of conflict inform the poem from the very beginning. There is the opposition between the ground-swell and the wall. The mutinous upsurge of the ground-swell causes portions of the wall to weaken and gradually become dislodged from the main structure.

The speaker is both observant and imaginative. He takes note of the degeneration that has affected the wall, at the same time imagining the nature and power of the force or forces that may have contributed to its condition. The combination of the indefinite pronoun "something" with the loose construction "there is" suggests a speculative vagueness that establishes the informal, almost casual tone of the poem. The three active verbs "sends", "spills", and "makes" that impel the second, third and fourth lines achieve a conjunction of intent and meaning by attaining their culmination in specific objects. It is the "subterranean dynamics of the frost" which sends the frozen groundswell, "spills" the boulders and "makes" the gaps in the wall.

Lines 5-9 are anecdotal and digressive in nature giving an account of the vandalism that is indulged in by hunters who actually tear apart walls in the countryside in search of rabbits. This description gives the poem the relaxed rhythm of a casual conversation and enhances the discursive drift of the narrative.

The manner in which the speaker returns to his original theme, that is the ruin and subsequent rebuilding of the wall, in a single locutory loop : "The gaps I mean..." shows Frost's mastery over the conversational style, with its tendency to dwell on aspects of a particular topic, and recurrent patterns of thought.

Line 10 "No one has seen them made or heard them made" sheds light on the speaker's perception of the situation, and his tendency to regard the same as the outcome of an invisible and mysterious process. The next line, "But at spring mending-time we find them there", reinforces the idea with its emphasis on discovery. If the wall is a man-made boundary, the "hill" is a natural topographical barrier, the demarcation separating the speaker from the neighbour "beyond the hill".

Lines 12 to 15 constitute a unit in terms of order and progression with regard to both the subject referred to, and the syntax used by the narrator. Line 12 makes a

simple declarative statement, that of the speaker informing the neighbour of the state of the wall. The very following line provides a record of the next logical step that of both neighbours meeting on an agreed date to walk the length of their common wall. Line 14 with its regular beat of drumming iambs enforces not only the masonic rhythm of repairing and rebuilding a structure, it subtly conveys through its metrical rhythms, the need for neat, perhaps symmetrical boundaries between estates and in relationships.

Line 15 is resonant with the notion of separation with its insistence on "keeping" "the wall between us as we go". It seems to suggest that wall repairing or barrier-construction is an ongoing process, distancing persons, perhaps communities and cultures as people strive to fashion fences and demarcate their personal and public spaces. The distribution of boulders, depending on the side on which they have fallen, along with the rather professional division of labour, succinctly encapsulated in line 16, "to each the boulders that have fallen to each" further emphasizes the notion of neighbours separated by a line, a wall, a division of responsibilities. The verbs "let", "meet", "set" and "keep" in the successive lines retain the narrative inexorably in the present.

The earnestness of the rustic preoccupation evoked through concrete and sensory details leaves us unprepared for the "deprecatory offhandedness" of expressions such as, "Just another kind" and "comes to little more" Wall building as a rural ritual affirming boundaries dates back to ancient times, an outdoor "game" unceremoniously defined as one of the many kinds of games played in the countryside. There is the sense of a summary appraisal in the half-line: 'It comes to little more'. The game-reference brings with it echoes of rivalry and tension and contributes to the deeper scheme of oppositions and conflicts which informs the poem. If the wall-repairers are engaged in a game by themselves they are also at the same time, pitted against the wall-destroyers, the hunters who wantonly bring it down to serve their own ends.

In a different kind of opposition line 23 puts forth a sentiment which goes against the mentality calling for a wall, "There where it is we do not need the wall". The speaker appears to suggest that there is a vegetative and generic division wrought by nature which, if human beings so deem, may suffice as a boundary. "He is all pine and I am all apple orchard". The speaker maintains that his apples, which are edible, are unlikely to devour the farmer's pinecones, which are not.

Lines 23-26 give us the speaker's viewpoint vis-à-vis walls, his attitude to the school of thought, which believes in the necessity for fences. The argument is worked backwards from line 23 which, in a way begins with the conclusion, "There where...wall", a bald, perhaps slightly belligerent declaration, not calculated to irk,

but conscious of the rightness of the speaker's personal judgement. In the next line he advances the reason why a man- made wall is not an imperative in the vegetable contexts of their respective farms, "He is all pine and I am apple orchard". Acidity of pine needles would prevent apple seeds from taking root and a demarcation would naturally come into being without there being a need for a wall. The next two lines constitute patient explanation of the obvious. These lines may be interpreted as jocular evidence of the speaker's good humour-making light of an onerous activity; or they may be seen to be continuing a residue of ridicule for the farmer who is too obtuse to recognize the irrelevancy of the wall.

Line 27, the only line to be uttered by the farmer is a brisk rejoinder to the speaker's ideological position. A terse aphorism of five words, the line condenses and communicates the Yankee farmer's response to the situation, and by extension, his general outlook on life. The conflict gathers momentum as the speaker mentally contests the farmer's opinion, thereby extending and intensifying the conflicts of opinion, attitude, response and situation that are presented in the poem. Taking a logical stance, he wonders whimsically if he may plant a question in his neighbour's mind as to why walls are supposed to breed good neighbours. Having moved from description to speculation, from the factual to the fanciful, from irony to earnestness, the speaker grows diffident about his own perceptions toward the end of the poem.

He goes on to presume that in a bucolic landscape in which cattle are liable to wander beyond their allotted spaces, fences may serve a practical purpose but in a high-altitude, hilly terrain characterized by pine forests and apple orchards walls may prove to be artificial constructs. The half line, "But here there are no cows" is a mixture of lament and puzzlement, and entirely realistic in its tonal quality. Continuing in the logical strain the speaker opines, "Before I built a wall I'd ask to know/What I was walling in or walling out", The notion of enclosure, and simultaneous expulsion, is linked to the politics of inclusion and exclusion, of integration and segregation. The reasonableness of tone and the discursive mode of the argument trace the words to a thoughtful mind given to pursuing whimsical lines of speculation.

Line 35 "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" is a return to the opening of the poem. It has the quality of a refrain, and refers the poem to a repetitive process that is consonant with the turnings and returnings of the discursive mode. The setting out on a fresh track of investigation from the middle of line 36, "I could say 'Elves' to him" suggests a quirky, meditative bent of mind which leads to these abrupt, frequently fanciful transitions in thought. The mention of 'elves' further accentuates the whimsical, almost idiosyncratic humour of the speaker. It links this part of the poem to the notion of 'spell' mentioned in line 18, thereby evoking elements of the

occult or the supernatural which are historically and temperamentally far removed from the world of the Yankee farmer.

Lines 38 to 45 present the speaker's physical perception of the farmer.

"I see him there.

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an Old Stone Age savage armed."

It is a climactic vision that transposes the farmer to the distant past, allying him with the image of a primitive man about to resort to brute force at the slightest hint of danger. Though full of immediacy, these lines yet posit a vision of the far-off past. The temporal tension complicates the vision of the neighbour adducing the Yankee archetype with another archetype- that of the Stone Age savage. The physical perception of the farmer held by the speaker gives way to psychological insight into the man in the next three lines.

"He moves in darkness as it seems to me.

Not of woods only and the shade of trees

He will not go behind his father's saying..."

These lines afford a sense of the deepening perception of the speaker as he places the farmer, first in a far-removed, then in a shadowy jungle habitat, before proceeding to a vision of his cramped credulities. The farmers appear trapped in parental precepts and prejudices, the narrow confines of what he has been taught to believe and conditioned to think.

3.1.1 Analysis

Rural walls of the type described in 'Mending Wall' are largely the remnants of the piles of boulders made by generations of pioneers and yeomen who had to perforce dig out the stones before the New England soil could be made cultivable. There is no purpose in preserving these relics and Frost exploits the conflictual connotations of the image to make a point in his apparently meandering conversational way. Conflict, varying in nature and degree, seems to be one of the identifiable themes of the poem. The frozen ground swell, gradually increasing in volume, surreptitiously pushes against the wall and succeeds in dislodging many of its boulders. The proundswell represents the resistance of nature to manmade structures.

The activity of hunters brings to mind other types of conflict. The destruction wrought by hunters in the countryside is pitted against the organic, creative and regenerative forces in nature. The reference to rabbits and "yelping dogs" enforces

the notion of a clash between the hunter and the hunted, the predator and the prey. Line 12, which introduces the "neighbour beyond the hill", at once establishes the "otherness" of the farmer. His physical domain is so close to that of the speaker, yet his world is so far removed.

The playful attitude of the speaker to the wall repair, seen in lines 18 and 19, and again in lines 21 and 22, curiously enclose an opposing viewpoint to the work in line 20, which quietly recognizes the hard physical labour entailed in the same activity: "We wear our fingers rough with handling them."

From line 23 onwards appears the temperamental and psychological tension between the speaker and the farmer, the attitudinal animosities, which give the poem its ideological and tonal complexities. The contrast in the landscape and vegetation of the respective farms of the two men is but an emblem of their orientations and dispositions. The speaker, reflective, and apparently reasonable, seems willing to explore words, ideas and feelings. The neighbour, on the other hand, appears taciturn, unwilling to verbally commit himself beyond a single sentence, to grow beyond adages and aphorisms, not relying on individual perceptions.

The oppositions do not end here, and indeed, permeate to a deeper level of the text, and like the 'frozen ground-swell', tend to dislodge some of the assumptions that we have formed on our initial reading of the poem. While the speaker complains about the unfriendliness of his neighbour, it is he who initiated the wall-mending exercise, and was quick to assume the worst about his neighbour. Kemp points out "the failure of communication in the poem is mutual. And in truth Frost's persona is the less communicative and the more hostile of the two" (***Robert Frost and New England : The Poet as Regionalist,*** John C. Kemp, Princeton Univ. Press, N Jersey, 1979 p). The speaker's own reliance on subjective judgement ironically takes away from the reasonable and tolerant image of himself that he Strives to portray. Given to digressions, equivocation, suppositions and questions, the speaker is ultimately unable to challenge the Yankee farmer's confident assertion.

"Mending Wall' on one level is a parable on parochialism. The closing of gaps in the wall signifies the sealing of the points where the neighbours could have perhaps met. As Frost's persona dwells on the necessity of building a wall between neighbours, he vests his neighbour with attitudes which are at variance with his (as he believes) his own enlightened tolerance. Ironically, his ruminations give away his ingrained prejudices about people and their beliefs and habits. Kemp maintains that "it is less about neighbourliness than it is about modes of thought, about language, perhaps even about poetry itself' ***(Robert Frost and New England : The Poet as Regionalist,*** P 24).

3.1.2 Structure and Style

A dramatic narrative, 'Mending Wall' shapes itself around some of the traits of the rural New England character and achieves an authenticity of effect, both personal and regional, through a brilliant approximation of tone and voice. This voice, at once generic and eccentric, is central to Frost's greatest regional work. It guides the reader in a particular direction through images and observations even as it introduces ambivalences in the form of tonal attitudes such as diffidence, uncertainty and the fantasizing urge. William H. Pritchand observes, "This voice has not a particular back-country identity, nor is it obsessed or limited in its point of view; it seems rather to be exploring nature, other people, ideas, ways of saying things, for the sheer entertainment they can provide". ***(Frost : A Literary Life Reconsidered,*** (OUP, 1984).

The language, as it traces the thought patterns of a ruminating mind, appears entirely natural in its digressions, suppositions, hesitations, questions and capricious constructions. The dialectical refutation of one idea by another as the poem moves toward its climax, expressed by the natural twists and turns in thought, and the corresponding sinuosities of speech attests to an easy naturalness of effect most difficult to attain in poetry. That Frost was deeply concerned about the veracity of voice in his poetry is evident from his references to what he calls the 'vocal imagination' and 'the images of the voice speaking,' in his essay, 'The Constant Symbol'.

Irony with its concomitants of dialectic and paradox is the governing trope in this poem by Frost. Frost's persona in speculating not altogether charitably about his neighbour has not quite succeeded in presenting the latter in a negative light. Rather, he has engendered several perspectives involving both speaker and farmer which together fracture and complicate meaning, rather than encourage a simplistic assessment of character and situation.

The colloquial language and the quotation imagery occasionally carry within their scope images of startling prescience. The description of the Yankee farmer as an "old stone age savage" with "a stone grasped firmly by the top/in each hand" as he moves in the darkness of a primitive age and adage illustrates Frost's mastery of analogous figures. Frost himself spelt it out when he said, "There are things you can't convey except in similitudes. That's the way we get from one thing to another, by similitudes, of course." (***Bread Loaf School,*** Aug 2, 1954).

English Frost balances matter and metre, the varied blank verse cadence imbuing the poem with a flexibility and a mixture of restraint and freedom that is integrated to the theme. Walter Beacham illumines the point in his essay, 'Technique and the

Sense of Play' ***(Frost; Centennial Essays,*** ed Jac Thorpe, Univ. Press of Miss, Jackson, 1976, p 261) where he argues, "Meter is used to render emotions which we would like to feel, and which are superficially suggested by the subject matter, thereby creating a difference between comfort and insecurity."

3.1.3 Questions

1. Would you agree that conflict, in its various manifestations is a major thematic preoccupation in 'Mending Wall'?
2. Examine 'Mending Wall' as a parable on parochialism.
3. Analyze 'Mending Wall' as a poem of regional character and incident.
4. "While attacking his neighbour's lack of open-minded amiability, the speaker is the one who exhibits anti-social tendencies". Comment.
5. Assess the effectiveness of 'Mending Wall' as a dramatic narrative.

3.2 Introduction 'After Apple-Picking'

The situation presented in the poem is the culmination of the harvest, and the preparation of the apple-picker for the long rest of winter. The speaker, who is physically fatigued and emotionally fulfilled after his prolonged labour of picking apples, is able to evoke both the senses of decline and satisfaction associated with the season of autumn. While the first half of the collection presents a relatively carefree figure rambling about the countryside, in 'After Apple-Picking' he is found to be "drowsing off'. Though weary after his labour and reflective in his repose, the speaker does not abandon the exploratory mode of the earlier poems in the collection, and he moves from meditation to a revelation, carrying his readers with him.

