NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

1

UNDER GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME

মানুষের জ্ঞান ও ভাবকে বইয়ের মধ্যে সঞ্চিত করিবার যে একটা প্রচুর সুবিধা আছে, সে কথা কেহই অস্বীকার করিতে পারে না। কিন্তু সেই সুবিধার দ্বারা মনের স্বাভাবিক শক্তিকে একেবারে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া ফেলিলে বুদ্ধিকে বাবু করিয়া তোলা হয়।

—রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

ভারতের একটা mission আছে, একটা গৌরবময় ভবিষ্যৎ আছে, সেই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের উত্তরাধিকারী আমরাই। নূতন ভারতের মুক্তির ইতিহাস আমরাই রচনা করছি এবং করব। এই বিশ্বাস আছে বলেই আমরা সব দুঃখ কষ্ট সহ্য করতে পারি, অন্ধকারময় বর্তমানকে অগ্রাহ্য করতে পারি, বাস্তবের নিষ্ঠুর সত্যগুলি আদর্শের কঠিন আঘাতে ধূলিসাৎ করতে পারি।

—সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু

Any system of education which ignores Indian conditions, requirements, history and sociology is too unscientific to commend itself to any rational support.

—Subhas Chandra Bose

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HONOURS IN ENGLISH

BRITISH POETRY AND DRAMA: 14TH CENTURY TO EARLY 17TH CENTURY

CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

PREFACE

In a bid to standardise higher education in the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) based on five types of courses viz. *core, discipline specific, generic elective, ability* and *skill enhancement* for graduate students of all programmes at Honours level. This brings in the semester pattern, which finds efficacy in sync with credit system, credit transfer, comprehensive continuous assessments and a graded pattern of evaluation. The objective is to offer learners ample flexibility to choose from a wide gamut of courses, as also to provide them lateral mobility between various educational institutions in the country where they can carry acquired credits. I am happy to note that the University has been accredited by NAAC with grade 'A'.

UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Learning Programmes) Regulations, 2020 have mandated compliance with CBCS for U.G. programmes for all the HEIs in this mode. Welcoming this paradigm shift in higher education, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has resolved to adopt CBCS from the academic session 2021-22 at the Under Graduate Degree Programme level. The present syllabus, framed in the spirit of syllabi recommended by UGC, lays due stress on all aspects envisaged in the curricular framework of the apex body on higher education. It will be imparted to learners over the *six* semesters of the Programme.

Self Learning Materials (SLMs) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. From a logistic point of view, NSOU has embarked upon CBCS presently with SLMs in English / Bengali. Eventually, the English version SLMs will be translated into Bengali too, for the benefit of learners. As always, all of our teaching faculties contributed in this process. In addition to this we have also requisitioned the services of best academics in each domain in preparation of the new SLMs. I am sure they will be of commendable academic support. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders who will participate in the teaching-learning based on these study materials. It has been a very challenging task well executed, and I congratulate all concerned in the preparation of these SLMs.

I wish the venture a grand success.

Professor (Dr.) Subha Sankar Sarkar
Vice-Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University

Under Graduate Degree Programme
Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)
Subject : Honours in English (HEG)
Course Title : British Poetry and Drama —
14th Century to Early 17th Century
Course Code : CC - EG - 01

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Under Graduate Degree Programme

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Subject : Honours in English (HEG)

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Course Code : CC - EG - 01

Module	Unit	Course Writer	Course Editors
One	1 2	**Bisweswar Chakraborty** *Assistant Professor of English* *Government General Degree College, Lalgarh, Dist. Jhargram*	Sandhya Sen & Dr. Srideep Mukherjee
	3	**Dr. Debamitra Kar** *Assistant Professor of English* *Women's College, Calcutta*	
	4	**Kusumita Datta** *Assistant Professor of English* *Behala College, Kolkata*	
	5	**Dr. Debamitra Kar**	
	6	**Dr. Mahuya Bhaumik** *Associate Professor of English* *Derozio Memorial College, Kolkata*	
Two	7	**Sandhya Sen**	
	8	**Kusumita Datta**	
	9	**Manu Auddy** *Associate Professor of English* *Goenka College of Commerce, Kolkata*	
	10	**Sandhya Sen**	
Three	11	**Kushal Andrew Biswas** *Associate Professor of English* *Women's Christian College, Kolkata*	
	12	**Dwaipayan Mitra** *Assistant Professor of English* *Government General Degree College, Lalgarh*	
	13	**Dr. Devalina Gopalan** *Assistant Professor of English* *Women's Christian College, Kolkata*	

Module	Unit	Course Content Writer Details	Course Editors
Four	14	**Anindita Halder** *Assistant Professor of English* *Krishnagar Government College*	Sandhya Sen & Dr. Srideep Mukherjee
	15	**Pritha Banerjee** *Assistant Professor of English* *Vidyasagar Metropolitan College, Kolkata*	
	16	**Dr. Debamitra Kar**	
	17	**Dwaipayan Mitra**	
	18	**Kusumita Datta**	
Five	19	**Dr. Devalina Gopalan**	
	20	**Dr. Sankar Chatterjee** *Formerly Reader in English* *University of Kalyani*	
	21	**Dr. Ajanta Paul** *Principal, Women's Christian College, Kolkata*	
	22	**Soma Ray** *Associate Professor of English* *Women's Christian College, Kolkata*	
	23	**Dr. Indranil Ghosh** *PG Counselor, NSOU*	
Timeline		Developed by **Dr. Debamitra Kar & Dr. Srideep Mukherjee** Formatted by – **Dr. Md. Intaj Ali**	

: Board of Studies :

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Netaji Subhas Open University

UG : English (HEG)

Course Title : British Poetry and Drama — 14th Century to Early 17th Century
Course Code : CC - EG - 01

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Module - One

The Beginnings of English Literature and Language

Unit - 1 □ Anglo-Saxons and the Continental Invaders in Britain

Structure

1.1.0 Introduction

1.1.1 Early Britain and the Roman Occupation

1.1.2 Invasion by the Germanic Tribes

1.1.3 Introduction of Christianity

1.1.4 The Scandinavian Invasion

1.1.5 The Norman Conquest

1.1.6 Summing Up

1.1.7 Suggested Reading

1.1.8 Comprehension Exercises

1.1.0 Introduction

In this unit we are going to study Anglo- Saxon or Old English Literature. The Old English language was very different from English as we know it now. In this unit we are going to learn about the early inhabitants of Britain, their history, culture, language and literature. We shall see how the Romans during their occupation civilised the ancient Britons and how, after their withdrawal, Germanic tribes, first from the continent across the English Channel and then from the Scandinavian countries in the north invaded Britain, gradually settled there and how from the mixture of many Germanic tribes the English people came to be.

1.1.1 Early Britain and the Roman Occupation

Pre-historic Britain was peopled by a group of rustics who had migrated from western Russia and the shores of the eastern Baltic. They introduced farming, had the prudence of storing surplus grains and could hill forts. They were the Celts who after their arrival in Britain found out the use of iron. One division of these primitives called themselves Brittones and gave the name Britain to the island. It was the Celts

who fought the great Roman General, Julius Caesar, on the sea-beach when he invaded Britain with his legions in 55 and 54 B.C. But the disturbances in Gaul[1] kept the Romans busy with the result that the Celts in Britain were left alone for another hundred years. But Caesar's invasion exposed the island to other races. Pressed by the Roman army the Gauls, the Celts' kinsmen, came over in small batches. The pattern of society of both the Celts and the Gauls was tribal and their chieftains were constantly fighting among themselves. They failed to put up a united resistance when, in 43 A.D., the Roman Emperor Claudius, took earnest steps for a systematic domination of the island. The Romans had encountered stiffest resistance among the Welsh Mountains and the northern moors. The savages of northern England and of Caledonia (Upper Scotland) held out against the highly drilled Roman army for more than a century until Emperor Severus (193 – 211A.D.) gave up the thought to conquer Scotland.

The Romans stayed in England for four hundred years and exerted an intense influence on the life of its inhabitants, particularly in the south and the east. Tribal feuds were systematically controlled; population increased; trade and commerce flourished; towns sprang up; Christianity got a foothold and a sense of unity gradually developed. Roman engineers laid firm roads remnants of which still exist. The Britons learnt how to build villas with windows. The British blood that was already a fusion of the pre-historic primitives' and Celts' got a dose of Roman blood into it from the soldiers, the merchants and the courtiers of the Empire. Many city dwellers also began to take up Latin way of life-style in their daily affairs.

1.1.2 Invasion by the Germanic Tribes

In the early years of the 5th Century the Romans were compelled to leave England in a bid to defend Rome against the barbarians of the East. With their departure fresh invasions from across the sea took place. The Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes and the Franks swarmed to the island from the continent in succeeding waves for about seven hundred years. The invaders belonged to the same ancestral stock as the Celts, , had allied languages and customs. Their poetry too sang of the same racial heroes. The first specimens of the poetry of these people show clearly that their culture was similar to the Celts' of Britain than to the Romans' or the Greeks'. The Jutes were the first to arrive and came from Jutland, the angles came probably from north-west Germany and south Denmark and the Saxons from west Germany. As the Angles and the Saxons were the most numerous, the entire body of migrants is called 'Anglo-Saxons'. Writers writing in Latin in the 9th century first used the term 'Anglo-Saxons' to refer to these people in order to distinguish them from their kinsmen on the continent.

The Anglo-Saxons were fierce sea-rovers who were not afraid to face challenges from a harsh nature They were fierce fighters and a large section of the native inhabitants were killed by them. Their conquest was so thorough that the civilisation and language of the ancient Britons disappeared completel y. The remaining natives were driven to in the jungles and mountains of western England. The Anglo-Saxons did not adopt more than half a dozen words of the ancient Britons. There was a fresh mixture of blood as the invaders captured British women and married them. This time the racial stock changed. The Anglo-Saxons called their new home 'Angle-land' which, in course of time, changed to 'Engle-land' and finally England.

1.1.3 Introduction of Christianity

During the last two hundred years of the Roman rule the Christian Church was established in England and the Celts were converted to Christianity. The Anglo-Saxons were pagan and their invasion drove it to the mountains of Wales. From Wales a Roman-Briton, St. Patrick, took it to Ireland and became her patron saint. It was from Ireland that the gospel travelled back to Scotland. For various reasons this church did not succeed in spreading Christianity in Britain. In 597, a chosen band of missionaries under St. Augustine sent by Pope Gregory (Pope, 590-604) landed in Kent which is the part of Britain nearest to Europe. The Anglo-Saxons who had first set up small kingdoms subdued the whole island within the span of a century, except the mountainous Wales, the remote Cornwall (South-West) and Strathclyde (North-West). These kingdoms gradually merged into larger political units viz., Essex, Sussex, Wessex, Kent, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria. The then King of Kent had married a Christian princess of France. Under the queen's influence, the king, Ethelbert, became one of Augustine's first converts

With the conversion to Christianity England came in closer touch with Mediterranean culture and mainstream Western civilization. It marked a turning-point in English literature, language and history. The Roman Church, an international organisation, consolidated its hold in England for the first time. It increased the Anglo-Saxon's natural enthusiasm for music, taught him not only Latin but also law and charity. The monasteries became centres of learning. With books brought from overseas they opened libraries. English universities owe their origin to the intellectual pursuits of Christian monks. The Anglo-Saxons wrote in runes[3], the monks taught them the Latin alphabet and made writing easier. The monks wrote and transcribed all the oral songs and folktales of the Anglo-Saxons and preserved them.