3.3 Textual Explication

The poem beginning with colloquial but vivid references to little tasks left unfinished–the ladder still pointing skyward, the unfilled barrel, a few apples yet on the bough-serves to accentuate the exhaustion and repletion experienced by the apple-picker. Line 6, "But I am done with apple-picking now" has a confident ring of finality to it, and also the sense of a well-earned repose and weariness that comes after a task well done. The apple- picker's tiredness renders him especially sensitive to the touch of winter on the autumnal night.

His utterance. "I am drowsing off' inevitably invites a comparison with Keats'

'To Autumn'. Just as the fume of poppies has an intoxicating effect on the reaper in Keats' poem, so also the scent of apples almost overpowers the speaker's senses, inducing in him the somnolent effects of a well-deserved rest. A sense of release, relief and redemption simultaneously affect the speaker, influencing the rhythms and tonalities of his account.

Lines 9-12 present the striking image of a sheet of ice, the "pane of glass" skimmed from the surface of the drinking trough and used as a min or by the speaker. It is an instance of the "extraordinary perspective" mentioned by Langbaum. According to Langbaum. this is a device "to keep the poem located—to keep the dramatic situation from turning into a rhetorical device and the landscape from turning into a metaphor for an'abstract idea". ***(.Poetry of Experience,*** p 47 Kemp attempts to explain the strangeness of the perspective by observing that looking through a thin sheet of ice leads to chimerical dreams and recollections of the harvest effort.

The persona captures the moment of his crossing over into the magic realm of the imagination in unmistakably Keatsian terms "I am drowsing off'. The following line. "I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight", though in a subdued key, yields effects ot hidden excitement, the promise of a new perspective. Interestingly, a homely sheet of ice becomes his magic lens, affording him wondrous visions of a different order of experience.

The melting of the ice, its falling and breaking, coincide beautifully with the speaker's drift into sleep, with his gradual surrender to the rhythms of rest. Lines 14-17 serve as a prescient prelude to the speaker's later imaginings. Though on the verge of sleep his faculties had been curiously enhanced, and he could intuit what 'form' his "dreaming was about to take". Marie Borroff observes (in ***Frost : Centennial Essays II*** ed Jac Thorpe. Univ. Press of Miss, Jackson, 1976, p 27), "Despite the preternatural vividness of the imagined apples, this is not a contemplative vision of essence in the Platonic sense, but something more mundane". Preferring to place emphasis on the psychological rather than the philosophical orientation of the vision she further explains, "It is an anxiety dream of the occupational sort. What has tired out the speaker is not the picking but the "cherishing' of each apple-handled with love."

Lines 18-26, described as a "brilliantly assonant and echoic passage", contain an illusory quality that is intensified through the interplay of perception and perspective. The apples which "appear and disappear" are "magnified". It is the transformed perspective of dream, vision and fancy, which necessarily interferes with the apprehension of natural physical proportion of objects, at times, enlarging or shrinking

them from their everyday dimensions. A striving toward inclusivity of perspective and detail, however, counters the notion of a subverted scale of vision in lines 19 and 20.

"Stem end and blossom end

And every fleck of russet showing clear"

Lines 21-22 record not only the physical response of the picker, the "ache" of his sensitive sole resting on the round of the ladder, it invokes that sense of balance which lies at the core of Frost's conception of happiness. The feet bearing the body's weight press down, while the ladder-round resists the downward pressure. Says Marie Borroff, "In Frost's poetry, as in life itself - happiness in the performance of a task depends on a balance between effort and resistance, a "poise" ***(Centennial Essays,*** p 29).

Line 23 "I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend"

may be understood as a naturalistic description of the swaying movement of the ladder against the bending branches. It may, at the same time, be construed as the speaker's movement away from the phenomenal world into that of the unknown, the tentatively broached domain of a dream.

The next 3 lines :

"And I keep hearing from the cellar bin

The rumbling sound

Of load of load of apples coming in."

have to do with the auditory perception of the speaker, as the 'rumbling sound" of loads of apples being brought into the cellar assails his ears. The speaker's exposure to the closing cadences of the harvest encourages the sense of a passive surrender on his part, as he cannot help but hear the sounds of transport and storage that inevitably accompany the end of a harvest.

The explanatory conjunction introducing line 27 "for" sets in motion the tonality of tiredness which is picked up and augmented by the hypnotic rise and fall of its rhythm, capturing the speaker's drift into drowsiness. He goes on to express the extent of his fatigue through the adjective "overtired". The deep satisfaction derived from working close to the soil is compounded by a weariness born not only of the physical labour of "picking" but also of the emotional involvement of "cherishing" each apple. Line 31 sets forth the sequence of care bestowed on each apple:

"Cherish in hand, lift down, and not left fall."

The musing tone of the speaker in the next 5 lines carries a note of lament and

inevitability which, dwells on the fate of those apples which fall to the ground. An apple which, falls to the ground, irrespective of any blemish it may acquire or not, is consigned to the cider-apple heap.

The reflective tone is continued in the next few lines, which constitute the conclusion of the poem. The themes of drowsiness, dream and hibernation, developed in the poem, are given a further dimension in the speaker's attempt to distinguish, at the end of the poem between kinds of sleep. Seeking to accurately describe the nature of the sleep that is about to overtake him, the speaker resorts to a comparison to express his point of view. The speaker distinguishes between human and animal sleep, the human variety being "troubled" with the weight of memories and cares, and the latter being the "dreamless oblivion" of animal hibernation. Elucidating the difference between the two kinds of sleep Richard Reed maintains, "The woodchuck is simply a part of nature from which man is set apart. Man toils, dreams and is troubled and the trouble is what makes man human and superior to the woodchuck," ***(Centennial Essays,*** p 167). The stress on sleep, the tendency to see it as the culmination of a process of activity encourages one to see an analogy between the end of a day, of a particular harvest season, and also the tasks of a person's life.

3.3.1 Analysis

'After Apple-Picking' is concerned with the mysteries of sleep and dream, death and spiritual transcendence. Sleep and death, in their suggestion of the culmination of a process represent an end. The poem explores several understandings of the notion of 'end'. It presents 'end' both as a conclusion of things and as a cessation of being. The decline of autumn apprehending the "long sleep" of winter: the end of the day with its accent on the winding up of tasks; and of course, the gathering in of the harvest, equally enforce the sense of a logical or expected conclusion to activities, processes and temporal cycles. (16; 24-26).

The culmination of activity is practically synchronous with the advent of a great sleep, the oblivion wrought of extreme tiredness. "I am drowsing off' in line 8 is followed in lines 14-15 with the-reiteration, "But I was well/Upon my way to sleep...". In much the same strain, are the lines: "I am overtired/Of the great harvest I myself desired". The last reference to sleep in the poem extends and complicates the theme by going into its nature "One can see what will trouble/This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is".

The verbal insistence on "fall," evident in line 13 "It melted and I let it fall and break"; in line 15: "I was well/Upon my way to sleep before it fell"; and again, in line 31 "Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall", combines with the religious

connotations of the apple imagery, to suggest another kind of end–the end of innocence resulting in the fall of man.

The sense of an end, along with the notions of decline and death, so persistently addressed in the poem yet admit of another state of being, that is the dimension of dream, a transcendent experience beyond the border of sleep. The additional burden of meaning accruing from this expansion of frontier complicates a simple pastoral reading of the poem with subtler shades of meaning.

Being centrally concerned with the polarities of labour and rest, beginnings and ends, the poem derives its thematic balance from the notion of transition. Autumn is a season of both abundance and emptiness when the barns are filled even as the fields are shorn of growth. It is associated with culmination even as it ushers in a spell of hibernation.

While there is no evidence of actual sleep, the speaker is overwhelmingly at the threshold of drowsiness. Lines 14 and 15 speak of an almost involuntary affiliation to an influence beyond his control. Line 23 "I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend" symbolically reinforces his movement away from the known world. The verbs "sway" and "bend" suggest accommodation and admittance into realms beyond the naturalistic documented one. Lines 37 and 38 present the approach of sleep, with the speaker professing uncertainty about its nature. The penultimate line in the poem: "Long sleep, as I describe its coming on" again shows the imminent advent or "coming on" of sleep, bringing in its wake an obfuscation of the senses.

3.3.2 Structure and Style

In "After Apple-Picking' Frost succeeds in maintaining a balance between sensuous, visionary Romanticism and pragmatic New England values. Beginning with a quotidian detail colloquially expressed, "long two-pointed laddersticking through a tree" the poem moves through ruminative rhythms before giving in to the incantatory cadence of a line such as, "But I am done with apple-picking now". This anticipates the musicality of the lines 14 to 20. Numerous concrete images such as ladder, barrel, drinking-trough and cellar-bin testify to the earthy nature of the activity described in the poem even as the language with its contractions (there's, didn't) preserves the flavour of conversational casualness. Refer to the previous poem for a discussion on 'voice' in Frost's poetry.

3.3.3 Suggested Reading

In addition to the works already cited one may usefully refer to the following : ***Robert Frost. A Living Voice,*** Reginald Cook, Univ of Mass Press, Amherst, 1974); ***American Poetry 1915-1945*** (Chelsea House Pubs, N Yk, New Haven, Philadelphia, 1987).

For a particularly illuminating discussion on Frost's technique in both the poems, turn to the essay 'Technique and the Sense of Play' by Walter Beacham in ***Frost : Centennial Essays***

3.3.4 Questions

1. Would you agree with the view that 'After Apple Picking' is a poem that, is principally concerned with the mysteries of sleep and death? Discuss.
2. Examine the notion of balance as it is presented in the poem.
3. Critically examine the sensuous, imaginative and musical aspects of the poem.
4. Evaluate the details of language and imagery, which make the poem a memorable one.
5. Discuss 'After Apple-Picking' as a dramatic lyric.

Unit 4 ❑ Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

Structure

4.0 Introduction

Wallace Stevens was born in 1879 in Reading, Pennsylvania. After his school education at Reading Boys' High School, Stevens spent three years at Harvard. His stint at the university over, Stevens worked as a journalist for a year before being admitted to the New York State Bar. For the next twelve years or so, Stevens practiced law in New York. In 1916, he moved to Connecticut where he worked for the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company till his death in 1955.

Engaged in a quest for what has been called the supreme fiction in a post-religious world, Stevens went through the stages of ironic affectation and European filiation to a native pronouncement. Choosing for his themes the secular concerns of the day and the potentialities of the imagination, Stevens was a modern Romantic who was drawn into the intricacies of speculation as he wrestled metaphysically with profound abstractions.

4.1 Textual Explication 'The Emperor of Ice cream'

'The Emperor of Ice cream' is a poem that resisted explication for a long while probably because of the generic and rhetorical difficulties posed by it. The implications of the poem are tantalizingly embedded in the interstices of forms, in the gaps between story and plot, in the elisions and ellipses between ideas and expressions.

The poem sets out to tell the story of a person who has gone to the house of a neighbour who has just died. The person is to help lay out the corpse while other neighbours are sending over homegrown flowers or are preparing food for the wake.

The basic narrative has been fractured into two plots, each with its respective personae and setting, spread over the two stanzas. The first stanza presents the wake preparations as they unfold in the kitchen. The muscular cigar-roller is on the point of being called in to lend a hand with the ice cream making, while the women "dawdling" in the clothes of their choice blend easily into the background. It is a social occasion, a community exercise where ritual and routine dominate the scene.

In the second stanza the scene shifts to the bedroom and the focus comes to rest on the dresser from where the shroud is to be taken out. The item of furniture that commands attention, however, is the bed bearing the body. The inadequacy of art in hiding the stark dimensions of reality is clearly evident in the limitations of the embroidered bedspread, which is too short to cover the body fully. It will suffice for either the upper or lower portion of the body. In case the face is covered, the "horny feet" will project out; bringing home to the viewers, the harsh reality of the moment.

The narrative, plotted into two simultaneously unfolding scenes in contiguous settings, and set forth sequentially according to the dictates of formal linearity embodies a tension that is rhetorically complemented by the tonal textures of the imperatives that mark the style. The structure conforms to a series of commands issued by an invisible master of ceremonies, or stage director whose business-like orders: "call", "let", "bring", "take", "spread" introduce the actions which in their combined focus yield the scenes that together constitute the poem.

The tone of the speaker, entrusted with discharging part of the meaning, is a curious mixture of the imperious and the intimate. While the colloquial words, for their part, express a sense of familiarity, details such as "last month's newspapers" or the deal dresser with its five missing knobs convey a homely immediacy. Above all, the image of "that" sheet with the embroidered fantails intimates the nuances of a shared history, even as it indicates the detached efficiency of an objective agency simply ascertaining that the funeral is decorously conducted.

The last lines of both stanzas which are identical in their refrain-like quality appear to clinch resoundingly the ongoing dialectic of action with the didacticism of formulated insight: "The only emperor is the emperor of ice cream." One rules in whatever senses as long as one lives, and in order to live has to necessarily derive sustenance from food. Hence, ice cream in its synecdochic capacity comes to stand for all that nourishes the life force.

The penultimate lines in both stanzas, in their different ways address the poem's preoccupation with the notion of appearance and reality, a theme that is persistently probed by Stevens. In the first stanza, the speaker ascribes importance to "be" over

"seem"thereby recognizing the validity of reality over illusion; "Let be finale of seem." In the second instance, "Let the lamp affix its beam", the lamp in addition to the associations of the mortuary brings to mind the theatrical lights and their suggestion of worlds-real and unreal.

4.1.1 Analysis

'The Emperor of Ice cream is a short and stylized poem, which depends for its effect on the exhortatory tone of the speaker and the visual evocation of the scenes, which together constitute the dramatic moment. The poet Elizabeth Bishop has conjectured that the cigar rollers seem to have reference to the Cuban workers who worked at the cigar rolling machines in factories, while ice cream was traditionally consumed at Black funerals. This seems to locate the poem in ethnic details which; contribute not only to the atmosphere of the particular household in which the death has taken place,' but also to the larger climate of race and class as they intersect in the mesh of social relations.

4.1.2 Structure and Style

The first stanza with its images of "big cigars", "concupiscent curds" and dawdling wenches makes a life affirming statement, despite the intrusion of the image of the flowers in "last month's newspapers" and its associations of staleness. The contrast between life and death subtly developed through the images reaches a resolution in the penultimate line of the first stanza, "Let be the finale of seem." The resounding refrain: "The only emperor is the Emperor of Ice-cream" serves both as a rationale for the choice consciously exercised, and a reiteration of the mood and message that has conditioned the confident assertion.

The second stanza is qualitatively different from the preceding one in its quiet enumeration of furniture and linen. The dresser made of pinewood with its three missing glass knobs tells its story of lives lived within the walls of the house. The sheet with the "embroidered fantails," once probably a labour of love painstakingly undertaken now assumes the lineaments of a shroud, and an inadequate one at that. Fantails, a variety of domestic pigeon with a particularly showy, round tail, when combined with the fact of embroidery enforces the notions of flight and minute embellishment. The "embroidered fantails", a metaesthetic trope for the intricacies of the imagination, in its inability to fully cover the dead body suggest the growing realization of the speaker that despite the preponderance of vital images and aesthetic prevarication death, after all, cannot be camouflaged or covered.

The coldness and dumbness of death are as inescapable as the protruding "horny

feet" of the corpse. The lamp with its artificial lighting and manipulation of effects is invoked to "affix its beam". In the modulated glow from an artificial source of light the grotesquerie may be toned down, and the stage set so as to soften the harsh contours of reality and accommodate the gaze which may be otherwise struck by the stark nature of death in all its unpleasantness. The speaker registers his choice of life over death in the face of the latter's ubiquity and inevitability repeating his belief that: "The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream." Ice cream, or the tawdry, concupiscent pleasures it represents, is the only pleasure that is real.

The poem derives its piquancy from the overlap of genres that is discernible in the poem. A story is being told even as scenes are enacted and visual details are imagistically interposed. The hectoring tone of a monologue, possibly an affectation on the part of the speaker sets up rhetorical and psychological tensions, which contribute to the tonal complexities evident in the poem. Also, the formula of commands expresses a culture of orality and effects a sense of distance in terms of an observing and ordering intelligence which directs the actions as well as the responses of readers.

4.1.3 Suggested Reading

The Columbia History of American Poetry. Ed. Jay Parini and Brett C. Miller. New York : Columbia UP, 1993. Copyright © 1993 by Columbia UP.

4.1.4 Questions

1. Examine the symbolic resonances of the poem's title.
2. Comment on the narrative and dramatic elements in the poem.
3. To what extent does the poem illustrate Stevens' interest in "the comic irony of the quotidian and a glance at the grotesque"?
4. Comment on the imagery of the poem and suggest how it affects the theme.

Unit 5 ❑ Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)

Structure

5.0 Introduction

Born on 3 June, 1926, in Newark, New Jersey to a Russian émigré mother and a poet cum teacher father, Ginsberg spent his formative years in New Jersey, attending Paterson High School till he left it to attend Columbia University at the age of 17. After being dismissed from Columbia in 1943, Ginsberg trained with the Merchant Marine Academy at Brooklyn and went out on voyages. He graduated with a BA degree from Columbia, after being readmitted to the same.

Having become involved in criminal activities in 1948, Ginsberg had to undergo psychiatric counselling at Rockland State Hospital, after which he returned to live with his father for a while. His peripatetic urges took him to Cuba and Yucatan. The publication of *Howl and Other Poems* in 1956 led to an obscenity charge against Ginsberg for which he was subsequently tried but was declared innocent, upon which he once again set out on travels. This time his journeys took him to the Arctic, Tangier, Venice, Amsterdam, Paris, London and Oxford.

In the years that followed Ginsberg remained busy with his poetry readings at universities, his writing, and a couple of appearances in films. In 1961; he went to the Far East, a trip that engendered in him a desire to understand more deeply the nature of eastern mysticism. In 1972 began Ginsberg's long association with Chogyam Trungpa, a teacher of Buddhist meditational practices. In 1974; the poet co-founded the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics as part of the Naropa Institute at Boulder, Colorado.

In 1975, Ginsberg performed a number of spontaneously composed blues songs as 'poet-percussionist' with Bob Dylan on a musical show. In 1979, Ginsberg was

honoured with the National Arts Club Gold Medal. In the next few years Ginsberg published several volumes of poems.

5.1 Textual Explication ('Howl')

The poem 'Howl' being too long to be included in its entirety portions of the text have been selected for inclusion. The extracted portion of Part I is the beginning of the poem ending with the line "and the Staten Island ferry also wailed." The entire second part has been included, while the two concluding stanzas of the third part have been quoted for the sake of continuity and coherence.

The post-war decades in America were characterized in some of its cultural quarters by a strident rejection of all received values. The social, cultural and political atmosphere of protest found a poetic outlet in the expressions of the Beat poets who broke free of social, sexual and aesthetic taboos to mint a new idiom of protest and search. Allen Ginsberg was the high priest of the Beat cult and sought to mediate the reality of that situation in an idiom at once vibrant and trenchant.

The word 'beat' resonates with several meanings. The poets bearing this label represented the 'beaten' or subjugated segments of the population; the poetry typically sought an alliance with the beat or rhythm of jazz, the marginalized music of the less understood. Also beat, with its link to beatitude seemed to hold out hope for the pilgrims looking for salvation. According to Parini and Miller; *(Columbia History of American Literature)',* 'beatness' to Ginsberg was "looking at society from the underside, beyond society's conception of good and evil".

The genesis of the poem is interesting. 'Howl' was "typed out madly in one afternoon," Ginsberg notes, "a tragic custard-pie comedy of wild phrasing, meaningless images..." *(Notes on Howl* p 28). The poem comes across as a catalogue of random references and arbitrary allusions, dazzling descriptions and radical reflections intended, as Ginsberg explained in 1969, to dig "the humor of exhibitionism". Explaining his creative motivation and method Ginsberg continues, "You're free to say any damn thing you want; but people are so scared of hearing you say what's unconsciously universal that its comical. So I wrote with an element of comedy-partly intended to soften the blow." (In an interview to Playboy, 90).

Exploiting precisely this freedom the poem sought to purge the self of fears, reservations and inhibitions, which operate as a socially conditioned form of restraint, naturally affecting the creative process and militating against a genuinely spontaneous expression. "I thought I wouldn't write a poem", Ginsberg explains, "but just write what I wanted to without fear, let my imagination go, open secrecy and scribble

magic lines from my real mind-sum up my life-something I wouldn't be able to show anybody, write for my own soul's ear and a few other golden ears."

For a poem of 'Howl's' length to be composed in the course of a single afternoon, it calls for a sustained spell of inspiration which Ginsberg evidently experienced in a concentrated form. Such an exercise also demands a charged momentum and organicity, that is to some extent achieved by the first words which introduce the lines of the respective parts with an almost manic monotony and rhythmic regularity of expression.

Part I of the poem deals with the atrocities allegedly perpetrated on Ginsberg's friends and contemporaries by an unfeeling establishment. The opening lines present the poet as an observer who saw "the best minds" of his generation "destroyed by madness". Madness presumably is the attitude of society that was antithetical to the feelings and aspirations of the non-conformist members of Ginsberg's generation. Madness, perceived from the conventional angle, is also the condition of the creative thinkers who refused to submit to the reductive and categorizing processes that threatened to annul individuality. The reference to madness reappears in the poet's mention of the same people "who thought they were only mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural ecstasy". Autobiographical offshoots of the theme may be traced to Ginsberg's own stay in an asylum, and to the mental illness of Carl Solomon who underwent treatment at Rockland State Hospital.

The poem is an animal cry of anguish at what Ginsberg sees happening around him. He tries to mediate a world in which the creative, sensitive and idealistic members of his generation are shown wandering through the city like damned souls. They become the "hipsters", the substance abusers, the hallucinators, the seekers of "jazz or sex or soup", the "scribblers" of "lofty incantations", the suicides, the sentence-creators and the sentence- servers.

The opening line of the poem dwells on the ruthless reduction of "the best minds" to "starving hysterical naked beings". Society, according to the poet, with its codes and prescriptions has wrought the destruction of the most gifted thinkers and seekers who find themselves without food, shelter, clothes and coherent speech. These artists and poets of potential and promise find themselves drifting through the "negro streets" (the haunt of other marginalized people as well) searching for their "fix"

The third line of the poem describing the same people as "angelheaded hipsters" shows them abjuring all material considerations and striving to derive their inspiration directly from a spiritual or supernatural source. The next line juxtaposes actual and hallucinated images of places in its projection of penurious but passionate pursuers

of dreams who sat smoking in their unheated flats and "floated across the tops of cities". The notion of liberation thus introduced leads in the following line, to an explosion of chemical induced ecstasy.

Ginsberg identified the hipsters, beatniks and scholars who negotiated their way through academia with Blakian visionary fervour as those expelled from universities for their obscene writings, who cowered on the verge of nervous breakdowns, burnt their money in bizarre acts of demonstration and desperation, and often surrendered to their fears. These are the people who experimented with alcohol, paint and turpentine, who tried to flagellate and purge themselves of impurities with dreams, drugs, alcohol and sex.

From the "negro streets" at dawn they move through the "blind streets" of endocrinal energy in the brain, "leaping towards poles of Canada and Paterson", entering new spatial realms and time-zones, powered by the "peyote" which propels them on to a succession of images. In a poetic transcription of the stream of consciousness mode, the poet posits a series of images, vibrant in themselves but lacking an apparent link: "Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light..."

There is a rapid evocation of place names, which conjures up the congested cosmos of New York: Battery, Bronx, Brooklyn Bridge, and Empire State. The civic map changes when its boundaries are exchanged for the forgotten frontiers of the East-Tangier and China—before returning to America with the resounding references to the West and the Midwest: Kansas. Idaho, Baltimore, Oklahoma and Houston.

Journeying down the New York subway drugged on Benzedrine till the surrounding cacophony brings them back to consciousness, "battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance" the beatniks intermittently awoke into new points of awareness. The "lost battalion of platonic conversationalists" who drifted through the pubs and bars of metropolitan and small-town America tried out the leap from mundane reality to heightened consciousness, or the ones to suicidal self-annihilation. The ones who survived recovered by therapeutically throwing up their memories of "hospitals and jails and wars", the remnants of institutional America.

What follows is an intense recapitulation of pathological peregrinations of the beat generation from midnight meanderings in the railway yard to racketing in boxcars in desolate places, through the streets of Idaho, Baltimore, Oklahoma and Houston. There is a reference to the volcanoes of Mexico consuming the beatniks and their creativity consequently erupting in the poetic ash of the hearths of Chicago. Some of these restless rebels reappeared in the West Coast protesting against war and

capitalism, advocating extreme Communism in demonstrations where the wail of the different sirens merged into the latent lament, the echo of the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem.

Part II of the poem contains the deafening diatribe against Moloch written while Ginsberg was under the influence of peyote. The "sphinx of cement and aluminium" is the modem metropolis, eternally mystifying yet mundanely mechanical, the hedonistic habitat of Moloch. This part of the poem presents the thrust of Ginsberg's attack on materialism and capitalism with their "Robot apartments", "blind capitals", "demonic industries", "invisible madhouses" and "monstrous bombs" combining to present a picture of unrelieved chaos and terror.

Here the protagonist "who" has been replaced by the antagonist "Moloch" whose soul is "electricity and banks", mind is "pure machinery" and whose blood is "running money". Every line of this part begins thunderously with the name 'Moloch' ritualistically adumbrating an ethos of cruelty, corruption and meaninglessness. The beatniks who "saw it all" took their leave of this mindless worship of a god, who they believed stood so manifestly opposed to their cause. 'They bade farewell! They jumped off the roof!"

The end of the second part, rife with intimations of Biblical echoes and the sense of a mystic ecstasy, closes with a reference to the holy vision of the poets. The vocabulary fraught with words such as "river", "flood", "visions", "miracles", "adorations" and "epiphanies" among others bear out the religious overtones of the experience referred to.

This part in which the element of spontaneity fostered through rapid association is forsaken by Ginsberg in favour of striking imagery leads Merrill to contend that Ginsberg's "Hebraic lamentations on Moloch" become tedious in the absence of the surprise element which had earlier sustained the poem.

Part III shows the figure of the poet-victim ascending through a series of affirmations to the world of Carl Solomon who interestingly, has developed into a symbol through the accretionary aesthetics of the poem. The part ends with the following two stanzas:

"I'm with you in Rockland

Where we wake up electrified out of the coma by our own souls' airplanes roaring/ over the roof they've come to drop angelic bombs the hospital illuminates itself/ imaginary walls collapse. O skinny legions run outside. O starry spangled shock of mercy the eternal war is here. O victory forget your underwear we're free

I'm with you in Rockland

In my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey on the highway across America in tears to the door of my cottage in the Western night."

Ginsberg's own comment on the overall pattern of *Howl* presents a rationale behind the development of the three parts: "Part I, a lament for the Lamb in America with instances of remarkable lamblike youths; Part II names the monster of mental consciousness that preys on the Lamb; Part III a litany of affirmation of the Lamb in its glory: O starry spangled shock of Mercy."

5.1.1 Analysis

Movement, anguished and compulsive, expressed through journeys and the jumbled litanies of place names suggests the poet's need for action, to simply take off, to get away, most importantly, escape from the intolerable reality of his situation. To effect the latter, several options are randomly explored-mental release through drugs, physical distancings through actual journeys, jumping off high-rises, seeking the nirvana of esoteric pursuits. Believing they could not change society, as the change had to come from within, the Beat poets chose not to fight but to register their protest through various forms of escapism.

The journeys in 'Howl' reiterated with ritualistic fervour are more than escapist exercises emphatically envisioned. These forays, both in their centripetal and centrifugal thrusts are meant to take the subject beyond time. The hipsters "threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot for Eternity outside of time". The image of the journey is linked to the theme of liberation so ardently and compulsively sought by the beatniks.

Also evident in the journey motif are the Christian echoes. The sufferings endured by the early followers of Christ in Roman catacombs are echoed in the plight of the wandering truth-seekers, who in Part II "lit their cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow toward lonesome farms in the grandfather night". The persecution faced by the early Christian martyrs is again reflected in the fate of those "who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits in Madison Avenue". Ultimate martyrdom, however, is reserved for Carl Solomon, rebel, hipster, mental hospital inmate and the mentor to whom Ginsberg's poem has been addressed.

5.1.2 Structure and Style

"Everything I write", Ginsberg was quoted in The New York Times, 11 July, 1965, section 6, 90, "is in one way or another autobiographical or present consciousness at the time of writing." The aesthetics at the core of 'Howl' defies a logical analysis

of the poem. As Thomas F Merrill points out, the poem follows "a grammar of emotion", (p 58). Explaining the technique of composition that he used for 'Howl' Ginsberg states "I wasn't really working with a classical unit, I was working with my own neural impulses and writing impulses". He goes on to describe himself as "someone working with physiological movements and arriving at a pattern...but arriving at it organically rather than synthetically" (Thomas Clark, 'The Art of Poetry' VIII, Paris Review, 37, Spring 1966, pp 15-16).