1.1.4 The Scandinavian Invasion

Anglo-Saxon invasion of England was not the last of its kind. In the middle of the 9th century, fresh hordes of pagans from Scandinavia invaded England and all but destroyed her new faith and learning. They came from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. They are known by the common name of 'the Scandinavians'. At first they came to plunder and left as soon as their boats were filled with gold and valuables accumulated in the shrines and monasteries near the sea. Then, having denuded the coasts they penetrated inland. The Anglo-Saxons were no match for these ferocious invaders. By 871 A.D. the Scandinavians had destroyed Northumbria and Mercia and besieged Wessex

The history of domination shows that soldiers of one generation turned landowners in the next. The Scandinavians too were no exceptions to this rule. They learnt agriculture from the Anglo-Saxons and improved upon what they had learnt by virtue of their superior discipline and organisation. They never lost their vigour and fierce spirit of independence and would have uprooted the Anglo-Saxons completely but for the statesmanship of the Anglo-Saxon king, Alfred the Great.

Alfred (849-900?) was the King of Wessex when the Danes[5] laid siege to it in 871. He belonged to the oldest Saxon dynasty. The fall of Northumbria, Kent and Mercia, brought the Anglo-Saxons together. At the Battle of Ashdown (Jan.871), Alfred halted the invaders and gave his land peace for five years. In the battle of Ethandune Alfred inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and forced them to terms. Under the Treaty of Wedmore (878 A.D.), the leader of the Danes, Guthram, had to remain satisfied with 'Danelaw' i.e., Northumbria, East Anglia, South-East Midlands and parts of Mercia – about two-thirds of England. He and his followers also accepted Christianity.The Treaty gave England peace for the following fourteen years. To prevent fresh incursions by other batches of Danes, Alfred fortified the coasts and built a navy. But shortly after Alfred's grandson England had to accept a Danish king, King Canute. Gradually the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians merged into one people. The Scandinavians, unlike the Romans, were not culturally superior, so their contribution to English life consists of mainly a large number of everyday words.

1.1.5 The Norman Conquest

The last major invasion of Britain came from the Scandinavians who during their raids had settled in Northern France. They adopted French language and culture, intermarried with the French and came to be known as Normans . The Dukes of Normandy had developed an efficient feudal system. They were good at war tactics

as well as patrons of literature and culture. On the death of Edward the Confessor, Alfred's last descendant, William, the Duke of Normandy, claimed the English crown on the basis of a promise of king Edward. The king of England, Harold, a Dane, had an even weaker claim. William crossed over to England. In the battle of Hastings (October, 1066) England's fate was decided in the hands of the Norman Duke whom history came to famously recognise as William the Conqueror. He took a small span of only two years to conquer the rest of England.

The Conquest brought no new race to England because the Normans were also of Scandinavian descent. But they came with a superior culture and a literature and language of their own. They seized the land of the Saxons, built castles with Saxon labour and introduced a system of land tenure on military service. They did not disturb the system of the Saxons' local government. For many years the conquerors lived apart, treating the native population and their culture with contempt. So the fusion between the Normans and the Anglo - Saxons took a long time. Finally, by the 15th century , the people of Britain emerged clearly as a racial and cultural unit.

1.1.6 Summing up

You can understand, from this early history of England, how the English people combine several races and have a composite cultural tradition in which Roman and Germanic, Pagan and Christian elements are inextricably mixed. When you study the language and literature of England you will notice how these various elements interplay in the English life and literary imagination.

1.1.7 Suggested Reading

1. Campbell, James (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons*, Oxford, 1982.
2. Stenton, F. M., *Anglo-Saxon England*, Oxford, 1971.
3. Whitelock, Dorothy, *The Beginnings of English Society*, Pelican History of England II, Harmondsworth, 1952.

1.1.8 Comprehension Exercises

A. Essay type questions:

1. Write a note on how the Celts, the Gauls and the Romans lead to the formation of the Anglo-Saxon regime in ancient Britain.

2. Describe how the Roman Church was established in Britain and how did it contribute to the introduction of Christianity in ancient England.
3. Narrate historically the events leading up to the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

B. Mid length questions:

1. What information do you get about the nature of the Scandinavian invaders?
2. How does King Alfred try to unite the Danes?
3. What was the immediate effect of the introduction of Christianity in England?

C. Short-answer type questions:

1. How does the name *England* come into being?
2. Who were the ancient *Brittones*?
3. Evaluate the role of the first-established Church in the introduction of Christianity.

Unit - 2 □ Old English Literature – Poetry and Prose Beginnings

Structure

1.2.0. Introduction

1.2.1. The Language

1.2.2. Anglo-Saxon (Old English) Literature: Sources

1.2.3. Classification of O.E. literature

1.2.4. Old English Heroic Poetry

1.2.5. Old English Lyric Poetry: Elegies & Personal Utterances

1.2.6. Old English Religious Poetry

1.2.7. Characteristics of Old English Poetry

1.2.8. Old English Prose

1.2.9. Summing up

1.2.10. Word Notes

1.2.11. Suggested Reading

1.2.12. Comprehension Exercises

1.2.0 Introduction

The Anglo-Saxons did not get linguistic or cultural independence from their Germanic origins until after they had migrated to and settled down in Britain. From very early times, roughly from the 6th century, we find that the language used is called English. The term 'Anglo-Saxon' is a recent and learned coinage for the more common 'Old English', dating from the 17th century, and used by scholars to mean the earliest form of the English language. English is descended from Germanic, which is an offshoot of Indo-European, a hypothetical tongue.

1.2.1 The Language

The main challenge for you, is that if you take a look at any piece of Anglo Saxon writing, it will not make any sense apparently. The English language has changed almost beyond recognition during the intervening centuries. So it is necessary to know some facts about it. The vocabulary was for the most part native, but there were some early loan words from Latin. Words from Scandinavian languages gradually mixed into Anglo-Saxon. Since both were Germanic languages, it is not always possible to say which are native Anglo-Saxon and which came from the Scandinavians. The grammar had declinable (receding in numbers) nouns, pronouns and adjectives. The system of verbs with change of tenses and subject-verb agreement was far more elaborate than it is now. There were four main dialects; Northumbrian, spoken and written in the north; Mercian, the language of the midlands; Kentish, used in the south-east, over an area much larger than modern Kent; and West Saxon, the language of Wessex, the country of King Alfred. Due to the political supremacy of Wessex this became the 'standard' dialect and almost all the extant texts are preserved in this dialect. You can well use your understanding to realise how the system of power equations has always worked to give centrality to some languages and a marginal nature to its sister dialects!

1.2.2 Anglo-Saxon (Old English) Literature: Sources

There is no record of literature of the ancient Britons or of the Celts before the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. The earliest specimens of English literature are folk-tales brought to England in the fifth century A.D. by the invaders from their homeland on the continent. These tales were kept alive by oral tradition and hence are wholly poetic. Some of them are connected with events that took place before the migration.

The folk-tales turned into poetry by the scops (wandering minstrels/singers of song who rendered their tales in lyric) were not written down till centuries after. After England's conversion to Christianity (c.665) Christian clerics collected the poems of pagan times and put them down in manuscripts. As they did so they retouched them, replacing many of the pagan references by Christian ones, and toned down the fierce note that was in them. Themselves the descendants of Vikings and warriors, they were not, however, entirely successful in altering the spirit of the old poetry. So Anglo-Saxon poetry in the form we know it shows a curious mixture of primitive and Christian elements.

Anglo – Saxon (A.S.) literature exists in manuscripts, since printing had not yet been invented. The most important of the manuscripts so far discovered in which Old English (O.E.) poetry has survived are four:

1. The Exeter Book, given to Exeter Cathedral (Devonshire, England) by Bishop Leofric. It contains only verse.
2. The Beowulf Manuscript, now in the British Museum, containing both verse and prose.
3. The Junius Manuscript, first printed by 'Junius' (Francis Du Jon, librarian to Lord Arundel) in 1665, now in Bodleian Library, Oxford. It contains verse only.
4. The Vercelli Book, discovered in the library of Vercelli Cathedral (Northern Italy) where it is preserved. It has both verse and prose.

1.2.3 Classification of Old English Literature

In a study of old English literature dates are not important for good reasons. First, the dates are uncertain; there is a wide range of divergence of opinions amongst the best scholars over them. Secondly, this literature is nearly always anonymous and its writers had little scope for originality as we would understand it in the modern day. This is so because they were mostly working with a body of tales handed down to them across generations more as part of a culture that had undergone several layers of transition and even been subjected to cross cultural elements by way of inflexions through religion.

The surviving specimens of old English literature are generally divided into the following groups according to theme and treatment.

(a) Old English Epic / Heroic Poetry

(b) Old English Lyric Poetry consisting of Elegiac and Personal poems:

(c) Old English Religious Poetry

(d) Old English Prose

1.2.4 Old English Epic/Heroic Poetry

The important specimens of this group are: (a) *Widsith*, (b) *Beowulf*, (c) *Waldere*, (d) *The Fight at Finnsburgh*; and of a much later date (e) *The Battle of Brunanburgh*, (f) *The Battle of Maldon*.

(a) ***Widsith*** **(i.e., The Far Traveller):** A travel book of 143 lines, it narrates the experiences of a wandering scop. He has visited many tribes and many

princes of whom he produces a list. But the difficulty is that the princes he names lived centuries apart and no one could meet them in a single lifetime. Widsith encourages his fellow scops by referring to the rewards he got from the princes and praises his own profession. The first part of the poem is much older than the second, and is clearly the earliest piece of English verse. Its literary value springs from a competent arrangement of proper names. The view of life presented is a reflective one.

(b) ***Beowulf* :** It is an epic of 3,182 lines and the most interesting and impressive monument of Old English literature. It must have been composed not later than the eighth century and written down about a hundred years after by Christian monks. The poem presents the life and fortunes of a hero who however is not English – Prince Beowulf who is a prince of a Swedish clan. The poem shows the common Germanic roots of the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians.

The Story: The main narrative of *Beowulf* has been woven out of three separate folk-tales with which have been mixed up episodes of tribal feuds. The first tale describes Beowulf's fight with the monster, Grendel who lives in a moor (marshy land) beneath the cliffs. Every night he comes out of his den to visit Heorot – a hall built on the edge of the moorland by the king of the Danes called Hrothgar – and carries away the king's followers to devour them. Grendel's attackss continue for twelve winters. Beowulf is Hrothgar's kinsman and a prince of the Geats in Sweden. He hears about his kinsman's troubles and crosses the sea with fourteen followers to sleep in Heorot. At night Grendel appears. As no weapon can penetrate the monster's body, Beowulf wrestles with him and tears off one of his arms. Grendel flees to his den and dies. Here the first tale ends.