The influence of Whitman's rhythmic reiteration on Ginsberg's style has been observed and both modes have been traced to a measure of Hebraic parallelism. Gay Wilson Allen commenting on Whitman's repetitive mode in his book, **Walt Whitman: The Search for a Democratic Structure,** sheds light on the aesthetics that shaped the Hebraic syntactical and rhetorical formulations. He maintains, "the Hebraic poet developed a rhythm of thought, repeating and balancing ideas and sentences (or independent clauses) instead of syllables or accents." Ginsberg whose work is noted for its cumulative, accretionary and enumerative thrust admits how he followed "by romantic inspiration- Hebraic Melvillian bardic breath".

In **'Notes Written on Finally Recording Howl'** Ginsberg provides the following revelation, which provides an insight into his methods of composition: "By 1955 I wrote poetry adapted from prose seeds, journals, scratchings, arranged by phrasing or breath groups into little short line patterns according to ideas of measure of American speech I'd picked up from W.C. Williams' imagist preoccupations."

Such a poetics necessarily depends for its effects on a deft handling of both matter and metre. Ginsberg, influenced by Cezanne's methods, sought to incorporate a variation of one of the optic devices known as *petites sensations* favoured by the latter. In Cezanne *petites sensations* are two-dimensional surfaces that expand into three-dimensional space objects wrought through the juxtaposition of geometric masses. Images such as 'negro streets,' 'angry fix,' 'blind streets,' 'peyote solidities" are some of the poetic equivalents of this painterly device. Ginsberg realized that the artist's attention is not outward toward the object but inward toward the impression made by the object on the consciousness.

The holding together of heterogeneous elements, the achievement of "pantheistic unity," is to a large extent, obtained by the use of the words which introduce the respective parts. The word "who" Ginsberg has explained was used in 'Howl' to "keep the beat, a base to keep measure, return to and take off from again onto another streak of invention". (Notes on Howl, p 28). In the second part the word "who" has been replaced by the name "Moloch" while in the third part the metrical base is the word "where".

5.1.3 Suggested Reading

A major source of critical exegesis is *Allen Ginsberg* by Thomas F. Merill, Univ of Delaware. Twayne Publishers. 1988.

Another source likely to yield fruitful insights is of course, Ginsberg's own comments found in his *Notes on 'Howl',* and various interviews.

5.1.4 Questions

1. Assess 'Howl' as the representative work of a Beat poet.
2. Comment on the sources from which Ginsberg drew for the techniques and devices that he used in the poem.
3. Write a note on the major image patterns in the poem.
4. Which features do you think make 'Howl' an iconoclastic and iconic poem at the same time?
5. Would you agree with the view that the poem 'Howl' is merely "the aggressive irresponsibility of unrestrained whimsy"?

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)

Howl

For Carl Solomon

I

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,

dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,

angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night,

who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,

who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated,

who passed through universities with radiant eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war,

who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull,

who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall,

who got busted in their public beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York,

who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night

with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls,

incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind leaping towards poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of Time between,

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan

rantings and kind king light of mind, who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrine until the noise of wheels and children brought them down shuddering mouth- wracked and battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance in the drear light of Zoo.

who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford's floated out and sat through the state beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi's, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox,

who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge,

a lost batallion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills off Empire State out of the moon

yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars,

whose intellects disgorged in total recall for seven days and nights with brilliant eyes, meat for the Synagogue cast on the pavement,

who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving a trail of ambiguous picture postcards of Atlantic City Hall,

suffering Eastern sweats and Tangerian bone-grindings and migraines of China under junk- withdrawal in Newark's bleak furnished room,

who wandered around and around at midnight in the railway yard wondering where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts,

who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow toward lonesome farms in grandfather night,

who studied Plotinus Poe St John of the Cross telepathy and bop kabbalah because the universe instinctively vibrated at their feet in Kansas,

who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary Indian angels who were visionary indian angels,

who thought they were only mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural ecstasy,

who jumped in limousines with the Chinaman of Oklahoma on the impulse of winter midnight streetlight smalltown rain,

who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz or sex or soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to converse about America and Eternity, a hopeless

task, and so took ship to Africa, who disappeared into the volcanoes of Mexico leaving nothing behind but the shadow of dungarees and the larva and ash of poetry scattered in fireplace Chicago,

who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the FBI in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes sexy in their dark skin passing out incomprehensible leaflets,

who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism, who distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square weeping and undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos wailed them down, and wailed down Wall, and the Staten Island ferry also wailed,

who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before the machinery of other skeletons,

who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication,

who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts,

who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy.

who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors, caresses of Atlantic and Caribbean love,

who balled in the morning in the evenings in rosegardens and the grass of public parks and cemeteries scattering their semen freely to whomever come who may,

who hiccuped endlessly trying to giggle but wound up with a sob behind a partition in a Turkish Bath when the blond & naked angel came to pierce them with a sword,

who lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed shrew of the heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that winks out of the womb and the one eyed shrew that does nothing but sit on her ass and snip the intellectual golden threads of the craftsman's loom,

who copulated ecstatic and insatiate and fell off the bed, and continued along the floor and down the hall and ended fainting on the wall with a vision of ultimate cunt and come eluding the last gyzym of consciousness,

who sweetened the snatches of a million girls trembling in the sunset, and were red eyed in the morning but were prepared to sweeten the snatch of the sunrise, flashing buttocks under barns and naked in the lake,

who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars, N.C., secret hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver-joy to the memory of his innumerable lays of girls in empty lots & diner backyards, moviehouses' rickety rows, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt waitresses in familiar roadside lonely petticoat upliftings & especially secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, & hometown alleys too,

who faded out in vast sordid movies, were shifted in dreams, woke on a sudden Manhattan, and picked themselves up out of basements hungover with heartless Tokay and horrors of Third Avenue iron dreams & stumbled to unemployment offices,

who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks waiting for a door in the East River to open full of steamheat and opium,

who created great suicidal dramas on the appartment cliff-banks of the Hudson under the wartime blue floodlight of the moon & their heads shall be crowned with laurel in oblivion,

who ate the lamb stew of the imagination or digested the crab at the muddy bottom of the rivers of the Bowery,

who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad music,

who sat in boxes breathing in the darkness under the bridge, and rose up to build harpsichords in their lofts, who coughed on the sixth floor of Harlem crowned with flame under the tubercular sky surrounded by orange crates of theology,

who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish,

who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming of the pure vegetable kingdom,

who plunged themselves under meat trucks looking for an egg,

who threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot for an Eternity outside of Time, & alarm clocks fell on their heads every day for the next decade,

who cut their wrists three times successfully unsuccessfully, gave up and were forced to open antique stores where they thought they were growing old and cried,

who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister

intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality,

who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked away unknown and forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways & firetrucks, not even one free beer, who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out of the subway window, jumped in the filthy Passaic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the street, danced on broken wineglasses barefoot smashed phonograph records of nostalgic European 1930s German jazz finished the whiskey and threw up groaning into the bloody toilet, moans in their ears and the blast of colossal steamwhistles.

who barreled down the highways of the past journeying to each other's hotrod-Golgotha jail-solitude watch Birmingham jazz incarnation,

who drove crosscountry seventy-two hours to find out if 1 had a vision or you had a vision or he had a vision to find out Eternity,

who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who came back to Denver & waited in vain, who watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver and finally went away to find out the Time, & now Denver is lonesome for her heroes,

who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other's salvation and light and breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a second,

who crashed through their minds in jail waiting for impossible criminals with golden heads and the charm of reality in their hearts who sang sweet blues to Alcatraz,

who retired to Mexico to cultivate a habit, or Rocky Mount to tender Buddha or Tangiers to boys or Southern Pacific to the black locomotive or Harvard to Narcissus to Woodiawn to the daisychain or grave,

who demanded sanity trials accusing the radio of hypnotism & were left with their insanity & their hands & a hung jury,

who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism and subsequently presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with the shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding instantaneous lobotomy,

and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin Metrazol electricity hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy pingpong & amnesia,

who in humorless protest overturned only one symbolic pingpong table, resting briefly in catatonia,

returning years later truly bald except for a wig of blood, and tears and fingers, to the visible madman doom of the wards of the madtowns of the East,

Pilgrim State's Rockland's and Greystone's foetid halls, bickering with the echoes of the soul, rocking and rolling in the midnight solitude-bench dolmen-realms of love, dream of life a nightmare, bodies turned to stone as heavy as the moon.

with mother finally *****, and the last fantastic book flung out of the tenement window, and the last door closed at 4 A.M. and the last telephone slammed at the wall in reply and the last furnished room emptied down to the last piece of mental furniture, a yellow paper rose twisted on a wire hanger on the closet, and even that imaginary, nothing but a hopeful little bit of hallucination -

ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now you're really in the total animal soup of time -

and who therefore ran through the icy streets obsessed with a sudden flash of the alchemy of the use of the ellipse the catalog the meter & the vibrating plane.

who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul between 2 visual images and joined the elemental verbs and set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aetema Deus

to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and stand before you speechless and intelligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet confessing out the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought in his naked and endless head.

the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here what might be left to say in time come after death,

and rose incarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhom shadow of the band and blew the suffering of America's naked mind for love into an eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani saxophone cry that shivered the cities down to the last radio

with the absolute heart of the poem butchered out of their own bodies good to eat a thousand years.

II

What sphinx of cement and aluminium bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!

Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless! Mental Moloch! Moloch the heavy judger of men!

Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgement! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!

Moloch whose mind is pure machienry! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!

Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovas! Moloch whose factories dream and choke in the fog! Moloch whose smokestacks and antennae crown the cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks! • Moloch whose poverty is the specter of genius! Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen! Moloch whose name is the Mind!

Moloch in whom I sit lonely! Moloch in whom I dream angles! Crazy in Moloch! Cocksucker in Moloch! Lacklove and manless in Moloch!

Moloch who entered my soul early! Moloch in whom I am a consciousness without a body! Moloch who frightened me out of my natural ecstasy! Moloch whom I abandon! Wake up in Moloch! Light streaming out of the sky!

Moloch! Moloch! Robot apartments! invisable suburbs! skeleton treasuries! blind capitals! demonic industries! spectral nations! invincible madhouses! granite cocks! monstrous bombs!

They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven! Pavements, trees, radios, tons! lifting the city to Heaven which exists and is everywhere about us!

Visions! omens! hallucinations! miracles! ecstacies! gone down the American river!

Dreams! adorations! illuminations! religious! the whole boatload of sensitive bullshit!

Breakthroughs! over the river! flips and crucifixions! gone down the flood! Highs! Epiphanies! Despairs! Ten years' animal screams and suicides! Minds! New loves! Mad generation! down on the rocks of Time!

Real holy laughter in the river! They saw it all! the wild eyes! the holy yells! They bade farewell! They jumped off the roof! to solitude! waving! carrying flowers! Down to the river! into the street!

Ill

Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland

where you're madder than I am

I'm with you in Rockland

where you must feel strange

I'm with you in Rockland

where you imitate the shade of my mother

I'm with you in Rockland

where you've murdered your twelve secretaries

I'm with you in Rockland

where you laugh at this invisible humour

I'm with you in Rockland

where we are great writers on the same dreadful typewriter

I'm with you in Rockland

where your condition has become serious and is reported on the radio

I'm with you in Rockland

where the faculties of the skull no longer admit the worms of the senses

I'm with you in Rockland

where you drink the tea of the breasts of the spinsters of Utica

I'm with you in Rockland

where you pun on the bodies of your nurses the harpies of the Bronx

I'm with you in Rockland

where you scream in a straightjacket that you're losing the game of actual pingpong of the abyss

I'm with you in Rockland

where you bank on the catatonic piano the soul is innocent and immortal it should never die ungodly in an armed madhouse

I'm with you in Rockland

where fifty more shocks will never return your soul to its body again from its pilgrimage to a cross in the void

I'm with you in Rockland

where you accuse your doctors of insanity and plot the Hebrew socialist revolution against the fascist national Golgotha

I'm with you in Rockland

where you will split the heavens of Long Island and resurrect your living human Jesus from the superhuman tomb

I'm with you in Rockland

where there are twentyfive thousand mad comrades all together singing the final stanzas of the Internationale

I'm with you in Rockland

where we hug and kiss the United States under our bedsheets the United States that coughs all night and won't let us sleep

I'm with you in Rockland

where we wake up electrified out of the coma by our own souls' airplanes roaring over the roof they've come to drop angelic bombs the hospital illuminates itself imaginary walls collapse O skinny legions run outside O starry-spangled shock of mercy the eternal war is here O victory forget your underwear we're free

I'm with you in Rockland

in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey on the highway across America in tears to the door of my cottage in the Western night

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in any subject introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analysis.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in 'invisible teaching'. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials, the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental-in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Cha- cellor

6th Reprint : November, 2017

বি(বিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরি কমিশনের দূরশি(া ব্যুরোর বিধি অনুযায়ী মুদ্রিত।
Printed in accordance with the regulations of the Distance Education Bureau of the University Grants Commission.

POST GRADUATE : ENGLISH
[PG : ENG.]