In the second, Grendel's mother comes up to avenge her son's death. She seizes one of Beowulf's followers and runs back. Next day, Beowulf follows her track and dives into the waters of the moor. His men and the Danes wait on the shore. As Beowulf reaches the bottom, he is dragged into her cave by Grendel's mother. Other sea-monsters also set upon him but Beowulf's armour saves him. The hero is about to be crushed by Grendel''s mother when his eyes fall on a magic sword hung on the cave's wall. With this sword he kills the monster, severs the head of Grendel lying dead in the cave and returns with the prize.

The two tales are related to each other. The second comes as a climax to the first. Between the first two and the third there is a long gap of time. Beowulf, in the third tale, is a king who has ruled his people wisely for fifty years. In a corner of his kingdom lies an ancient hoard of treasure guarded by a fire-

breathing dragon. A part of the treasures having been stolen the dragon starts burning and killing in the neighbourhood. Beowulf feels obliged to come to the rescue of his people, though he is now an old man. As he prepares for the fight, his instincts tell him that his end his near. He kills the monster but is mortally wounded. Before his death he finds noble consolation in the thought that he has laid down his life for his people. The poem closes with an account of the hero's funeral.

The Literary Value of *Beowulf*: The material of the poem is largely Scandinavian. Names of early Swedish kings found in Beowulf correspond to names in a Scandinavian folk-tale. Many incidents too are common.

The poem opens with a prologue in the true epic fashion and its manner of narration is as direct and simple as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The various descriptions of pagan rites are vivid. Beowulf is almost a demi-god with human longings. In the midst of death agony he regrets the absence of a son he might bequeath his armour to. In the last part, the warrior-king attains the nobility of an epic hero. There is calm acceptance of fate and satisfaction that he has given his people peace. His last anxiety is to serve his men even in death. And he leaves instructions for a memorial that would inspire them with courage and confidence.

Scholars disagree as to whether Beowulf is an epic or not. If it is an epic it is an epic in the making. It does not possess the excellence and grandeur of the Aeneid or of the Iliad or the Odyssey. Its theme is not lofty enough to be worthy of an epic. Numerous episodes and digressions woven into the central theme divert the reader's attention and hamper the unity of design. In a true epic the narrative is continuous; in Beowulf there is a long gap in the middle. The boasts of the hero, the elaborate ritual are in epic tradition but the ferociousness of many incidents are romantic.

An epic (from Greek *epos,* originally meaning "word" but later "oration" or "song") is a long narrative poem, composed in a grand manner, dealing with the trials and accomplishments of a great hero or heroes. The epic celebrates merits of national, military, religious, cultural, political, or historical importance.

Critics talk of two kinds of epics. The first, the *primary epic,* evolves from the mores, milieu, legends, or folk tales of a populace and is initially developed in an *oral tradition* of storytelling. *Secondary epics* are literary. They are written from their inception and designed to appear as whole stories. Under this definition, *Beowulf* comes as a primary epic, the finest evidence being that it first existed in the oral tradition. Moreover, *Beowulf* does employ digressions, long speeches, journeys and quests, various trials or tests of the hero, and even divine intervention, as do classical epics.

Beowulf is nevertheless quite impressive and forceful, suggestive of a long literary tradition. Its diction moves with a dignity reminiscent of Virgil. The language has the rough picturesqueness of primitive poetry, with abundant use of periphrastic metaphors (*Kennings*) e.g., *whale-road* (for *sea*), *the game of blades* (for *battle*), *the lance-bearer* (for *soldier*). The outlines of scenes and personages drawn are vivid and clear. The speeches are stately although their effect has been toned down by deliberate understatement. The unrimed alliterative verse it uses is common to early Germanic poetry.

One important feature of *Beowulf* is the strong presence of the sea. The poet has coined fifteen names for the sea. This note was to persist in English literature and give it so much colour and variety. The poem's setting is Scandinavian, yet strangely enough, it contains no specific Scandinavian words. Judged by modern standards, this primitive poem might appear repetitive and monotonous. Its manner of narration is at times confusing and characterisation lacks complexity. This is however not to detract the significance of the text as a record in narrative of the life and times of the people it talks about.

The Historical Value of *Beowulf*: The events narrated in the poem are loosely based on an historical event – the raid of Hygelac, king of the Geats, against the Frisians in the sixth century. The Geats lived in what is now southern Sweden. Hygelac led a plundering expedition up the Rhine and was ultimately stopped by the Frisians.Hygelac had a nephew, Beowulf, who is said to have distinguished himself in this expedition. But the historical Beowulf could never do such impossible feats as the legendary Beowulf does. Various northern legends current at the time the poem composed, celebrate a certain Beowa, a demi-god who fights the monster Grendel. These legends must have influenced the poet of *Beowulf.* The fight of Beowulf against Grendel has been variously interpreted. Grendel might stand for evil forces – the fever rampant in damp marshes, the wild bear of the forest, the cruel sea, the fog and so on.

More important is the picture of Anglo-Saxon life and society that the poem unfolds. We have in it a glimpse of the very difficult and joyless life that the forefathers of the English people lived in primitive times. There is no mention of the British Isles in the poem. Instead we have descriptions of Seeland, the land of the Danes, of southern Sweden and of the North Sea, the Teutonic settlements, their ships and expeditions, their tribal relationship, their fights and feasts. They were a brave people unafraid of death which was always at hand, fond of music, respectful to their women, courteous and affectionate

to their brethren, loyal to their chief, cruel to their foe, loving to their land and eager for glory in adventure. Superstition played a large part in their imaginative life; all misfortunes like sickness, death and defeat were ascribed to evil spirits. They believed in the all powerfulness of Wyrd or fate yet submitted to it without a struggle. This sense of fatality gave them a certain dignity and also a sense of pathos. Against fate their weapon was valour. Beowulf is the ruler of a people who take life seriously. The land of their birth was far from comfortable. To the north was the sea troubled by storms and mists, on other sides were marshes and forests swarming with enemies, both beasts and men. There is a curious mixture of brutish and moral tendencies in their literature. No wonder that the predominant attitude is one of melancholy. Yet it would be wrong to believe that the Anglo-Saxons lived an austere life. The banquet scenes given in Beowulf are quite splendid.

(c) ***Waldere*:** The manuscript is divided into two fragments of thirty-two and thirty-one lines. In the first part Waldere's sweetheart, Hildegund exhorts him to battle with Gunther. She is sure Waldere would win for righteousness is on his side. The second fragment presents the dialogue between Waldere and Gunther and includes the former's challenge to the latter to take his sword that he got from his father.

It has been supposed that the fragments are parts of a poem on the story of Walter of Spain, belonging to the great tradition of Scandinavian sagas.

(d) ***The Fight at Finnsburg (The Battle of Finnsburg)*:** An epic fragment of forty eight lines, it reproduces an account of the battle between Finn, king of Frisians and Hnaef, a leader of the Danes. Hanaef is first invited and then treacherously attacked. He and his followers give a tough fight but Hanaef is ultimately slain and a truce has been made. His followers resume the feud and avenge his death. The episode in Beowulf, called the Finnsburg Episode, appears to be a sequel to this poem whose end is lost. Frankly inspired by the martial instincts, the poem is told briskly and pointedly.

(e) ***The Battle of Brunanburh*:** This poem and its companion, *The Battle of Maldon* both written as late as the tenth century – show that the tradition of the heroic epic persisted for many centuries after *Beowulf*. It describes in a typical Anglo-Saxon fashion a battle between the English under Athelstan and a combination of Norsemen and Scots. Written to celebrate a national victory, it heaps ignominy upon the defeated and extols the victorious highly. Intoxicated by the joy, the poet gloats over the fearful slaughter of the enemy. The narration is swift, the diction lucid. It is the first poem singing of patriotism in English literature. For, while the earlier heroic poetry is devoted to the

praise of individual heroes, *The Battle of Brunanburh* celebrates a national victory. It is also the only epic fragment in which short regular stanzas appear. This and the next poem find a place in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

(f) ***The Battle of Maldon*:** The poem gives the story of a defeat the English suffered at the hands of the invading Danes in 991. Byrhtnoth who led the English forces as he strove to drive back a band of Northmen whose ships were coming up the Blackwater, a little to the north of the Thames was killed and the Saxons were defeated.. We have only a fragment of 325 lines of this poem, which seems, since it does not name a single one of the enemy, to have been written soon after the fight. It is not a lyrical song, but a detailed epic narrative which, by its rhythm and general shape, recalls the battles of the *Iliad*.

1.2.5 Old English Lyric Poetry: Elegies & Personal Utterances

In Anglo-Saxon poetry there are also some poems which contain themes that are more personal, poems which seem to be more of an expression of the emotional state of the poet. A. S. Poetry does not have the lyric form, but these poems have the tone and temper of the lyric proper. So they are referred to as A.S. lyrics, or, because of a general note of melancholy in them, as elegies. The poems reflect a melancholy view of life, a sense of impending fate and threatening nature. Here we find little of the Christian hope that lies in thoughts of a Hereafter. A very early example of this primitive lyric is *Deor's Lament. As in Widsith*, the scop speaks directly to the hearer (or reader). He is sad. He has been robbed of his inheritance and the favour of his lord by Heorrenda, who has replaced him as the chief court singer. But, as he says, all misfortune passes, and he cites the sorrows caused by love and violence in the lives of the other men, and how these things passed. He reflects upon the fact that Our Lord can make the sorrowful happy and can bring the haughty to low estate. The poem has a refrain at the close of each section.

In *The Wanderer*, we meet a homeless man whose life is that of an exile, condemned by fate to sail across the unfriendly sea waves and seek the companionship of the screaming sea-birds. Not for him are the comforts of the mead hall and the protection of a king. He recalls his old life of cheer and happiness and how all that fell about him in ruin. Life is like that on this earth where man is a toy for fate to toss about. All earthly things are transitory and fleeting.

In *The Seafarer*, probably of the 8th century, an old and weary sailor confronts a young man, enthusiastic but ignorant of the trials and tribulations that his hard life upon the sea brings to a man. The old seaman curses the sea in one breath and in

the next reveals his feeling of inseparability with it. When at sea he longs for the land, and when ashore, neither the love of woman nor the lure of the pleasures of the world can satisfy his deep longing to be back upon the rolling waves. Back to the whale road for him and let others have their lives of ease upon the shore! It is one of the earliest examples of the Englishman's love of the sea. In another very fragmentary poem, *The Ruin*, the poet looks upon the ruined buildings of an ancient race and wonders at the pride these men must have felt in their great accomplishments and how little they dreamed then that he would look upon these stones that can no longer even give any identifying characteristics of what their owners were like.

There also remains a trio of interesting lyrics containing highly personal note. *The Wife's Lament* is a rather subtle piece in which the wife has been accused by her husband's relatives of infidelity or magic. The husband is forced by the tribal code to banish her to a lonely spot in the woods. She knows that he must be grieving for her and she remembers their once happy home together. She still loves him and thinks that he, even though he thinks her guilty, must still love her. That would make his grief far greater than her own, for she remains firm in protests that she was faithful to him and has a clear conscience. *The Husband's Message* is carved runes on a wooden staff and these runes speak the message. This rune stick has carried many a message over the seas to highborn people. Now it brings a message of love from a man exiled from his people and from his beloved wife. It begs her to listen for the coming of springtime in the song of cuckoo and come to him in a distant land where he has established himself, amidst wealth and prosperity, and has many brave warriors who serve him. He does not care for kings' daughters; life is empty for him without his beloved wife. Scholars are especially interested in the poem *Wulf and Eadwacer*. It has a strophic (a rhythmic system composed of two or more lines repeated as a unit) structure and a refrain, like *Deor's Lament*. The speaker, a woman, desires her lover Wulf, and expresses disgust for her husband Eadwacer. This brief poem is intense and passionate, one of the very few pieces in Old English Literature with high sexual content. Some parts are however confusing and difficult to interpret. Given that we are here talking of a very old literary era, the abundance of and fervour with which women's utterances are narrated is an interesting point to note.

A.S. secular poetry also has many riddles in which objects are described in vague and suggestive terms, the objects to be guessed by the reader. Many references to life and customs of the Viking northland are to be discovered among these interesting little compositions. A horn is described as a proud warrior when decked in gems and trappings. Here it travels with the tribe over the seas and there it hangs and there it hangs on the mead-house wall. Sometimes it is full of wine. Sometimes it must swallow the breath of men and invite valiant warriors to assemble or drive away enemies. The description ends with the inevitable: "Ask what my name is."

1.2.6 Old English Religious Poetry

With their conversion to Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons acquired a vast and diverse collection of stories written in the Bible and other sacred texts and proclaimed orally through the liturgy (set of rituals in the Christian church) and preaching. They also inherited the belief that understanding these narratives was essential to lead good lives and to ensure salvation. Although much of Christianity was still new, Old English poets adapted their own poetic language with its traditional themes to this material, often selecting subjects that would fit within existing conventions.

(a) **Caedmon**: In his *Historia Eccelesiastica Gentis Anglorum(Ecclesiastical History of The English People)* Bede tells the story of the first Christian poet of England: Caedmon. According to Bede, Caedmon was an unlettered cowherd who received divine inspiration to sing of the Creation and to turn the Old Testament into song. He has been credited by some critics with a number of poems paraphrasing biblical passages. Following in the tradition of the great Caedmon, other anonymous poets have left us poems and fragments of poems from the period, rendering various Old Testament passage into verse. That is all we know about the life and works of Caedmon; but in the Junius manuscript a series of religious paraphrases was found in the year 1651. In subject they correspond rather closely to the list set out by Bede, and they were ascribed to Caedmon. The poems consist of paraphrases of the *Genesis, Exodus*, and *Daniel, Judith* and three shorter poems, the chief of which is *"The Harrowing of Hell."* Modern scholarship recognizes that the poems are by different hands, but the works can be conveniently lumped together under the name of Caedmon. The poems appear in the West Saxon dialect. Caedmon belonged to Northumbria and must have written in his own dialect. But the difficulty is got over by pointing out that a West Saxon scribe might have copied the poems.

In the Manuscript of Bede's work a poem in the Northumbrian dialect, of which Bede gives the Latin paraphrase, has come down to us and this is supposed by some scholars to be Caedmon's first work and a part of his Genesis. It is a hymn in praise of God. He sings the praise of God like a scop singing the glories of his feudal lord. The poems written by Caedmon or by poets who may be loosely called poets of his school are all based on Old Testament stories. Genesis tells the story of Satan's rebellion, God's wrath and the expulsion of the rebel angels, God's creation of hell and his plan of Creation. *Exodus* deals with the story of Moses. *Christ and Satan* tells

the story of Creation and the Fall of Man. *Judith*, also from the Old Testament, gives the dramatic story of Judith bringing the head of Holofernes the tyrant to the Jews and the battle between the Jews and the Assyrians. In merit Caedmon's poems are unequal, but they are strong and spirited pieces with some vivid descriptive passages.

(b) **Cynewulf :** In 1840 the scholar Kemble lighted upon three runic (or pre-Roman) signatures which appear respectively in the course of the poems called (1) *Christ* and (2) *Juliana* (in the Exeter book) and (3) *Elene* (in the Vercelli book). The signature reads 'Cynewulf' or 'Cynwulf.' In 1888 a signature 'Fwulcyn' was discovered in (4) *The Fates of the Apostles*. This is all we come to know of Cynewulf. Yet an elaborate life has been built up for the poet, and other poems, similar in style to the signed pieces, have been attributed to him. *The Phoenix, The Dream of the Rood* are the most significant of the additional poems.

Christ deals with the threefold coming of Christ and ends with a picture of the Last Judgment. *The Fates of the Apostles* gives the narration of how the twelve apostles spread Christianity in different parts of the world and how they died. *Juliana* is the story or how the pagans tortured and finally killed the martyr St. Juliana. In *Elene* the poet tells a different kind of martyr story. It is about the mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, the first emperor to convert to Christianity. Constantine, winning a battle by the grace of Christ, learns the Christian lore and sends his mother Helena to Jerusalem to find the cross on which Christ died. Helena finds the cross and builds a church on the site where the cross had been buried.

Phoenix, in the Exeter Book, is an interesting example of how Eastern stories made their way to England where the poets put them to allegorical or didactic use. The poem describes an earthly paradise in the east and a fabulous bird, the phoenix, which flies to Syria , every 1000 years , to renew its youth. After a renewal by fire, the bird returns to paradise. The later part gives an allegorical treatment of the fable. The phoenix is likened to (1) the Elect among Adam's descendants, i.e. men and (2) Christ. The poem ends with praise of God and a description of the rewards for good people in the life to come. The most interesting poem among O.E. religious poetry is *The Dream of The Rood*, which used to be ascribed to Cynewulf, but is now considered to be by some anonymous poet. It is a very early example of a dream or vision poem. It has three parts: the opening words of the dreamer, the words spoken by the Rood or the Cross on which Christ was crucified, and the words of the dreamer after the dream is over. The True Cross tells the dreamer its history from the time it grew as a tree, how it bore Christ at Calvary and how, centuries after the

Crucifixion, it was found by St. Helena. The dreamer finally says how the dream changed his life. Ever since, he has devoted himself to the cult of the True Cross and hoped to gain heaven by his good deeds. The poem has a moving description of the Crucifixion. Some of the lines, in modern English translation are quoted below for you.

> "They pierced me with dark nails:the places are on me still
> The wicked wounds are open."

> These Christian poems are of little interest to the average reader today but many of them have passages with power and grace. They also offer us a curious treatment of biblical personages, Christ being pictured, for instance, as a hero like Beowulf, valiant rather than gentle. These poets, although they lived in monasteries, retained much of the spirit of the scop and *gleeman* of heroic times and their poems are close to heroic epics, even though the personages and the events are taken from the Christian Bible.

Caedmon shows an earlier tone and spirit than Cynewulf. Caedmon is more heroic and less Christian in spirit. His subjects are generally taken from the Old Testament, while Cynewulf's are from the New Testament and the lives of the saints, thereby admitting of greater Christian faith and ideas. In Caedmon the interest is primarily in retelling the Biblical stories. In Cynewulf there is greater interest in didactic teaching. Caedmon is simpler and perhaps, more fresh; Cynewulf is more artistic and even more artificial. He is more scholarly and has assimilated foreign influence in more thorough going manner. In Cynewulf we find a subjective note, full of tender sentiment and pathos, which we miss in Caedmon, who is purely objective. In description of nature and the surroundings Cynewulf is more artistic and finished than Caedmon.

1.2.7 Characteristics of Old English Poetry

Old English verse did not have rhyme or metre as we now have in English poetry. The poets used the alliterative measure of old Germanic poetry. There were no definite number of syllables to a line. A verse line usually contained four accented syllables and three alliterative syllables. There were two kinds of run-on lines. In one, the sentence goes to the next line without a syntactical pause; in another it goes on with a syntactical pause. The style is generally diffuse, although when something greatly moves the poet he can be simple and direct. The "kenning" is a strong feature

of the language. A kenning is a two-word circumlocution for a noun. For example 'bird's joy' for feather, or 'whale way' for the sea. We also find the 'heiti' , a one-term substitute for an ordinary noun, for example 'wood' for spear or 'iron' for sword. The poetry was generally sung.

1.2.8 Old English Prose

A great deal of prose was written in Britain during the early centuries in Latin. The Anglo-Saxon priests continued this tradition throughout their entire period generally. Most of their prolific work consists of scholarly writing devoted principally to theology and history. The Venerable Bede produced the first of the great historical writings of scholarship in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People (731). Bede's contribution to didactic writing in Latin is the most notable on the Old English scene until King Alfred came to the throne of Wessex in 871.

Alfred's Contribution

Alfred devoted his life to two purposes: securing the nation from the Danish invasion and civil wars, and the promotion of scholarship and literature through the establishment of an educational programme for his people. Though preoccupied with trying to secure his kingdom and in ill health, he did a great job of fostering the cause of learning. Alfred learned Latin principally in order to be able to translate the great Latin works into West Saxon. He was England's first great humanist monarch who was a patron of the scholars.

Alfred himself laboriously translated Boethius's *Consolations of Philosophy*, Pope Gregory the great's *Pastoral Care*, Orosius's *Universal History*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History. He took the help of other scholars, as he himself mentions.* Alfred's method of translation is very original. He does not translate literally. He omits passages, condescends, sometimes even adds portions if he finds the original lacking. For example, the geographical passage on Germany and Scandinavia in Orosius' *History of the World* seemed to him inadequate so he added a long and valuable section. His aim was not to reproduce the originals faithfully but to give his subjects what was good for them and easy to understand.

In addition to his translations, Alfred's influence is felt in many other directions. He stimulated research and urged the priests of his kingdom to teach in the vernacular. He encouraged the keeping of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and saw to it that the events of his reign were given proper attention in this running record of events which

was kept until 12th century. Alfred also did much to preserve the oral traditions of his people. He left a book of proverbs and we have record of *Handbook*, a treasury of his wisdom which has been lost.

Alfric and Wulfstan: Others attempted to continue the stimulus toward the creation of a native literature of vitality. Aelfric is one notable name with his *Catholic Homilies* and his *Colloquy on the Operations*, which was a follow up of his *Grammar* and Glossary and Wulfstan, with equally didactic and unloving treatises, are among those who tried to carry on the work of Alfred.

Aelfric is the most notable prose writer in Old English. In *Catholic Homilies* he wrote a large number of sermons, each sermon meant to be used for a suitable occasion of church service. His sources were religious writings in Latin, especially the writings of St. Augustine, Pope Gregory the great, and the Venerable Bede but he treated his sources with great freedom, adapting them whenever he needed. In the *Heptateuch* he wrote English versions of the first seven books of the Bible. Although he was a monk and wrote in response to practical necessities of trying to impart christianteachings to his people, Aelfric 's writings show him as a master of various kinds of prose styles. His purpose was didactic but his work has a high level of artistic competence.