Paper - VI
Modules — 4

Course Writing
Prof. Himadri Lahiri
Prof. Soma Banerjee

Editing
Dr. Subir Dhar
Dr. Sreemati Mukherjee

Netaji Subhas
Open University

Post Graduate Course in English
PG - English - 6

Module
IV

Unit 1 ❑ *Mourning Becomes Electra* : Eugene O' Neill

Structure :

1.1 ❑ Introduction

The American Critic, Louis Untermeyer introduces Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) in his *The Britanica Library of Great American Writing* (Volume II) by referring to Sinclair Lewis who accepted his 1930 Nobel Prize with the following words that startled the audience :

> Had you chosen Eugene O'Neill, who had done nothing much is American drama save to transform it utterly in ten or twelve year, from a false world of neat and competent trickery to a world of splendour and fear and greatness, you would have been reminded that he has done something far worse than scoffing - he has seen life as not to be neatly arranged in the study of a scholar, but as a terrifying, magnificent, and often quite horrible thing, akin to the tornado, the earthquake, the devastating fire. (p. 1382)

The above comment underlines the nature of O'Neill's creative genius which, despite Lewis's 'half-modest, half-satirical speech.' cannot hide. His genius was of a tragic nature and as a creative artist he broke new grounds. He was the son of an actor father and had been familiar with the performance of plays right from his early days. The spirit of drama was in his blood. And the experience of misfortune, accidents and deaths that he went through made him naturally prone to depression in his private life. The lack of a

spiritual centre in contemporary life further intensified his personal angst. This is reflected in most of his plays. His heroes are often labelled as "haunted heroes" who are driven inexorably by Nemesis or Fate. Contemporary theatrical conventions and props failed to impress him and he was in search of a more intense form which might offer him scope to express his vision of life. Classical myths and forms provided him a more effective vehicle. As Egil Tornqvist points but, to O'Neill, Greek tragedy which was enacted in theatres that were temples too, represented highest example of art and religion. "To recreate the Greek spirit was the goal he set for himself. The mystical, Dionysian experience of being part of the Life Force that Nietzsche found communicated in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, O'Neill hoped to impart, through his plays, to a modern audience." Tornqvist mentions in this context O'Neill's comment made in 1929: "What has influenced my plays the most is my knowledge of the drama of all time - particularly Greek tragedy." Scholars have dwelt at length to trace the influence on him of other writers and of those who belong to other fields of study, particularly philosophy and psychology. We shall only mention here the names of Nietzsche and Ibsen who had a profound influence on him. Strindberg too was his favourite playwright. He himself said that Strindberg "first gave me that vision of what modern drama could be, and inspired me with the urge to write for the theatre."

1.2 ❑ O'Neills Life and Works

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born on 16 October, 1888 in New York City. He was the second son of the renowned romantic actor James O'Neill and Ella Quinlan O'Neill. His childhood was spent in touring the country with his father's theatre company. Naturally his formal education was affected. He was sent to Mount Saint Vincent Academy, a boarding school in New York City, and to Betts Academy in Stanford, Connecticut. He went to Princeton University for a year. He married Kathleen Jenkins in 1990. He went on a gold prospecting trip to Honduras. His son Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, Jr. was born in 1910. In 1912 he attempted suicide and in the same year was divorced from Kathleen. He became an actor and then a newspaper reporter for the New London *Telegraph*. He also went to the sea for two years and earned the "Able Seaman" certificate. He suffered from tuberculosis and

spent six months in the Gaylord Farm Sanatorium in Connecticut. He utilized this period by reading books, mainly plays and wrote his first one-act plays. In 1914 he joined George Pierce Baker's drama classes at Harvard. His association with non-commercial theatre groups paved the way for writing and production of his experimental plays. In 1918 he married Agnes Boulton. Next year his son Shane O'Neill and in 1926 his daughter Oona O'Neill were born. He encountered a series of tragedies in his life that had profound impact on him. He witnessed the slow death of his father who had suffered a stroke and had intestinal cancer. Stephen A. Black, in his well-documented article' "Celebrant of loss" : Eugene O'Neill 1888 - 1953 observes that during the last years of his father, "father and son became close in an increasingly collegial way. From March to August 1920 Eugene grieved deeply while watching his father die slowly and painfully, spending many hours and days at his father's bedside when James was unconscious or barely lucid" (p. 4). Black also mentions the effect of Eugene's discovery that "his mother had become a morphine addict at his birth, he himself being the unwitting cause of her addiction. It was a discovery not unlike the discovery be one Oedipus that is celebrated in two plays by Sophocles; in one play Sophocles imagined the process of discovery, and in the other, the consequences of the discovery" (pp. 5-6). A sense of guilt overwhelmed him as "he grew up sharing the family assumption that they would all have been better had he not been born." (p.6). He witnessed the deaths of his mother in 1922, that of his brother James O'Neill Jr. In 1923, and later of his son Eugene O'Neill, Jr. in 1950. It is not difficult to imagine why death and bereavement figures so prominently in his plays. *Mourning Becomes Electra*, which he completed in 1931, is, as the title indicates, clearly a play of mourning. They instances of death and decay mentioned above had the impact on the writing of this playwright. As has been pointed out by critics, the plays, particularly those written after 1920, were concerned with death and bereavement in some way or other, so much so that he has been called as a "celebrant of loss" most of whose characters "struggle unsuccessfully to let their dead be dead and to live their own lives without feeling haunted" (Black, p. 5). This great dramatist of death and mourning breathed his last in a Boston hotel room on 27 November, 1953. Black reports that shortly before his death O'Neill said to his wife Carlotta, "God damn it, I knew it! Born in a hotel room and dying in a hotel room." This sums up the feeling of a person who all along felt unhoused and unsettled.

O'Neill was a prolific writer and his plays won widespread recognition. The National Institute of Arts and Letters awarded him a glod medal for drama and Yale University awarded him a D. Litt. He won the Pulitzer Prize for drama thrice. He reached the pinnacle of success with the winning of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936. His plays have been extensively translated in most of the languages of the world.

Some of O'Neill's well-known plays are :

Beyond the Horizon (1920)

The Emperor Jones (1921)

The Hairy Ape (1922)

Desire under the Elms (1925)

Mourning Becomes Electra (1931)

The Iccman Cometh (1946)

1.3 ❑ American Theatre and Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill and his parents were directly associated with the dramatic tradition of his country. As we have already noted, his father was a well-known actor of his time and his family members toured the country along with his company. Eugene himself participated in performane of some plays. He observed the conventions of plays, play acting and the systems within which plays were acted. In a highly competitive age all these were undergoing changes. His own plays were the results of his reactions to the theatrical conventions of his time. His career, as asserted by Watermeier, "was impacted by theatre's expansionist tendencies and the prevailing tensions between the forces of tradition and those of change" (p. 33). It is therefore necessary to examine here the conventions followed over the decades in order to contextualize *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

During the nineteenth century, from the 1820s to mid-1870s, American theatre was based on the "stock and star system." Resident stock companies of the cities presented mostly traditional plays and occasionally one new play or two on a repertory and rotational basis. These was not much scope for new experimental plays. And the success of the system depended very much on the stars. People associated with this system were usually very committed.

This system began to change with the entrance of the business-minded monopoly-oriented people who employed stars who would fit the new plays with popular appeal. The stock system gradually waned. This new system is described by Daniel J. Watermeier in the following way:

> Since new plays were usually more expensive to mount than revivals of old plays, to recoup their investment [...] managers would run a production continuously night after night, rather than rotating it with other productions. A run of one hundred continuous performances soon, became the benchmark for a commercially successful production. Stock was also affected by the rise of the "combination," a theatrical company organized to tour a single popular play, or a small repertoire of plays, featuring a prominent star, or, occasionally stars. Combination companies travelled with their own stock of scenery, properties and costumes, and a cadre of at least essential support personnel. They were essentially travelling long-runs.

This was facilitated by a fast growing railroad system, particularly by the laying of the transcontinental railway line in the late 1860s.

The commercially oriented theatre soon faced discontent from some aesthetic minded players, producers and new theatre groups. New Theatre was established in 1909 by a consortium of businessmen, Little Theatre (1912) and Booth Theatre (1913) by Winthrop Ames, a very energetic young director from Boston. Amateur theatre groups collectively called "Little Theatres" began to surface in the 1920s and they were inspired by European examples and projected experimental plays on a non-profit basis. One may mention the names of Provincetown Players and Washington Square Players in this connection because they played important roles in projecting the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

David Belasco introduced realism in an intense form. He used "solid three-dimensional scenic units, actual objects, and costumes that, depending on the play, were historically or contemporaneously accurate. He was a pioneer in the use of electrical lighting to create moods and naturalistic effects. He eliminated the traditional and distracting footlights and developed a system of overhead, diffused lighting that stimulated natural-looking sunsets and sunrises or strikingly lit interiors" (Watermeier 42). This trend of realism was reinforced by the new interest in the psychological realism.

American journal and newspaper, p. critics were also conservative in taste at the turn of the century and new experimental plays did not usually

receive good reviews. By 1920s things changed a lot and the new critics in the media were more open to receive plays written by new playwrights like O'Neill.

1.4 ❑ *Mourning Becomes Electra :* Synopsis

O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra is a trilogy consisting of "Homecoming," "The Hunted," and "The Haunted." The first one is a play in five acts, while the second and the third are in five acts and four acts respectively. The action of the plays is set in 1865-1866. The titles of the plays are indicative of the nature of the theme they deal with. The classical orientation of the trilogy is also indicated by its title.

Homecoming

Act I

"Homecoming" opens in the years following the end of Civil War in America. The backdrop is the affluent Mannon House in New England. From the very beginning a sinister, brooding, secretive atmosphere seems to pervade the house. The house is described as "an incongruous white mask" fixed to the house to conceal its ugliness. In subsequent pages the house is described as "a temple of hatred" built by its owner as a tribute to Hatred. The play opens with the appearance on the scene of Lavinia, the daughter of Ezra Mannon, a pillar of New England society. He was the Brigadier General in the Civil War, a Mayor and a judge. He is the prosperous owner of several ships and is highly esteemed in the community of New England. The war is at an end and Ezra Mannon is about to return home. Hence the title "Homecoming". From the very first lines an atmosphere of intrigue, hatred and venomous feelings permeates the atmosphere. The relationship between mother Christine Mannon and daughter Lavinia is tainted by the venom of mutual distrust and dislike. Lavinia is deeply disturbed by the information she has received regarding her mother's illicit relationship with Captain Adam Brant. Acting on a hunch she pursues her mother to New York where she comes upon the lovers' tryst. Here she learns that Mr. Brant who had seemed attentive to her is in fact her mother's lover. His apparent interest in her was a calculated ruse of Christine to throw her daughter off the scent, as Lavinia's suspicion might have been aroused.

Act II

Maddened by her mother's infidelity, Lavinia confronts her mother with the truth. She threatens to tell her father of her discovery when he arrives home. She asks her mother to give up her lover or face the consequence of her act. Christine, trapped, seems to relent and to submit to her daughter's wishes. She realizes that if her daughter carries out her threat her husband would never divorce her but would only disgrace and disown her. He would also rob her lover of his profession by using his immense influence. Thus the marriage which was already in shambles would grow into an intolerable bondage which they could never shake off. Mollified by her mother's apparent compliance, Lavinia leaves. As soon as she leaves, her mother summons her lover and informs him of the facts. They confer together. They realize that now that the relationship has been discovered, they will have to part ways. Christine has been forced into a corner. She now schemes to do away with her husband. She asks Adam to procure poison. Adam at first objects but Christine cleverly plays on Adam's feelings for his mother who was wronged by the Mannon family. She goads him on until he agrees to her plan.

Act III

Ezra Mannon, the master of the house, returns home. The Civil War is over. Christine Mannon enquires about her son Orin who was also in the war and has not returned home. Her husband informs her that her son had a head wound and he is now convalescing in a hospital. The wound is not a grave one, however, and hopefully, he will return home shortly. Lavinia steers the conversation to the subject of Captain Adam Brant who has been calling on Christine Mannon. Ezra who had already had a hint of this visit in her letters to her father is at once suspicious and angry. Lavinia further informs him that he is quite a lady's man and his presence will cause gossip in the town. Sensing a brewing trouble, Christine asks her daughter to leave.

Ezra Mannon bares his heart to his wife. He confesses that in the war with death all around him, death had lost all significance and seemed hollow and meaningless. Soon his thought had turned to life, specially his life with Christine. He senses that throughout their marriage, there had been an invisible and inflexible barrier between them that prevented all communication. She seems to love her son Orin with the possessiveness in proportion to the dislike and hatred towards her daughter and her husband. He wants to break

down the barrier and to truly love her. At this revelation Christine becomes uneasy but not the less resolved to carry out her grim purpose.

Act IV

It is now almost daybreak. Christine who has been unable to sleep furtively leaves her bed. Her husband too is awake. It is as if he feels the premonition of his death. He confesses "something in me was waiting for something to happen." He then accuses his wife of waiting for his death to set her free. He realizes that she does not care for him. To this Christine retorts that he is responsible for the barrier between them, that he has been cold and uncaring all these years. A sudden confession of love cannot undo the wasted years. She then changes her tone to one of deliberate and brutal frankness. She admits that she loves Captain Brant who is the illegitimate son of her husband's father's brother. This infuriates Ezra and he rises threateningly but falls back in pain, exclaiming that he has a heart attack and demands his medicine. She hands him the poison which he swallows. He soon realizes that it is not his medicine. He calls out for his daughter Lavinia who hurries into the room. Ezra with his dying breath gasps out that "she is guilty - not medicine." He then dies. Lavinia who distrusts her mother and knows of her illicit affair suspects that she has been responsible for the heart attack. She demands to know what her father meant by his last words. All this while Christine has been hiding the box of poison in her hand. Overcome by her daughter's accusation she faints down. The box falls on to the carpet. Lavinia who kneels down to attend her mother discovers the box. Her worst suspicion is confirmed. She knows that her father has been poisoned.

The Hunted

Act I

Ezra Mannon is dead and after the funeral neighbours call on Mrs. Mannon and her daughter. Hazel and Peter Niles, friends of her son Orin, sympathise over her bereavement. Christine, since her husband's death, has a haggard, careworn appearance. It is as if the secret burden of guilt she carries and her daughter's continuous silent indictment and hostility is wearing her away,

and gnawing at her very existence. She pleads with Hazel Niles to help her foil Lavinia's plans. She is afraid that Lavinia who has great influence over her brother will cause an estrangement.,between mother and son, and ostensibly she solicits Hazel's help to prevent a possible break-.up between her son and Hazel who are childhood friends. In reality it is an admission of Christine's fear that Lavinia will harden he aon's heart against, her mother. In a moment of weakness she yearns for the innocence and goodness she has lost, and she senses these lost quilities in Hazel Niles. Soon her son arrives home. To Orin the spectral appearance of the house bathed in moonlight suggests a tomb. Lavinia takes his words literally saying it is indeed a tomb with death in the house. Orin is irritated at this. He has had a surfeit of death and gloom and does not want to brood over death but wants to think about life. He then questions Lavinia about Adam Brant. Lavinia had hinted at the impropriety of Brand's presence in her letter to Orin. Like his father he grows suspicious. Lavinia warns her brother to be on his guard about their mother. She is aware of close attachment and asks him not to believe their mother's protestations of love. Orin who loves his mother reacts sharply and says that Lavinia is paranoid. Orin leaves the room. Left alone, Christine, is overcome by Lavinia's silent hostility, for Lavinia has not uttered her suspicion about her mother but has been following her every move. Goaded beyond endurance Christine tries to elicit some response, but she is silently rebuffed and condemned.