Wulfstan was Aelfric's contemporary. He was also a churchman, serving as Bishop of London, Bishop of Winchester and Archbishop of York. His fame rests on a famous homily written probably in the year 1014., the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (The sermon of the Wolf to the English). Though the title is in Latin, the work is in English. Wulfstan begins with a vision of Doomsday and tells the English people that they had brought misery and troubles upon themselves by their sinful ways. The sermon reflects the contemporary events. During this period England was devastated by waves of Viking raids . The Danes looted monasteries, destroyed the countryside. The payment of money to the Danes impoverished the English. King Aethelred had to escape to take shelter in Normandy for a short time. These terrible events moved Wulfstan to his exhortation.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

The Chronicle or The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is a remarkable specimen of Anglo-Saxon prose . As the first t written historical record of a Germanic people it has immense historical value. Its literary value is also immense, because it enables scholars to trace the development of A.S. prose over a very long period of time. Its beginnings were sketchy. Some churchmen had begun to maintain sketchy records of important

happenings. At first the records contained simply the dates of the birth death of different kings and the records of warfare. *The Chronicle* in its earliest stage was certainly not a literary work. It was hardly even a history. It was during Alfred's reign and most probably under his guidance that the Chronicle became a continuous narrative, tracing the history form their settlement in Britain to the year of compilation. There are also references to other events, in Britain and elsewhere. The earliest event recorded is Julius Caesar's invasion of Britain. The compilers used earlier annalistic records and oral records. None of the original manuscripts have survived. There are seven extant versions, all of which have come down, in one way or other, from the compilation of the year 891 A.D.As time went on, new entries were added to the manuscripts by successive annalists. The records continue till the 12th century in different monasteries.

The literary quality of the early part of *A.S. Chronicle* is poor. The annalist of 775 for example had a very interesting story of inter-tribal rivalry, the story of Cyneheard, Cynewulf and Osric but does not give us a good narrative. By the 9 th. century the language had developed a lot. The writers express themselves simply and clearly and show skill in avoiding the monotony that is often found in mere chronicles. At the time of King Aethelred the Unready (early 11 th century) it reached great heights. By the 11th century very good prose was being written. Had this development continued, the 12th and 13th centuries would have produced great prose literature in English. But the Norman Conquest of 1066, introduced the use of Norman French for use in all important spheres of English life and Anglo-Saxon was driven underground, although it continued to be written upto the 12th century. Middle English literature is dominated by poetry, Literary prose had to wait several centuries to flower again.

1.2.9 Summing Up

In all languages, poetry makes its appearance before prose, and that was also true about Anglo-Saxon literature. Anglo-Saxon prose however fared much better than its counterpart -Anglo-Saxon poetry. English literary prose developed actually as late as 9th century under King Alfred's patronage. Anglo-Saxon poetry was archaic and a bit complicated, but Anglo -Saxon prose was comparatively modern and simple. About Anglo-Saxon prose, two specific features must be noted. In the very first place it has an essentially national appearance. In the second place, it is much closer to modern English than Anglo-Saxon poetry is. Anglo-Saxon prose started humbly in the form of some laws, moral codes and historical records. Its beginnings had no much literary merit. Aelfric and Wulfstan are the most prominent prose writers of the Anglo-Saxon period. *Catholic Homilies* is a famous book of Aelfric. There are other prose

works like the *Blickling Homilies*, a group of nineteen sermons, contained in a manuscript, and some other homilies and fragmentary prose works. Like Anglo-Saxon poetry, Anglo-Saxon prose was wrecked by the Norman conquest of 1066.The prose literature of England was silent for more than a hundred years.

1.2.10 Word-Notes

1. Gaul: Latin *Gallila*, ancient name of roughly what is now France.
2. Welsh: adj. From Wales – the name of the western provinces of Great Britain and also of the language.
3. Runes: Ancient Germanic alphabets, developed in the 2nd or 3rd Centuries and current among all northern tribes of Germany at the time.
4. Constantinople: Former capital of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires in Asia Minor.
5. Danes: Of the Scandinavians, those from Norway mainly went to Scotland and Ireland; those from Denmark (the Danes), to England.
6. Scop: The Anglo-Saxons lived in tribes, each under a chieftain. Every tribe had its scops or minstrels who made verses as well as recited them. There was also another class of singers called *gleeman* who only recited verses made by the *scops*. The word *scop* (Old Norse *skop*, Old High German, *scoph*) means 'a jest' and 'gleeman' is derived from Anglo-Saxon *gleo* which means 'fun'. So it is believed that the chief function of scops and gleemen was to provide entertainment to the tribe. They sang verses to the accompaniment of the harp. The *scops* are the first poets of English literature.

1.2.11 Suggested Reading List

1. Albert, Edward: *History of English Literature*, OUP, 2009 ed..
2. Carter, Ronald & Mcrae, John: *The Roultledge History of Literature in English*, Routledge, 2008 ed. .
3. Daiches, David: *A Critical History of English Literature*, *Vol-I,* Supernova Publishers, 2010 ed.
4. Legouis, Emily & Cazamian, Louis: *History of English Literature*, Macmillan, 1997 ed.
5. Long, William J. : *History of English Literature*, (Indian Edition).

6. Peck, John & Coyle, Martin: *A Brief History of English Literature*, Palgrave, 2000 ed.
7. Rickett, Arthur Compton: *A History of English Literature*, UBS Publishers, 2009 ed.
8. Sanders, Andrew: *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, OUP, 2004 ed.
9. A Literary History of England edited by Albert C. Baugh, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

1.2.12 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-type

1. Give an account of Old English heroic poetry.
2. 2. Indicate the importance of Beowulf to the student of English literature.
3. Show the range and variety of Anglo-Saxon poetry.
4. Discuss the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon Religious poetry.
5. Briefly discuss the characteristics of the language and literature of the Anglo-Saxons.
6. Trace the development of Anglo-Saxon prose.

Mid-length questions

1. What was the impact of the invasion of the Germanic tribes on Britain?
2. Discuss characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon lyrics or elegies
3. What are the literary qualities of Beowulf? Can it be called an epic?.
4. Assess Alfred's contribution to English life and literature.
5. How big a role did the Christian church play in the development of Anglo-Saxon literature?

Short questions

1. Write a note on The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.
2. Comment on the note of melancholy in A.S.Poetry.
3. Write notes on ;

   (a) *The Seafarer* (b) *Deor's Lament* (c) *The Dream of the Rood*

   (d) *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (e) *Catholic Homilies*

   (f) *The Battle of Brunanburh* (g) *Widsith* (h) *The Norman Conquest*

Unit - 3 □ Why the History of Language

Structure

1.3.0 Introduction

1.3.1Language Families

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1.3.0 Introduction

This Unit will introduce a brief history of Old English language with its origin and earliest developments. Through this Unit you will get a glimpse of

- the language families of the world;
- the Indo-European language family;
- first settlers that came to the British isle;
- history of the earliest changes taking place in English language.

1.3.1 Language Families

Let us begin with a story. The story is told in the Book of Genesis of the Bible. Once upon a time there was a king in Babylon called Nimrod. He wanted to create a tower with a spiral staircase that would reach up to the heaven. The Tower of Babel thus rose, and it rose so high that the people could actually throw arrows and spears at God. Jehovah was aghast. So he decided to teach them a lesson. He put different languages in the mouth of different peoples and confused them. As the people could no longer communicate with one another, their plan to attack heaven was foiled, and hence the Tower of Babel could not be completed.

What does the story tell us? Once, all the people spoke in the same tongue and it was God, who created different languages. So, all the languages come from a single origin. The linguists today do not believe all the languages come from the same origin. They tell you that all languages evolvefrom some 'language family' or other. There are eighteen such language families which may be called the mothers of all the languages of the world. For instance, we have the Negrido, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Native American, Semitic language families. Indo-European, a languagewhich is responsible for the birth of many languages that you know of, is one member of this original group.

One common way of representing the development of languages is to use a family tree to show the various relationships that exist between them. English becomes a language of West-Germanic descent, which itself derives from a language called 'Indo-European'. If we use the 'family' metaphor, English is the great-great-grandchild of the pre-historic Indo-European. The membership in a language family is not genetic in the biological sense but languages do descend from their mothers and are related to the other members of the group just as you are related to your family, and bear close resemblance with your mother, sister, aunt, niece, and others. You may look like them, think like them, and behave like them. Similarly, the languages have words that are common or similar to one another, for they are either derived or borrowed from the same source, or they may have similar grammatical practices.

Now, how in the real world can one language give birth to so many other languages? Historians will tell you that it all happened when many years ago, much before the birth of Christ, the people living in one place and sharing a common language started to migrate to other parts of the world. The reason of this migration could have beenseveral: climate change, food scarcity, adventurous nature of man, or in later times, political dissension, religious conversions or social crises. Thus they went to new places, and remember, no placewasever empty, so there would have been natives in those places, and the newcomers would sometimes engage in war, or just mingle with them.As their lives overlapped, so did their language. Thus language is transmitted not by means of genes but through culture and social practises. Sometimes, when two languages mix, one is enriched and the other decays, or sometimes both the languages change, and a new third one evolves. It is not the arbitrary choice of fate that decides which language is going to stay and which one is going to disappear. Such decisions are taken by the historical and economic forces operating at that moment in that particular place. So, if you are wondering as to why the study of language is important in the study of literature, remember, the history of the growth and development of a language will actually show you the growth and development of that particular culture, and the growth and development of a particular culture would lead to the growth and development of their literature.

1.3.2 History of English Language

Now, let us come to the curious history of the English language. Look at the chart in Plate1below. It is a simplified family-tree of all the Indo-European languages. Notice that English comes at the end of the West Germanic or Teutonic Languages, which come from the Western set of Indo-European languages.The Indo-European family probably originated around 3000-2000 BCE, in the general region of the Caspian Sea. Over the centuries the speakers of the proto-Indo-European language spread as far east as India, as far west as the Americas, as far north as Northern Russia and as far south as the southern tip of Africa. During their travel their languages changed continuously and independently, but regularly enough so that by means of reconstruction techniques the linguists can show the relatedness of these languages.

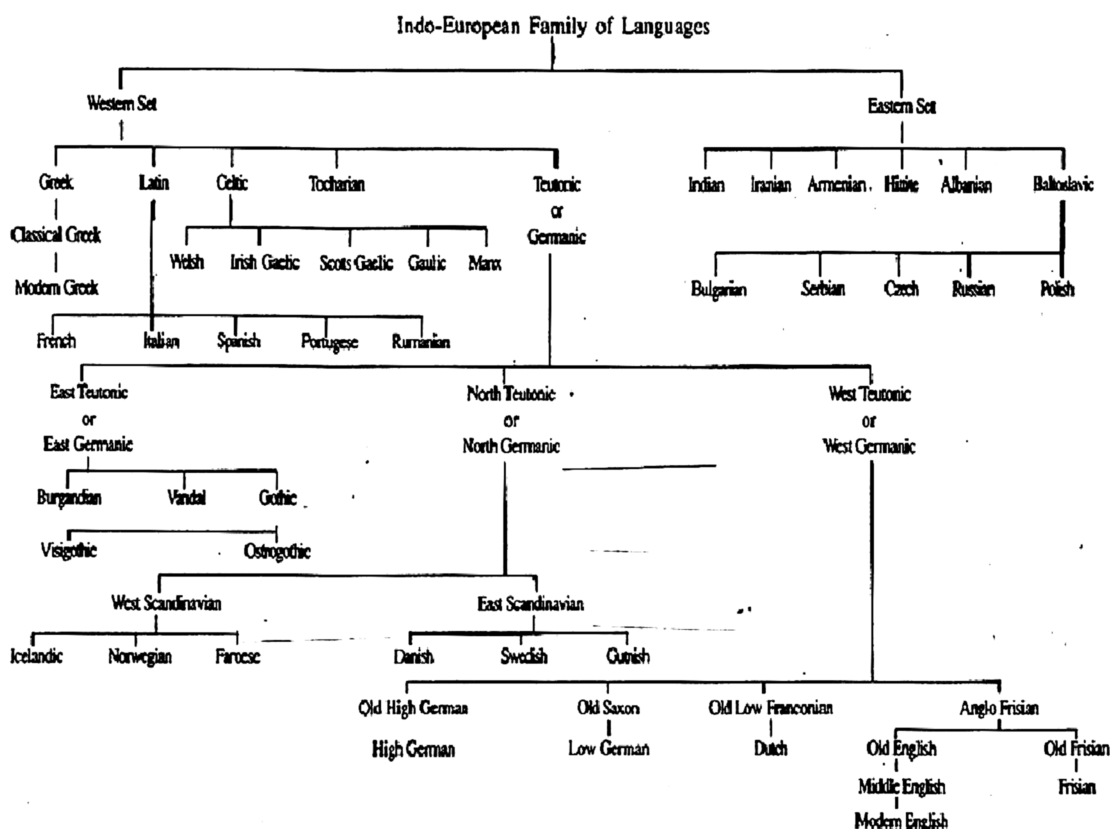
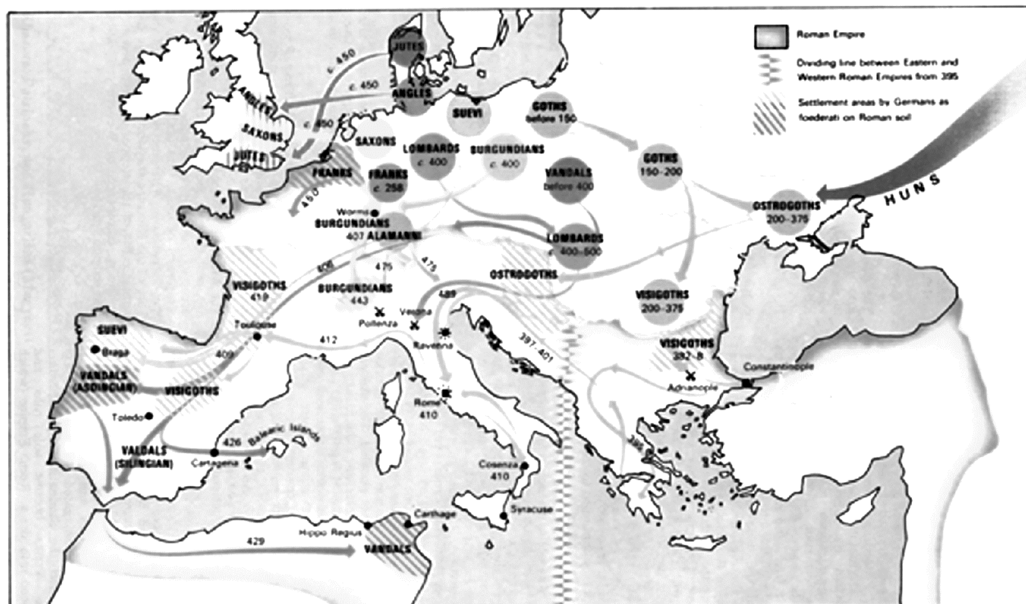


PLATE 1

Germanic or proto-Germanic is a member of the north-western Indo-European

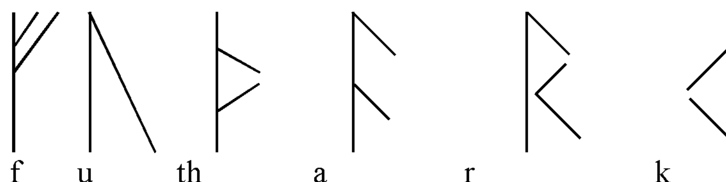
group of languages. From their early homeland in the southern parts of Scandinavia, the speakers ofthe Proto-Germanic migrated in various directions. See **Plate 2**below:



Migrations and areas of settlement of Germanic tribes, 4th and 5th cents.

PLATE 2

The linguists have divided this speech community into three parts depending on the routes of their migration that led to the rise of the different languages. The people of the East Germanic group are believed to have moved eastwards and southwards during the first three or four centuries B.C. The most well-known people of this group were the Goths. Peoples from the North Germanic groups moved to the areas now known as Denmark, Sweden and Norway and later to Iceland. These people later came to England as Scandinavians and left an indelible mark on the formation of the English language. They also left a considerable number of early texts dating from the second century onwards, carved in 'runes' on metal, wooden, bones and other objects. The runic 'alphabet' is generally called the 'futhark'. Take a look at the following letters, you may find them interesting:



(The first six letters of the early futhark found on a bracteates from Vadstena in Sweden. Source: *The Oxford History of English* by Lynda Mugglestone)

Before the Germanic peoples began their migrations, the West Germanic group seem to have been located in what is now Denmark and in the northern and North Sea coastal territories of modern Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. These people were divided into three major tribal groups of which the Invaeones group's dialects, spoken along the North Sea, gave rise to the English language.

1.3.3 The Origins and Linguistic History of the English

The Anglo-Saxons

Before going into the details of the nature and extent of the Scandinavian and French influence on English language, let us first look into the beginnings of English history and find out who the English are and how they came to settle in England.

Celtic was the first Indo-European tongue spoken in the area known as Great Britain today. Celtic was once widely diffused over Europe, it can be divided into three groups: Gaulish, Britannic and Gaelic. Gaulish was spoken in France and northern Italy in the time of Roman Republic, and was spread abroad by Celtic military expeditions to central Europe as far as Asia Minor. It died out during early centuries of Christian era. Britannic was the branch of Celtic spoken in most of Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasions. It survived into modern times in three languages: Cornish, which is known in texts from the fifteenth century and died out in the eighteenth century; Welsh, which has literary texts going back to the eleventh century; and Breton, which has literary texts from the fourteenth century. Breton was taken across toBrittany by refugees from Britain during the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasions.

The island of what is known as Great Britain todaywas a part of the Europe landmass as it was fifty thousand years ago. There was no English Channel and the North Sea was not much more than an enlarged river basin. The earliest inhabitants were the Paleolithic Men, who lived in the open, or under rock shelters and later in caves. Around 5000 B.C., Neolithic Man came from the southern lands bordering on the Mediterranean. He was a bit more advanced than the Paleolithic Man for he knew how todomesticate animals, develop elementary agricultural techniques, and so on. Traces of these people are still found in the population of British Isles, but their language has notsurvived. Around 500 B.C., the Neolithic men were driven out of the British Isles by the Celtic invaders. This was also the time of introduction of bronze in the island and Celtic was the first Indo-European tongue to be spoken in this area. We have documents about this language. Julius Caesar invaded Britain in

around 55B.C.The invasion was not a great success. Around 43 B.C. Emperor Claudius succeeded in colonising the British Isles and Latin was introduced in the island. Though the relation between the Romans and the Celts was not particularly a cordial one, yet Latin was spoken, particularly among the educated people for the first four centuries A.D. Celtic was first spoken only by the rural people, but later after the Romans soldiers left the island around 410 A.D. to protect their homeland against the Goths, the position of Latin also declined. The withdrawal of the Roman army also had other political consequences in England. The Picts and Scots from the Northern part of the island, who were so long kept out by constant Roman vigilance now began to raid England. According to legends, since the Romans refused to help, help was sought from theJutes, and in 449 A.D. a variety of Germanic tribes responded to the invitation of King Vortigern and settled in England. The tribes who settled in were the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes—who dwelt on the North Sea coast from Denmark to Holland.

Modern historians have raised question regarding the veracity of this historical account. The Anglo-Saxon monk Bede, in his 8th century Latin history of the English church titled Ecclesiastical History of the English People also wrote about this migration. Nicholas Rowe, in his book Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England (1989) identified it as a 'myth' which had become canonical in Anglo-Saxon history writing. Whatever the reason of this migration, be it political condition in England or Germany, or climatic change, or the adventurous nature of the Germanic tribes, our objective is definitely not to find out why the Anglo-Saxons came but to register the factsthat:

(1) this migration was the beginning of the recorded history of England;

(2) the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain was not an invasion of an unified army but rather the arrival and penetration of various uncoordinated bands of adventurers in different parts of the country, beginning in the middle of the fifth century and continuing all through the sixth century;

(3) this had a deep impact on the making of the English language, for the Celtic language almost disappeared and the language of the Anglo-Saxons formed the basis of Old English.

There is no reason to think that the Celts were all killed or driven out by the Anglo-Saxons. But they were the defeated ones. So their language lost its prestige—you will come across a similar incident while reading about the French invasion of England. However, a few Celtic words still remain, particularly in place names like, London, Leeds and names of rivers, for instance, Avon, Ouse (meaning water or stream), Thames (dark river), etc; county names like Devon and Kent. You may compare the Celtic place names with the Scandinavian place names that you shall read in the following section.

The political struggle between the Roman-Celtic and Anglo-Saxon population was a long one and the latter's supremacy was established at the end of the sixth century. By 700 A.D., the Anglo-Saxons had occupied most of England (except Cornwall and areas in the North-West) and also a considerable part of southern Scotland. Wales remained a Celtic stronghold.

1.3.4 Summing Up

English as a nation does not have a single origin. Several Germanic races from the North European territories invaded the British isle that gave a multilingual and diversified cultural identity to the English. The English language also evolved through different phases of historical development.

1.3.5 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-Type

1. Write a brief note on the Indo-European language family.

Mid-length questions

1. Trace the inflow of the Anglo Saxons to the British isle.

Short questions

1. What do we know about the earliest inhabitants of Britain?
2. Write briefly on the Celts.
3. How did the Anglo-Saxons come to settle in Britain?

1.3.6 Suggested Reading

Baugh, Albert C. & Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Routledge: London & New York, 2013.

Bose, P.K. *A Manual of English Philology*. Maitra Publishing Concern: Kolkata, 2005.

Jespersen, Otto. *Growth and Structure of English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

McIntyre, Dan. *History of English: a resource book for students*. Routledge, London & New York, 2009.