Act II

Hazel and Peter Niles sit conversing about the sad changes in the Mannon household. Orin arrives with his mother. He instinctively senses some change in his mother and his sister, and says as much. He is torn between his love for his mother and a growing suspicion of Adam which was carefully planted in him by his sister. He is, by turns, devoted to and distrustful of his mother. Christine is on the defensive. She tries to instil in him doubts about the mental health of her daughter. She charges Lavinia with an unnatural obsession with her dead father. She fears that Lavinia is trying to poison her brother's mind. Christine is in desperation. Repelled by her daughter, afraid that his beloved's life is in danger (Orin threatens to kill Adam if he should meet him) and fearful of losing her son's love, Christine is truly 'hunted', Hounded by the relentless hatred of her vindictive daughter she is in danger of losing

everything she loves. She pleads with her daughter to forebear, which appeal however falls on deaf ears.

Act III

Lavinia's warning to Orin to beware of their mother has taken an unshakable root in his mind. He is aware that a change for the worse has taken place in the house but so far these fears have been unfounded, based only on insinuations and dark hints from sister. He ironically looks at his father's picture and remarks that "his father was like the statue of a dead man looking over the head of life without a sign of recognition, cutting it dead for the impropriety of living." His sister overhears this sardonic remark and chides him with disrespect for their dead father. Orin replies that during the war death has come to lose all meaning for him. Lavinia tries to alter his mood. She wants to talk about Christine. At first Orin refuses to listen, calling her suspicion the ravings of an abnormal mind. Lavinia swears that she is of sound mind and that she has definite proof of their mother's infamy and openly accuses her of murder. She produces the empty box containing the poison, but Orin replies that their father had always sided with his sister and against mother and himself. Desperate to convince him, Lavinia tauntingly says that Orin will allow their mother's lover to escape. At this Orin's suspicion is reawakened. Lavinia promises that they will catch the lovers red-handed.

Christine suspects that her children are now intent on hurting her and her lover. Desperate and with her back against the wall, she is the very embodiment of guilt, a lost soul in torment.

Act IV

This act opens on a clipper ship on a wharf in East Boston. Captain Adam Brant, the commander of the ship, is on board. Christine appears on the scene to warn him that his life is in danger. She tells him that her son and daughter are away and she has taken advantage of their absence to talk to him and informs him that Lavinia has found the box of poison, and that maddened by the knowledge, Orin will try to kill him. They must flee. Adam promises to give up his ship "The Flying Trades" and board another ship. She urges Adam to escape together before Lavinia can act. They are unaware that both Lavinia and Orin are hiding nearby, listening to their conversation. Orin now

comes out and follows Adam and shoots him dead. Together the brother and sister ransack the apartment to make it look like a burglary. They then leave the scene of the crime,

ActV

Christine, unaware of the event that have followed her meeting with Adam, is alone at home. She is in a pitiable state of fear and guilt and entreats Hazel Nile to keep her company. Hazel agrees to stay the night and leaves the place to get permission from her parents. Lavinia and Or in arrive and Orin immediately blurts out the truth. Christine, stunned by her grief at the news of Adam's death, is paralysed and shocked. Orin who truly loves his mother still has vestiges of enderness for her. He believes that his mother has killed their father under the influence of Adam who plotted the whole affair. Christine silently condemns her daughter, as she guesses that Lavinia was in love with Adam and this is her revenge. Unable to bear the accusing look, Lavinia departs. Christine's world has been utterly destroyed. Bereft of her last solace, love for Adam, she shoots herself. When Orin hears the shot and discovers his mother's body, he is grief-stricken. He blames himself for the death of his mother and calls himself a murderer. Afraid that their part will be revealed by Orin, Lavinia commands their servant to tell the family doctor that their mother, unhinged by grief at her husband's death, has committed suicide.

The Haunted

Act I Scene I

Some time has elapsed. The Mannon House has been empty for a year. As Lavinia and Orin had left the country to travel abroad, the house is the target of much gossip. Rumour has it that the house is haunted. In the beginning of the act a local character named Abner Small had boasted that he was not afraid to stay until dark in the Mannon House. Others lay a wager that he should stay there until dark. If he leaves the house before dark he will lose the wager and had to pay ten dollars. Abner enters the house. The others stand conversing. Very shortly he rushes out of the house, gasping out that he has seen the ghost of Ezra. At this point Peter and Hazel Niles approach

the house. They have just received a telegram from Orin and Lavinia that they are returning from their trip abroad. Peter and Hazel wish to make arrangement to make the house comfortable for the wary travellers. They proceed to open windows and light fires. Orin and Lavinia arrive home. Marked changes are noticeable in Lavinia. Formerly angular and stiff, she has now put on weight. She dresses in green like her mother. There is a womanly attractiveness in her. She now physically resembles her mother. There is a touch of irony here, for Christine now seems to be reincarnated in her daughter. Lavinia tries to coax her brother indoors. He too has changed. He is haggard and lean and carries himself like an automaton. It is as if vital spark of life has left his body which is now merely an empty shell. He is strangely reluctant to enter the house and looks around him in dread. Lavinia has to exercise all her powers of persuasion to elicit some response from him, She tries in her brisk matter-of-fact way to exercise the ghost that haunts him. Orin has to make a great effort to obey his sister. The strain of past horrors is clearly telling on him. He is in a state of great shock.

Act I Scene II

Lavinia and Orin are both trying to come to terms with the changed condition in the Mannon House. Lavinia now so closely resembles her mother that it evokes strange reactions from others. Orin is the first to notice this transformation. He has retreated into himself and lays the burden of guilt for the death of Adam and his mother. He still believes in his mother's innocence. He feels that her mother, under the undue influence of Adam Brant, had committed the sin. Lavinia sharply dispels such notions, saying that her mother was a murderess who met her just deserts. Orin, she says, must free himself of any sense of guilt. But the murders of Christine and Adam, specially Christine, weigh heavily on Orin. While they converse, Peter and Hazel Nile come in. Peter, like Orin, is amazed by the physical transformation in Lavinia. It is more than a physical change. Her very nature, formerly so puritanical, has become more emotional, passionate and almost uninhibited. Brother and sister seem to have changed places. Orin, so much like his mother, has grown into a Mannon, harsh, husbanding and austere, while Lavinia is now like her mother. Orin speaks disapprovingly of the permissive ways of the Pacific Island where they had stayed for a month. There is an underlying menace in his voice as he speaks of the Pacific island. Peter urges Lavinia to marry him

but Lavinia declines as she thinks Orin is far from being well. She cannot rest until Orin is free from the demon which haunts him.

Act II

Orin Mannon is confined to a room with the windows closed and the door locked from within. He is engaged in writing the true history of the Mannons till the present day. Lavinia is'not aware of what he is doing. She pleads with him to leave his unhealthy, preoccupation and go outdoors. Orin replies that as guilty creatures they have renounced the right to face the daylight. Darkness of the soul is theirs and thus the dark is fitting for condemned creatures like them. Orin threatens Lavinia that if she ever feels tempted to marry Peter he will place the history in Peter's hands. Orin has gone sinister and threatening, He bluntly tells Lavinia that her opinion of their mother's death being an act of justice was nonsense. Her death was the outcome of the jealous vindictiveness of Lavinia's thwarted love for Adam Brant. Driven beyond endurance by Orin's threat, Lavinia asks him to take care. Orin mockingly questions if that is a threat to his life. He says he is well aware of his danger and it is she who had better watch out or else the dark skeletons in the Mannon cupboard would come out, Orin is oblivious to Lavinia's distress and merely repeats that he wants to be left alone to complete his unfinished task.

Act III

Lavinia is in a state of excruciating mental pain. She keeps thinking about her last conversation with Orin when he challenged her to kill him. Thoughts of Orin's death pass through her mind bringing an unconscious feeling of relief. She is instantly repentant and prays for composure. Their gardener Setli summons Lavinia to attend to some household problem. She leaves. Peter and Hazel Niles enter talking. They discuss Orin's strange behaviour. He hardly ever comes outdoors and Lavinia sticks to him closely, never allowing him to have a moment together, specially with Hazel. Orin comes in carrying the envelope containing the confession and hands it to Llazel. He makes her promise to have it in safe keeping, not to read it unless Lavinia were to marry Peter or in case of his own death. Hazel is shocked by Orin's insistence that Lavinia must not marry Peter. He says that this is part of her punishment. He cannot marry Hazel either, for the only love he feels now is the love of

guilt. Orin encouraged by Hazel's sympathetic tone is on the brink of confession but draws back at the last moment Hazel tells him that she knows that he had quarrelled with his mother before her death and that this has made him feel responsible. Orin appreciates Lavinia's cunning (Lavinia earlier told this to Hazel) and merely repeats that Hazel should keep the envelope safely locked. He pleads with Hazel to take him away from this evil house for he fears something terrible is going to happen if he stays here. Hazel invites him to their home. Orin bitterly replies that Lavinia willnot allow him to be out of her sight. Just then Lavinia arrives. She immediately senses that something is amiss. Hazel says that she has invited Orin to their house. Lavinia declines the offer. Angered by this Hazel says that Orin is old enough to know his own mind. Lavinia snubs her. Hazel now unwittingly reveals the envelope she is holding, Orin tries to warn her and asks her to leave. Hazel tries to edge past Lavinia who realises that Orin must have given her the writing. She appeals to Orin's sense of honour to the Mannon loyalty and in desperation asks him to get back the envelope for her sake. In return she promises to do whatever he wants, including not marrying Peter. Orin is now in a morbid state of mind and confesses that ties of guilt bind them close together and he loves her. He hints at an incestuous relationship because he feels that it is the only way she can be made to feel her guilt and not leave him. He begs her to confess and find peace. By now Lavinia's mind is also unhinged by the tensions she has been passing through and the dread of Orin's revelation of their guilt. She is near a breaking-point. She tauntingly adds that Orin will kill himself and that he is not a coward. This shaft strikes home. He confuses Lavinia with his dead mother. It is as if Christine is speaking through Lavinia. He wildly raves that this is the only way to find forgiveness for his guilt. In this state of mind he goes out. Lavinia waits for the worst. Soon a shot is heard. Lavinia quickly locks the envelope in a drawer and leaves the room.

Act IV

Orin is dead. He has committed suicide. Lavinia is alone in the house. She tries to put on a cheerful air. She has made up his mind to marry Peter and turn her back on grief and live life on her own terms. Hazel drops in to talk to Lavinia and tells her that Orin's death is no accident. She then pleads with Lavinia not to marry Peter and thereby to ruin his life. Hazel leaves and

Peter enters. He is dejected and depressed. Lavinia urges him to marry him immediately. Peter is shocked at the proposal since they were passing through, a period of mourning. He is suspicious and asks if the envelope contained anything damning to prevent their marriage. Lavinia says that the dead are coming between her and her happiness. Now Lavinia pleads her not to wait for marriage but love her for her sake: "Want me, take me, Adam." She immediately realises that she has uttered the name of Adam. Now Peter is extxemely suspicious and asks her if there is any truth in Orin's hints about her relationship with a Pacific islander whom Lavinia had admired. Lavinia now feels that her relationship with Peter must end and thus replies that ex relationship with the islander was purely physical. Peter, shocked, refuses to have anything to do with her. Seth comes in, singing his favourite Shenandoah tune. Lavinia says grimly that she is bound to the Mannon dead. Seth requests her to leave the house but she replies that she will not go Orin's and Christine's way, She will punish herself. She will cut herself off from all living beings, nor see the light of day again. She will live indoors, surrounded by dead Mannons until her own death. Lavinia finally enters a room to wait for her doom.

1.5 ❑ Main Characters in the Play

The main characters in the play correspond to those in Greek myth and plays. They are moved by intense passion, motivation, and urge for revenge. A sense of determinism seems to work relentlessly in the play. A brief introduction to the major characters of the play is given below.

Lavinia : Lavinia is the daughter of Ezra Mannon and Christine. She is the protagonist of the play and is the "Electra" of the title. Like Electra, she helps her brother Orin to murder their mother's lover Adam Brant and goads her mother to commit suicide. She has great manipulative power and influences her brother to achieve her own goals of revenge and retribution. She is in fact the agent of retribution. Right from the beginning she has an obsessive attraction for her father and informs him of the developments in the Mannon household when he is away in the Civil War. She, like her father, is puritanical in the beginning but registers changes in her character when she comes back from abroad. She in fact is the custodian of the interests not only of his father but the entire Mannon family. In the end also she is the only custodian of the

Mannon House which houses many memories, not all of which are cherishable. She is therefore the agent of repression of the memories. She hates her mother who not only possesses her father but also Adam Brant who falsely shows his love for her. When she discovers this she plans for her revenge. She therefore not only moves away from her mother but also replaces her. Physically she looks like her mother after her death. She is her mother's double. After her return from abroad she becomes more permissive. Instead of wearing black which she used to wear earlier, she now is dressed in green. This change is worthy to be noted because her mother is dead now and she is ready to take up her role.

Orin Mannon : Orin is the son of Ezra and Christine and brother of Lavinia. He plays the role of Orestes of Aeschylus. His absence from the Mannon House was most intensely felt by his mother with whom he was obsessively in love. His return from the Civil War sparked a series of incidents in which he is made to be involved by the manipulative skill of his sister. His jealousy is carefully aroused by Lavinia and he kills his mother's lover Adam Brant whom he considers to be a rival. He suffers from guilt and ultimately kills himself. He is intelligent enough to see through the cunning of his sister but himself is a helpless victim to jealousy and an urge for revenge. In his paranoid state he considers Lavinia to be his mother and acts according to her instigation. After his return from abroad he too is a changed person and resembles the members of the Mannon family.

Christine Mannon : Christine is the wife of Ezra Mannon, and mother of Lavinia and Orin. She has a striking physique. She is capable of taking decisions. In the play she plays the role of the Greek character Clytemnestra. During her husband's absence she takes a lover (Adam Brant) and kills her husband when he returns from war. She is absolutely possessive of her son and admits that she would not have taken a lover if her son did not join war. Adam is thus a substitute for her son. She wears green which suggests envy and jealousy. She is full of vitality and life force, The paleness of her face is considered to be a mask which hides her duplicity and indicates her repression of her passion.

Ezxa Mannon : Ezra Mannon is the symbol of law and patriarchy. After his return from the Civil War he is seen in the dress of a judge, enforcing the puritanical law. He belongs to the influential Mannon family and wields considerable power. Although he is a broken down husband, he is still

important in the symbolic form. His imagination of himself as a statue of a great man standing in a square speaks of his projection in the trilogy in a symbolic form. His influence in the house is felt even in his absence and even after his death he has been evoked again and again.

In the play he is the counterpart of Agamemnon. Ezra returns from the Civil War to be murdered by his wife with the help of Adam Brant.

Adam Brant : Adam Brant is the counterpart of Aegisthus of the Greek tragedy. He is the lover of Christine. He is full of romantic sensuousness and sensuality. He is an illegitimate child of the Mannon family and comes back to take revenge in his own way. He takes away Ezra's wife from him and fakes love for Lavinia who soon discovers the nature of his relationship with her mother; In a way Christine appears to him as a mother substitute. Christine too says that she would not have been involved in a love affair if Orin had not joined the Civil War.

1.6 ❑ The Title of the Play : *Mourning Becomes Electra*

The title of the play manifests the influence of Greek myth and classical Greek drama on the play and the playwright. These have structured the story of the trilogy and influenced the dominant tone of the play. O'Neill was an admirer of the classical Greek drama and was greatly influenced by the content and style of these. In the present play we find several elements including the use of determinism, employment of Fate, use of some form of Chorus and so on. "What has influenced my plays the most," he said in 1929, "is my knowledge of the drama of all time - particularly Greek tragedy." Tragedy, he believed, "is the meaning of life - and the hope. The noblest is eternally the most tragic. The people who succeed and do not push on to a greater failure are the spiritual middle classes."

The title of O'Neill's trilogy refers to Electra who, in Greek mythology, was the daughter of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, the king of Mycenae, and Clytemnestra. The couple's other children were Iphigenia and Orestes. Agamemnon sacrificed Iphigenia in order to win favourable winds during the Trojan war. After a ten-year siege Troy was ravaged and Agamemnon returned with Priam's daughter Cassandra as a prize. However, after their return home, they were murdered by Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus

who then seized power. Orestes, helped by Electra, killed his mother and her lover. Electra's hate for her mother and her relentless desire for revenge is the subject-matter of the dramas of Greek dramatists like Euripides, Sophocles and Aeschylus. O'Neill's play is particularly structured on the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus.

A reading of the play clearly establishes a close parallel between the Greek story and that of O'Neill. O'Neill's interest is obviously in Lavinia (Electra) who replicates Electra's role. She avenges the murder of her father Ezra Mannon (Agamemnon) who, like his Greek counterpart, returns from a war - American Civil War. Ezra is murdered by his wife Christine (Clytemnestra) who has, like her Greek counterpart, a lover in Adam Brant (Aegisthus). One can also note close resemblance between the names of the Greek characters and those of O'Neill. Here we shall not make any attempt to elaborate the points of resemblance because one can read the synopsis given in this study material and gather story elements from there. And of course a first-hand acquaintance with O'Neill's trilogy is necessary.

The point which needs to be emphasised here is that O'Neill has located a contemporary story of American society within the structure of the Greek tragedy. By doing this he underscores the continuing relevance of the tragic events. The tales of passion and guilt happen even these days and Fare follows lives of human beings like a relentless force. The ancestral guilt of the Mannon family ultimately nails Ezra and the pictures of his ancestors are a constant reminder of their presence in the lives of the inhabitants of the house. The extra-marital relationship of Christine leads to murders. As a result of the continuing surveillance of Lavinia and the psychological pressure exerted by her, the fact of the murder develops into a guilt complex in her. Orin, a brother-turned-son character, is driven by jealousy but is also a helpless creature in the hands of Fate. The deterministic force of the Greek tragedy is clearly present in *Mourning Becomes Electra.*

In the end Lavinia locks herself in the Mannon House that houses memories of the past. She survives deaths, murders and suicides. She entombs herself in the house. Mourning, in the end, becomes Lavinia (Electra).

1.7 ❑ *Mourning Becomes Electra:* A Psychoanalytical Play

Critics have noted the impact of psychoanalysis on O'Neill's plays. *Mourning Becomes Electra* also lends itself to such interpretations. But O'Neill himself did not admit of any conscious effort to infuse such a meaning in his plays. He felt that any sensitive writer can have an intuitive understanding of the mindscape of his or her characters. He asserts:

> There is no conscious use of psychoanalytical material in any of my plays. All of them could easily have been written by a dramatist who had never heard of the Freudian theory and was simply guided by an intuitive psychological insight into human beings and their life-impulsions that is as old as Greek drama. [...] I have only read two books of Freud's, "Totem and Taboo" and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." The book that interested me the most of all those of the Freudian school is Jung's "Psychology of the Unconscious" which I read many years ago. If I have been influenced unconsciously it must have been by this book more than any other psychological work.

The above statement establishes that O'Neill had a good understanding of the psychoanalytical perspectives which may have been unconsciously projected on his characters and on the overall structure of the stories.

One notes that the trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra* is structured, besides the myth of Electra, by the Oedipus myth. Oedipus was the son of Laius. It was predicted that Laius would be killed by his son and hence Oedipus was abandoned on the Mount Cithaeron. He was found by a shepherd and raised by Polybus. Hearing about the oracle he left Corinth and accidentally killed his father as a result of a hot argument with him, without having the knowledge of the identity of the killed. This myth was developed into "Oedipus Complex" by Freud. This Oedipus Complex contends that the child has an instinctive, incestuous desire for the parent of the opposite sex. Both the son and the daughter have as his or her love object of the mother. The father is for the male child the rival who is supposed to threaten him with castration. By this threat against incest the father becomes a figure of the law. The male child then overcomes the Oedipal desire and identifies with the father. The girl child, on the contrary, realises a sense of castration of both herself and her mother, and leaves the mother for the father with the hope of bearing his child that would compensate for her lack. The girl will be a

mother in her mother's place. This turning away from the mother, according to Freud, "is accompanied by hostility; the attachment to the mother ends in hate. A hate of that kind may become very striking and may last all through life." Even the synopsis of O'Neill's play establishes the existence of some aspects of this complex in the play.

One finds manifestations of this complex in O'Neill's trilogy. Lavinia's hate for her mother and affiliation to her father can be amply demonstrated. She takes revenge on her mather for murdering her father. In the end she has a striking ."esemblance with her mother, now dead, and even wears a green dress like her mother. She identifies herself with her mother only after her death and replaces her in the Freudian pattern. She is now not only the only 'mother' figure but also is in possession of the Mannon House which is the symbol of patriarchy and rule of the law. Her 'lack' seems to be compensated now: Similarly, Orin's love for his mother is also clearly perceptible. The story bears this out. He kills Adam who is perceived as a rival. He dreams of "Blessed Island" which has clear sexual connotations. He tells his mother, "The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same colour as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you." One has the feeling that the island is also equated with Mother Nature with all her fertile and recuperative power! Christine similarly has an obsessive love of and possessiveness for her son and asserts that she would not have a lover if Orin did not join the war.

Lavinia and Orin are thus re-incarnated as Christine and Ezra respectively and substitute the mother and the father.

1.8 ❑ Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the title of O'Neill's trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra.*
2. Critically analyse how Greek myth and classical Greek drama structure the plot and characterisation of the trilogy.
3. O'Neill adopts a Greek theme that is relevant for a contemporary American society. Do you agree with this view? Elaborate your arguments.
4. Do you think that O'Neill's trilogy was influenced by Freud and other psychoanalysts? Give your opinion, citing examples from the text.
5. Consider the role and significance of the Civil War as a backdrop in the trilogy.
6. Who is the protagonist of the trilogy? Analyse this person's character.
7. Analyse the character of Ezra Mannon and show how his importance is felt even in his absence.
8. Analyse the character of Christine Mannon.
9. Analyse O'Neill's trilogy as a tragedy of death and mourning.
10. Critically analyse the mother-daughter relationship as presented in the trilogy.
11. Describe the Mannon House and analyse its role in the trilogy.
12. Critically analyse the role of Fate in the trilogy.
13. What is the role of the Blessed Island in the trilogy? How do the major characters respond to idea of the Blessed Island?
14. What are the functions of the minor characters in the trilogy? Give your own opinion by analysing the text.

1.9 ❑ Recommended Reading

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Martine, James J (ed). Critical Essays on Eugene O'Neill. Boston: G.K.Hall, 1984.

Unit 2 ❑ *Death of a Salesman* : Arthur Miller

Structure :

2.0 ❑ Background

American drama after the Second World War continued many of the themes and preoccupations of the drama of the 1920's, whose great architect was Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). Indeed, in both Miller and Tennessee Williams, who is his contemporary, the shadow of O'Neill is clearly discernible, in the emphasis on family themes, and in locating destiny within the family situation. O'Neill was also extremely experimental with theatre technique, using masks, ghosts, and forms of expressionism, that continue in Miller's dramaturgy.

The fiction of the Second World War was deeply affected by changes in the human viewpoint, and drama of this period, specially, faithfully reflected this condition. A loss of faith in life itself, cynicism about human values, a failure to achieve personal identity and individuality seemed dwarfed by the truly massive power of nonhuman things. In every genre of literature was depicted facets of humanity scarred by war.

Following the patriotic absorption of World War II, American theatre continued to thrive for a time, but after the 1960s Broadway was increasingly given over to glossy spectacles, a condition resulting from high production costs and the competition of movies and television. Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Lillian Hellman and other established playwrights continued as forceful presence into the 1950s and beyond, while American theatre was

energised from abroad by the theatre of the absurd created by Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet and others. The immediate postwar period was marked also by the rise of two American playwrights of uncommon genius. Tennesee Williams earned great acclaim with rich, moody drama set in the South, notably *The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* Arthur Miller contributed to the postwar stage, one of America's greatest plays *Death of a Salesman* (1949), a moving study of the 'Tragedy' of the Common man.

Miller's play *The Crucible* (p.4) focuses on the excesses of the McCarthy era or what is popularly known as McCarthysm. John McCarthy was a US senator of the 1950's, who suspected Communist infiltration into America, and conducted hearing after hearing at Washington, of suspected Communists. Regarding these hearings Miller commented, "the main point of these hearings as in seventeenth century Salem, was that the accused make public confession, damn his confederates as well as his Devil Master, and guarantee his sterling new allegiance by breaking disgusting old vows-whereupon her was let loose to rejoin the society of extremely decent people." The Crucible (1953), which centralizes the Salem witch hunt of the 1600's, thus has its political analogue in Miller's own time, and its hero John Proctor, allows himself to be executed rather than sign away, his own and his children's respect. Both playwrights significantly diminished in their contributions after the 1960s. Among younger' dramatists, for many years only Edward Albee seemed to approach the power and intensity of Miller or Williams.

2.1 ❑ About the Dramatist: Life and Works

Arthur Miller was born and raised till he was a teenager on the upper East Side of Manhattan, attending school in Harlem. He came from a very ordinary middle-class family, with a German ancestry and Jewish practices followed at home. His father was a manufacturer of ladies coats and his mother a teacher. In 1928, the family moved to Brooklyn, and suffered tremendously in the hard times of the depression there. Miller graduated from high school in 1932, but since he was more interested in athletics than studies, his grade were too poor for admission into college. After a series of jobs, that he acquired and left very quickly, he settled down to a daily grind in an automobile parts warehouse. He evokes this period in loving detail in a one-act play *A Memory of Two Mondays.* This work provides a fine introduction to the milieu

that produced his determination to write. Finally accepted to the University of Michigan in 1914, he began writing in earnest, won two undergraduate Hopewood Awards for his plays and met Mary Slattery, who later became the first of his three wives. Graduating in 1938, he went to New York, wrote briefly for the Federal Theatre Project and was soon employed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard while writing plays for radio.

Miller's first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944) failed after four performances, but three years later he was back with a substantial success in *All My Sons* (1947), a drama based on the guilt arising from a shipment of faulty aeroplane parts in Word War II. This play and *Death of a Salesman* (1949) which appeared next, established Miller as a master of family dramas rarrying strong social implications. In *The Crucible* (1953) Miller continued his social analysis, finding in the witchcraft trials of colonial Massachusetts an analogue for the increasingly restrictive environment of cold war America.

After *The Crucible,* Miller's work seemed for some years less successful, and his personal life more troubled. In ironic confirmation of the ideas expressed in *the Crucible,* he was accused of left wing sympathies, denied a passport to the Belgian opening of the play and brought under the scrutiny of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In 1956, his first.marriage ended in divorce, and Miller married the glamorous actress Marilyn Monroe, from whom he was divorced in 1961. Within this period, his major work was limited to *A View from the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays,* first produced and published together, in 1955, a *Collected Plays(1957)* and the screenplay for the film *The Misfits(l961).*

In 1962 he married the photographer Inge Morath, with whom he later collaborated in producing several books of photographers and essays.

After the fall and *Incident at Vichy,* both produced in 1964, brought him back to Broadway after a long absence and restored his position among American dramatists. The Price (1968), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972) and *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1976) are testaments to Miller's concern and dedication to the specific Theatre of ideas.

Timebends : A life (1987) is a memoir and a significant pointer to his plays, that are mostly autobiographical. Social consciousness, like Ibsens', forms the bedrock of Miller's plays.

His only novel, Focus (1945) appears inadequate in technique and style, but carries a profound message. In it, a Gentile confronts anti-Semitism, and

has a truly traumatic experience. Miller's abiding sense of the individual's needs to come to terms with personal responsibilties, while bravely confronting the world's injustice. This sense finds constant reflections in Miller's writings, and his essay, 'Our Guilt for the World's Evil stresses upon over discovery of ourselves in relationship to evil.

He frequently structures his plays to reveal psychological crisis through expressionistic techniques that undercut the otherwise surface realism of his plays. His preoccupation with ordinary lives and the profundity of their beings, makes him a major force among the twentieth century masters of the theatre.