Pyles, Thomas & John Algeo. *The Origins and Development of the English Language*. 3rd ed. London, New York (etc.) Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers: Florida, 1982.

Unit - 4 □ Scandinavian Influence on the English Language

Structure

1.4.0 Introduction

1.4.1 Historical Background of the Scandinavian Influence

1.4.2 Nature of the Scandinavian Loans

1.4.3 Influence on English Vocabulary

1.4.4 Influence on English Grammar and Syntax

1.4.5 Summing Up

1.4.6 Comprehension Exercises

1.4.7 Suggested Reading

1.4.0 Introduction

In the previous section you learned about the language families, and part of the history of the English people and their language. In this Unit you will know how the Scandinavians influenced the English language further. This Unit will enable you to

- know about the origin of the Germanic languages;
- understand the intervention of the Scandinavians in the developing stage of the English language;
- trace the development of English vocabulary and grammar of the period.

1.4.1 The Historical Background of the Scandinavian Influence

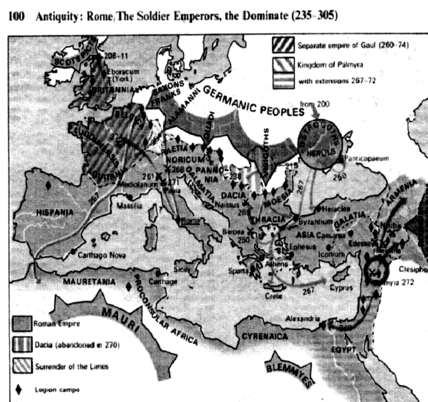
Now let us take a look at the maps in Plates 3 and 4 that follow. Can you see the three nations of the Danes, the Norwegians and Swedes in the map? See they were staying in close proximity with the Angles and Saxons. If you go back to unit 3 and relate with the chart of Indo-European language families in plate 1, the connections will be clears. The Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish languages come in the North Teutonic or Germanic or Norse group of languages. The Scandinavians are

Norsemen who spoke dialects of a North Germanic language known as Norse. Thus linguistically as well they were quite close to the West Germanic languages from which Old English emerged at around 700 A.D. You may also remember how the legend of a Danish king Beowulf has been preserved in English literature more faithfully than in the Danish literature. With all these we may safely infer the facts:

1) The two races of Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians were linguistically and culturally quite close to one another;
2) Therefore, even if they became foes because of the strange consequences of history, they had every possibility to merge with one another and emerge as a single race for their differences were few.

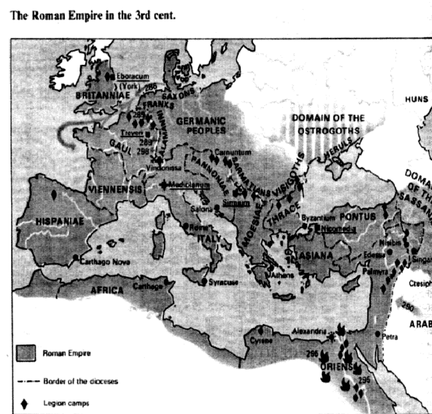
This was exactly what happened with the Scandinavian influence.

100 Antiquity: Rome: The Soldier Emperors, the Dominate (235-305)



The Roman Empire in the 3rd cent.

The Roman Empire in the 3rd cent.

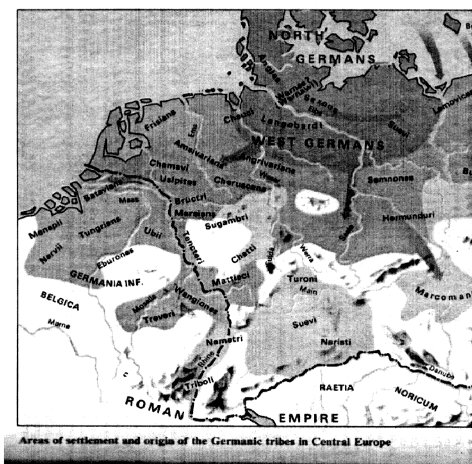


The Roman Empire under Diocletian

Plate 3

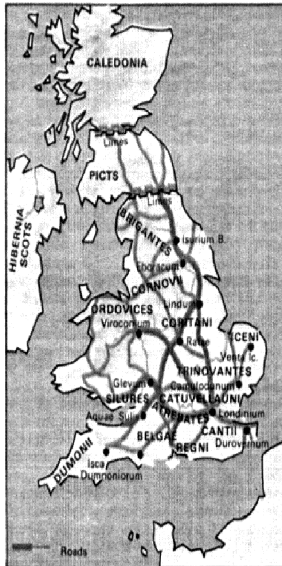
'What *bread* and *eggs* are to daily fare': it is this homely nature of the loans that makes them different from their French counterparts.

Plate 4



Areas of settlement and origin of the Germanic tribes in Central Europe

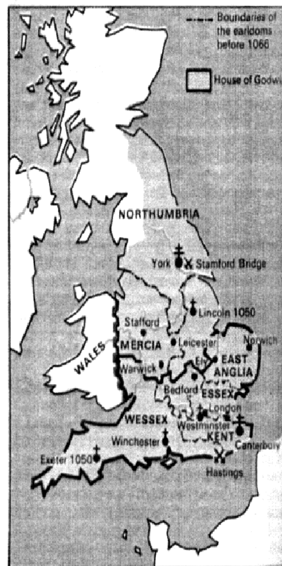
128 Early Middle Ages/England (to 1066)



England in the Roman period

The conquest of Jutes, Angles and Saxons

The Anglo-Saxon struggle against the Danes and Norwegians in the 9th cent.



England, *c.* 1066

PLATE 5

In the Old English period the Anglo-Saxons and Danes were two peaceful nations. For centuries the Scandinavians had remained The Vikings from modern-day Norway and Denmark began to raid parts of Britain from the late 8th century. In 865 B.C., a major invasion was launched by what the Anglo-Saxons called the Great Heathen Army which eventually brought large parts of Northern and Eastern England under Scandinavian control. The Danes suddenly started to come in small troops (much in the same fashion the Anglo-Saxons themselves had come 400 years ago to the island). They looted what they could lay their hands on and left. But by the ninth century the intermittent attacks changed into systematic campaigns of armies who aimed to settle in the land they had conquered. Battles were fought with various success but on the whole the Scandinavians seemed to be a stronger race; and by the treaty of Wedmore, in 878, King Alfred wasforced toleave more than half of what we now call England—all Northumbria, all East Anglia, and one half of central England, to make out the district called the Danelaw to Guthrum, the Danish chief. (See Plate 5) Thus the political change initiated a social change which paved the way to a wider linguistic change that restructured the English language.

DANELAW: As recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it is a historical name given to the parts of England in which the laws of the Danes held sway. (Image: The Five Boroughs of the Danelaw) It co-existed with the West-Saxon and Mercian law but dominated these latter laws. It is a set of legal terms and definitions created in the treaties between the King of Wessex, Alfred the Great and the Danish warlord, Guthrum like the 886 Treaty of Alfred and Guthrum. Clash of civilizations resulted in the clash of cultures and languages and resulted in the emergence of Anglo-Norse dialects.

1.4.2: Nature of the Scandinavian Loans

The Scandinavian loans are marked for their simplicity and democratic nature. Both the languages, i.e., Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian, descended from the same stock so their vocabulary was shared. The Scandinavians were by no means superior to the English, though not actually inferior, so the English actually felt no urge to borrow any particular set of words from them. As a result of which a huge number of words like *man, wife, father, mother, wise, well, ill, egg, over, under, come, sitare* identical in two languages.

When speakers imitate a word from a foreign language and at least partly adapt it in sound or grammar to their native speechways, the process is known as borrowing, and the word thus borrowed is the LOANWORD

Most of the Scandinavian loanwords in Old English do not actually occur in written records until the Middle English Period, though undoubtedly they were current long before the beginning of that period. Practically all of the extant documents of the late Old English period come from the south of England, especially from Wessex. It is likely that Scandinavian words were recorded in non-extant documents written in that part of the country to which Alfred the Great by force of arms and diplomacy had persuaded the Scandinavians to confine themselves – the Danelaw, comprising all of Northumbria and East Anglia and half of Mercia.

In the later part of the eleventh century the Scandinavians became gradually assimilated to English ways, though Scandinavian words had been in the meanwhile introduced into English. Many Scandinavian words closely resembled their English cognates; sometimes, indeed, they were so nearly identical that it would be impossible to tell whether a given word was Scandinavian or English.

Sometimes, however, if the meanings of obviously related words differed, semantic contamination might result, as when Old English *dream* 'joy' acquired the meaning of the related Scandinavian '*draumr*' 'vision in sleep'. Otto Jespersen cites bread 'fragment', bloma'lump of metal', and poetic eorl'warrior, noble' (ModE*bread, bloom* 'flower', *earl*). The last of these words acquired the meaning of the related Scandinavian jarl 'undertaking, governor.' Similarly, the later meanings of dwell (OE *dwellan, dwelian*), holm 'islet' (same form in Old English), and *plow* (OE *ploh – dash above o*) coincide precisely with the Scandinavian meanings, though in Old English these words meant, respectively, 'to lead astray, hinder,' 'ocean,' and 'measure of land.'

Late Old English and early Middle English loans from Scandinavian were made to conform wholly or in part with the English sound and inflectional system. These include (in modern form) *by* 'town', homestead, *carl* 'man' (cognate with OE *ceorl*, the source of *churl*), *fellow, hit* (first 'meet with,' later 'strike') *law, rag, sly, swain, take* (completely displacing *nim*, from OE *niman*), *thrall*, and want. The Scandinavian provenience of *sister* is the ON *systir*; OE *sweostor*).

A good many words with [sk] are of Scandinavian origin, for, as we have seen, early Old English [sk], written *sc*, came to be pronounced as *sc*. Such words as *scathe, scorch, score, scot 'tax'* (as in *scot-free*), *scowl, scrape, scrub, skill, skin, skirt* (compare native *shirt*), and *sky* thus show by their initial sequence that they entered the language after this change had ceased to be operative. All have been taken from Scandinavian.

Similarly the [g] and [k] before front vowels, in *gear, geld, gill* (of a fish), *kick, kilt, and kindle* point to Scandinavian origins. The very common verbs *get* and *give* come to us not from Old English *gitanand gifan*, which began with [y], but instead from cognate Scandinavian forms in which the palatalization of [g] in the neighbourhood of front vowels did not occur. Native forms of these with [y-] occur throughout the Middle English period side by side with the Scandinavian forms with [g-], which were ultimately to supplant them. Chaucer consistently used *yive* and *yeve*.

As a rule the Scandinavian loans involve little more than the substitution of one word for another (such as *window*, from *vindauga*, literally 'wind-eye', replacing *eyethurl*, literally 'eyehole', from OE *eaythyrl*, the acquisition of new words for new concepts (such as certain Scandinavian legal terms) or new things (such as words for various kinds of warships with which the Scandinavians made the English acquainted), or the more or less sporadic and invariably slight modification in the form of an English word due to the Scandinavian influence (like *sister*).