Apart from his major dramatic and fictional works cited earlier, Miller also wrote stories. A collection of stories are put together in I *Dont Need you Any More* (1967). His non-fiction account of wartime army camps is recorded in *Situation Normal* (1944). Books in collaboration with his third wife Inge Morath include *In Russia(1969), In the Country* (1977) and Chinese Encounters(1979) Robert A Martin edited *The Theatre Essays of Arthur Miller* (1978), while Harold Clurman edited *The Portable Arthur Miller* in 1971.

2.2 ❑ Theme and Structure

Death of a Salesman represents a successful attempt to blend themes of social and personal tragedy within a dramatic framework. The story of Willy Loman, a salesman is also the story of false values sustained by every agency of publicity and advertisement in the American, indeed, the global life . Willy Loman accepts at face value the overpublicized ideals of material success and blatant optimism. This is the root of his tragedy. This is the root of his tragedy. This downfall and final defeat highlight not only the failure of the man,but also the failure of an entire society and a blatantly capitalistic mode of life. The playwright's ability to project the story of his tragic, lower-middle class hero, into the common experience of so many Americans who sustain themselves with illusions and ignore realities, makes this play one of the most significant in the American Theatre.

The socio-psychological factors bring about death and senseless destruction. The Human mind and the subconscious play major roles in shaping the story

Willy Loman. The protagonist, is a megalomaniac plagued with a guilt complex. He takes upon himself the flaws and failures of his sons, specially Biff, his favourite.

Ominous forebodings are relating to the protagonists tragic end are there from the play's onset. The play records the tragic failure of human aspiration, within factors of social, cultural and economic determinism. The Death of the Salesman marks the death of hope, faith and success within contemporary America. Miller's play in that respect, share the despair that not only characterizes William's drama, but was sounded much earlier in O'Neill. European drama of the time also reflects a similar spirit of pessimism and despair.

Death of a Salesman had stunned audience at its very first staging in Philadelphia. As Terry Hodgson had emotionally remarked-people stood up, put on their coats, sat down again then someone clapped, and the house came down! It was a play that was so disturbing, that it made a tremendous impact. To this day it has not lost its universal message.

As one examines or encounters the play one needs to look at the semantic significations of a name like Willy Loman. Like the characters of Ben Jonson's comedies, whose prevailing humours are indicated in their names, Loman's name indicates his status as 'everyman,' a low man, as opposed to the grandeur of the tragic hero, who not only enjoys exalted social status, but is also gifted with a virility of being, that justifies his being called a hero. Miller's naming of his protagonist, also gestures towards the democratic foundations of his dramatic aesthetic which seeks to find dramatic material in the life of the common man. The "death" in the *Death of a Salesman,* however, ties some of the aesthetic implications of the play with the death motif in classical tragedy, emphasizing man's proclivity towards death, destruction and self-annihilation. Although, destiny in this play is generally figured in social forces that compel a human being to exert himself beyond endurable limits, nonetheless, somewhere a sense of individual responsibility is implied.

The technique of psychic projection that is so intense in *Macbeth,* is often encountered in Miller's plays particularly in *Death of a Salesman,* Dreams often merge into the world of reality, and characters are profoundly swayed by them. The character of Ben, Willy's dead brother in *Death of a Salesman* has no concrete place in the play, yet his words are prophetic. Therefore a different register of reality is created than the concretely visible or sensuously apprehensible. Although, realistic at the cone, Miller works effectively through

dreams, halucinations and epiphanies. The 'jungle' Ben talks about is the relentless, dynamic world of suceess that Willy has ensnared himself in. The present and the past comingle, Benis a memory figure who hovers over his brother Willy and Charley playing cards. The present reality and past actuality one simultaneously represented.

Willy: Jim awfully tired Ben.

Charley : Good, keep playing, you'll sleep better. Did you call me Ben?

Willy: That's funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.

In a very significant manner, an intimate interior monologue has been juxtaoposed with an ordinary bit of dialogue. The same unnerving conversation goes on later with the dead Ben talking about their dead mother, Ben is the illusory realm of the past that is constantly impinging on the present. He is Willy's personal haunting fantasy.

2.3 ❑ The Story

When Willy Loman came home on the same day he had left on a trip through his New England territory, his wife Linda perceived that he was near breaking point. He had lately began to talk to himself about the past. He had that day, driven off the road, quite a few times, unaware of what he was doing, These incidents attest to state of emotional imbalance in Willy, a caving in to psychological pressures and traumas. This movement marks a point of erisis W's life, which is apparent to his wife, but not to Loman himself.

He had come home in fear. At sixty-three, he had given all his life to the company. He told himself they would just have to make a place for him in the New York home office. He had became weary of his hectic life-travelling all week and, driving futile miles had become too much for him.

Willy had two grown sons - Biff and Happy. Biff was his real favourite, though Happy was more settled and successful. Biff was going on in years-thirty four years old and still to find his moorings. He had been the greatest football player his school had ever known. The game in Ebbets Fileld had shown him up as a hero, and three colleges offered him scholarship. Biff had refused all three. He wanted his life roguing around the West, never making more than twenty eight dollars a week. His attitude was inexplicable.

In the next two days, Willy found his life-story unfurling before him.

Present reality mingled with yesterday's half-forgotten episodes. The broken pictures revealed the story of Willy Loman-Salesman.

Willy's mistake was not to follow Ben to Alaska or was it Africa? Willy was a salesman, and on weeks he averaged two hundred dollars. However a more prudent estimate was that he earned $70 a week. To make the grade, Willy stayed on in New York. Ben however went into the jungles a pauper and four years later he came back from the diamond mines a very rich man.

Both Willy's sons were well-liked. Charley's son, Bernard, was not as popular. Bernard was awed by Biff's popularity as a sports hero and had begged to carry his shoulder-pads at Ebbet's field. Biff's pilfering of a football from the school, and whole case of them from the sporting goods store where he worked, worried Willy only a little, and he waved the problem aside, saying the boy did not mean any harm. He even laughed when his sons stole some lumber from a construction yard. Saying that no one would miss it, they used it to make the front stoop.

The day at Ebbets' field was a crucial day in Biff's life. Willy had left for Boston after the game, He was with a woman when Biff burst in upon them. Biff had failed in mathematics and could not avail one of the scholarships unless Willy talked to the teacher and got him to change the grade. Willy was ready to leave for New York at once, but when Biff saw the woman in a compromising state with his father, he left in a state of trauma. Things were never the same afterward.

Happy, the other son, was always eclipsed Biff. Happy, like Biff, was magnificently built and very handsome, and believed that there was not a woman in the world he could not have. An assistant merchandizing manager, he would be manager someday, a big man. So would Biff, if only he was given time to find himself.

On the day Willy returned home, he dreamed his biggest dreams. Part of the play's pathos derives from the dreams that Willy dreams. They are excessive, far beyond the practical reaches of his abilities. Perhaps, there is an element of tragic hubris in such dreams. It is perhaps in the nature of Willy's reach, that the tragic flaw of his character can be located. Like Marlowe's Faustus, and like Macbeth, Willy Loman is an "overreacher." Social pressures notwithstanding, the deleterious effects of the American Dream conceded, there is still something archetypal about Willy's desire. It is a desire that does not acknowledge or does not accede to limitations.

He loved Biff overwhelmingly and dreamt how Biff would get a loan from the owner of the sporting goods store and set up himself and his brother in business. Willy planned to approach young Howard Wagner, his boss's son, and demand to be given a place in the New York office. They would celebrate that night at dinner. Biff and Happy would give Willy a night on the town to celebrate their mutual success.

But Biff failed to acquire the loan, for the man who was appreciative of Biff now did not even recognize him. To get even in a childish manner, Biff stole a fountain pen and ran down eleven flights with it. When Howard heard Willy's request, he told him to turn in his samples and retire. Willy, shocked, realized that he was being asked to leave. He went to Charley for more money, for he had been borrowing from Charley since he had been put on straight commission months ago. Bernard was in Charley's office. He was on his way to plead a. case before the Supreme Court. Willy could not understand it. Charley had never done for his son what Willy had for his. When offered a job, willy waves it away saying that he was a brilliant salesman, who would show the world his worth someday. Willy, pathetically hopeful, stumbles in to the dinner they had planned, a failure himself, but hoping for good news about Biff. Hearing of Biff's failure, he was completely broken. Happy picked up two girls of easy virtue and he and Biff left, without a thought for their shattered father.

When they finally came home,their mother Linda ordered them out of the house by morning. She was afraid because Willy had tried to kill himself once before. Giving vent to his anger and sense of defeat, Biff cursed Willy for a fool and a dreamer. He forced himself and Willy to acknowledge that Biff had been only a clerk in that store, not a salesman; that Biff had been jailed in Kansas city for stealing; that Happy was not an assistant manager but a clerk and a philandering, immoral rogue, and that Willy had never been a success and never would be. Then Biff began to weep inconsolably, and it dawned on Willy that his son really loved him. Left alone when the others went upstairs, willy began to see the dead Ben again, to tell him his plan. Willy had twenty thousand in insurance. Biff would be benefitted by that money and become 'magnificent' again.

Willy hatched a terrible plan, ran out to his car and drove crazily away. He died in accident.

At the funeral, there were no crowds of tearful admirers, only Linda, their two sons and the faithful friend Charley. Charley tried to tell Biff about his

misunderstood father - of how a salesman had to dream, that without drearms he was nothing, when the dreams were gone, a salesman was finished. Sobbing quietly, Linda- the everconstant, patient wife, stoops to put flowers on the grave of Willy. The hopes, aspirations and dreams and dreams of an archetypal American were symbolically buried with him. The deep moral vein, that runs through Millers works, is very prominent here. What is that moral? This moral vein is the excessive preoccupation with material culture that is one of the inevitable aspects of "dreaming" within a capitalist culture. Miller, who had leftist sympathies, records emphatically in this play, his fear and anxiety over the gradual destruction of the individual in the mad pursuit for material success and accomplishment. Miller seems to be indicating in the style of the medieval morality plays, whose central character was "Everyman", that obsessive dreams of financial success, or to envisage one's worth in terms of bank balances, would surely lead to perdition and death, both physical and spiritual.

2.4 ❑ Father-Son Relationship

Family bends are explored minutely in this remarkable play. Willy Loman, the salesman, has the notion that personal attractiveness and being popular were keys to success. He was deeply impressed by the successful career of Dave Singleman-his role model. The false values he cherished drew him into a vortex of illusions and a false life. The over-ambitious Willy has false notions about himself, but he is just a mediocre person. Miller epitomises contemporary American values in Willy Loman.

The discovery of Willy's extramarital liaison destroys the bond of affection between father and son. Biff's impressionable, adolescent mind is devastated in the face of the harsh reality. There is loss of warmth, and consequent alienation between father and son. The repulsion that takes root in Biff's rnind destroys both of them. The disclosure of liaison is a tragic event that evokes pathos and bring about absolute ruin in the family. It underscores Willy's common and average humanity, in contrast to the heroic in himself, that Willy always liked to stress. Biff idolised his father and believed earlier, that Willly could achieve anything . He pleads with his father to have the teacher change his failed grade:

Biff: Would you talk to him Pop? You know the way you could talk.

Willy: your'on. We will drive right back.

Biff: Oh Dad, gnod work ! I'm sure he'll change it for you."

All the trust and affection of the son changes into amazement and hatred when he sees a whore in his father's room. All Willy's Lame excuses are of no avail. Biff relinquishes his dreams of rising in chosen field, for he sees his father as a traitor. He has just witnessed his father giving the whore his mother's stocking:

Biff: Dad

Willy: She is nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terribly lonely.

Biff: You...you gave her Mama's stockings ! (His tears break through

and he rises to go)

Willy: (Grabbing for Biff) I gave you an order!

Biff: Don't touch me, you...liar !

Willy: Apologize for that !

Biff: You fake ! You phony little fake ! you fake !

As Biff, weeping copiously leaves, Willy sinks to his knees in despair. The icon of success has been pulled off the pedestal, the marble statue has revealed its ugly feet of clay. The family man is exposed as a crass philanders. Biff totally abandons his education, leaves one job after another and is yet unsettled in career and life at the ripe age of thirty four. This play too follows tragic structure in its incorporation of Aristotlian anagnorisis (recognition) and peripeteia (reversal). Biff recognizes his father for what he is and the event leads to reversal of Willy's hopes. Willy is aghast to realise that he is the prime cause of his son's failure. Despised by his sons, Biff and Happy, Willy realises that he is a complete failure in life. When Biff fails to get a loan for business, he and his brother leave the restaurant with their girls, leaving their father (whom they had invited) totally humiliated. The sons even disown him, an old and broken man, before their girls. Willy in a rush of guilt, relives his shameful encounter with the whore in Boston in the past, and behaves as a demented man. In fact, his pain is felt by his wife, Linda, who rebukes her sons hurting their old father.

Willy finally succeeds in committing suicide, even smashing up his car so that his son could get the insurance money, and rehabilitate himself. Even in death, the salesman sells himself. His funeral is attended, not by the multitudes who thronged to Dave Singleman's funeral, but only by his immediate family.

The dreamer, the husband, the father- in all these roles Willy had thought to succeed but failed miserably. Consequently the whole question of the American Dream is problematized. The father is haunted by the fact that he cannot be a role-model for his loving, but straying sons; the salesman is appalled that, being old, he can neither travel long distances, nor lift the heavy sample cases, The husband is haunted by the memories of his unsavoury past when he had committed adultery with a whore in a Boston hotel room. The confidence and the power of youth have left him, and he finds himself a helpless old man, but still a dreamer. Willy is a victim of the false values of society, as well as his own false illusions.

2.5 ❑ Questions

1. Comment on the incident at the restaurant. What is its significance in the play?
2. Consider Miller's depiction of a whole generation caught in web of delusion. How far does he succeed in his expose?
3. Miller is ironic and sympathetic at the same time, Do you agree?
4. Comment on the parent-child relationship in the play.
5. Consider Arthur Miller as one of the greatest of American dramatists, with reference to *Death of a Salesman.*
6. Of what significance are dreams in this play?
7. *Death of a Salesman* is an intense psychological study of people caught up helplessly in a vortex of incidents. Do you agree?
8. Critically comment on the following characters in the play-

   a) Linda, b) Happy, c) Biff, d) Willy e) Uncle Ben
9. Analyse *Death of a Salesman* as a tragedy. What is archetypal in this play?

2.6 ❑ Select Bibliography

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