Scandinavian Loanwords in Modern English

A number of Scandinavian words have entered English during the modern period. The best known of them are *muggy*, *rug*, *scud*, and *ski*, thelast of these dating from the latter years of the nineteenth century. *Skoal* (Danish *skaal*) has had a recent alcoholic vogue. It is surprising to learn that it first appears in English as early as 1600, though its early use seems to have been confined to Scotland. The OED reasonably suggests that it may have been introduced through the visit of James VI of Scotland (afterwards James I of England) to Denmark, whither he journeyed in 1589 to meet his bride. *Geyser* (1763), *rune* (1685), *saga* (1709) and *skald* (1763) are all from Icelandic.

The importance of the Scandinavian loanwords is their usefulness in everyday life. It has proved to be the most lucrative foreign source of simple and even monosyllabic words. They are domestic and democratic in nature, in sharp contrast to the fashionable and aristocratic nature of the French loanwords. The Scandinavian words are mostly monosyllabic and homely. They constitute an essential part of the English vocabulary necessary to everyday use.

For the sake of clarity we shall read the Scandinavian influence on the English language under two categories: its influence on English vocabulary and on English grammar and syntax.

1.4.3 Influence on English Vocabulary

The influence of a foreign language on the vocabulary is measured through the influx of the loan words from the foreign source into the native language. The Scandinavian loans can be briefly viewed in the following manner:

Certain **names of places** ending in

'—by' for village, farm (e.g. Quarmby, Whitby)

'—thorp'for farm, hamlet (e.g.Grimesthorpe)

'—beck' for stream (e.g. Caldbeck, Sandbeck)

'—rigg' for ridge (e.g.Haverigg)

'—thwaite' for meadow, clearing (e.g.Slaithwaite, Braithwaite)

'—carr' for brushwood, marsh (e.g. Redcar)

All these suffixes primarily mean village or hamlet. Such suffixes still survive in place names like *Lowestoft*('—toft') and *Witherslack* ('—slack'). More than 1400 of such names have been counted and they are found more in number in places like Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, etc, where the Scandinavians settled down in greater number.

- Scandinavian proper names are also found in great number in these areas. Names ending in '—son', like Stevenson, Johnson, Gibson, Thomson are Scandinavian in origin for the traditional English patronymic (name derived from father or ancestor) was '—ing' as in Browning.
- As invaders and subsequent rulers the Scandinavians tried to impose rules of their own and therefore there was a huge influx of war terms and legal terms. They modified the legal ideas of the Anglo-Saxons and introduced manylaw-terms including words like:

  law (coming from Old Danish word *logh*)

  by-law (by originally meant 'town' or 'village' in Danish)

  thriding ('third part')

  carlman ('man')

  niðing (read ð as 'th' in 'then'; criminal)

  bunda (peasant)
- The war terms, mostly related to war and navy, include: orrest (war), fylcian (to collect, marshal), liþ (read 'þ' as 'th' in 'thought'; fleet), barda, cnear (different types of warships), ha (rowlock), etc. But subsequently all these war terms and law terms disappeared when the next rulers, the Normans came to England and set up their own system of administration and warfare. However, words like law remained in the language.
- Apart from these war and legal terms a few more interesting words were borrowed, like window from vindauga ('wind-eye'), steak from Old Norse steik, knives from Scandinavian knif and others.

Loan words are supposed to play an important role in understanding the cultural standard of the foreign and the recipient culture. In this case, the loan word test seems to tell us that the cultural standards of both the races were almost the same; so the English felt no urgent need to borrow any particular type of words from the Scandinavians. The Scandinavian knives must have been really good, for the word was introduced into the French language as well, as canif. Otherwise, the two races, as we have already discussed, were quite similar to one another and had no new ideas to convey to one another, rather they borrowed everyday words and family terms, which we shall discuss in the following section.

- Some architectural and scriptural words have entered into English through the Scandinavian influence like 'window' and 'eyehole'.

The consequences of borrowing

- Where the words in two languages coincided more or less in form and meaning, both were retained in the modern form—*burn, drag, gang, scrape, thick,* etc.
- Where there were differences of form the English word often survived. For instance, English words as *bench, goat, heathen, yarn, few, grey, loath, leap* have corresponding Scandinavian words, which are often found in Middle English literature and in some cases still exist in dialects.
- In other cases, the Scandinavian word replaced the native word, often after the two had long remained in use concurrently. For instance, Scandinavian awe and its cognate *aye* (OE), English *ey* and Scandinavian *egg*, Scandinavian *syster* (modern spelling *sister*) and OE *Sweoster* both exist in medieval literature. You can see that only the Scandinavian words are retained in modern usage.
- Occasionally, both the English and Scandinavian words are retained as doublets: *no—nay, from—fro, shriek—screak, whole—hale, shirt—skirt,* and so on.
- Both the words may also be retained but with a slight change of meaning, thus *dream* in OE meant joy, but in ME the modern meaning of the word was taken from the Old Norse *draumr*; similar cases are *bread* (OE meaning was 'fragment'), *bloom* (in OE it meant 'mass of metal'), and so on.
- Some instances could be found where the Scandinavian word reintroduced a long forgotten native word back into the main course of the language, *like till, dale, blend, run, rim,* and so on.

1.4.4 Influence on English Grammar and Syntax

If you compare the influence of the loan words with that of the Scandinavian grammar you would find that the latter plays a more decisive role in shaping the English language to its modern form.

- The main reason behind this is that the Scandinavian language simplified the inflexional endings of the Old English tongue and made it look more like the modern language. The English and the Scandinavian languages differed chiefly in their inflexional elements and these endings were the main obstacle to mutual understanding. In the mixed population of the Danelaw these endings

might have caused serious confusion which led to their gradual disappearance. Jespersen speculates that the tempo of this simplification increased as the settlers wanted more to be understood than be correct in their knowledge of the language.

- Certain pronominal forms like *they*, *them*, *their*, and adverbial forms like *thence, hence, whence,* the present tense plural form are of the verb 'to be', and the prepositions like *till* and *fro* came into use in Old English due to the Scandinavian influence.
- A certain number of inflexional elements peculiar to the Northumbrian dialect of Old English have been attributed to Scandinavian influence, for example the '–s'ending of verbs in the present tense form of the third person singular. Again, participial ending like '—and', '—end', '—ind', were all replaced by the Scandinavian '–ing'.
- With regard to the syntax nothing much is known because the absence of early texts in Scandinavia or North England makes it impossible for us to state anything very definite. However, by looking at loans we can conclude that the intimate fusion of the two languages must certainly have influenced their syntactical relations. For instance, relative clauses without any pronouns are relatively rare in OE, but they become increasingly common in ME due to Scandinavian influence. Thus 'the man whom I know' becomes 'the man I know'.
- One of the most reliable changes in the language took place in sound, particularly in the development of the sound 'sk'. In OE this was early palatalized to 'sh', except possibly in the combination of 'scr', whereas in Scandinavian countries it retained the hard 'sk' sound. Consequently, while native words like *ship, shall, fish,* have 'sh' in Modern English, words borrowed from Scandinavians are still pronounced with the 'sk' sound: *sky, skull, skin, scrape, skill, bask, whisk,* and so on. The OE *scyrte* has become shirt, while the corresponding Old Norse form *skyrta* gives us skirt. In the same way the retention of the hard 'k' or 'g' in such words like *kid, get, gild, egg* indicate their Scandinavian origin.

1.4.5 Summing Up

Scandinavians came from the same Germanic stock as the Anglo-Saxons. They shared cultural and linguistic similarity with one another.Thus, the Scandinavian loan

words are democratic and simple in nature. Mostly common, simple and everyday words were borrowed.The influence on grammar and syntax is quite significant because the inflexional endings were discarded which brought the language closer to the form it has today. The Scandinavians also influenced phonetic changes in the English language.

1.4.6 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-Type

1. Assess the range and extent of the Scandinavian influence on the English language.
2. Show how, from the nature and extent of the French borrowings, we can get an idea of the social relationship of the Normans and the Saxons.
3. The philologist Otto Jespersen has called English loan words 'some of the milestones of general history' Show how, Scandinavian and French loan words can help us reconstruct the early history of England.
4. How did the Scandinavian and French influences contribute to the development of modern English from Old English?

Mid-length questions

1. Discuss the nature of the Scandinavian loan words.
2. What is the recognition between the Old English and borrowed words of Scandinavian origin?
3. In what way did the Scandinavians contribute to the simplification of the Old English grammatical system?
4. Show how the English nation was formed from the intermingling of different kinds of people.

Short questions

1. What was the effect of the Roman occupation on Britain? What was the *runic alphabet*?
2. Does English retain traces of the Celts and the Romans?
3. How did the Scandinavians mingle with the Anglo-Saxons?
4. What are the pronouns that had been introduced in OE from Scandinavian?
5. Write short philological notes on: *law, get, sky, sister, shirt, skirt, egg, bread, Rugby, Althorp.*

1.4.7 Suggested Reading

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Unit - 5 □ The Latin Influence on English Language

Structure

1.5.0 Introduction

1.5.1 Latin Loans of the Zero Period

1.5.2 Latin through Celtic Transmission

1.5.3 Latin Loans of the Second Period

1.5.4 Latin Loans of the Third Period

1.5.5 Latin Loans of the Fourth Period

1.5.6 Latin Influence on English Grammar and Syntax

1.5.7 Summing up

1.5.8 Comprehension Exercises

1.5.0 Introduction

By this time you have learnt a little about the nature of the Scandinavian influence on the English language in its formative stages. You must have noticed that Scandinavian exerted its influence during a particular period of time in the history of English language. After that particular period by which the foreign language had well entered into the native tongue, it died. For instance, the death of the Norse or the language that the Scandinavians spoke must have occurred in the 11th century, similarly, as you will learn later, the death of French as the mother tongue of aristocracy took place in the 12th century. Since Latin never enjoyed the status of the mother tongue of any particular community settled in England, it never faced the threat of death.

Thus, the Latin influence is not limited to any one of the particular literary periods, i.e., Old English, Middle English or Modern English. The extent of borrowing increased or decreased depending on the other historical and political factors that influenced the nation's language habit, but it never actually died out. The Latin loans

started to trickle in from the very beginning when the Anglo-Saxons had not yet left their continental homes and continued well into the period of Renaissance and even after that. This is the most salient feature of the Latin influence.

In this unit you will learn:

- **Latin loans of different periods**
- **Changing nature of the Latin loans**
- **The influence of Latin on English grammar and syntax**

At the beginning, Latin was the language of the Christian religion, later it became the language of the learned or erudite. For the sake of clarity we shall study the loans according to their period of incubation in the English language and try to see their changing pattern over the centuries. Following this principle we shall divide the loans into five groups: Latin loans of the zero period, Latin loans through Celtic transmission, Latin borrowings as a consequence of Christianization of Britain, Latin of the Middle English(ME) period and Latin loans of the Modern period.

1.5.1 Latin of the Zero Period or Continental Borrowing

The first Latin words to find their way into the language owe their adoption to the early contact between the Romans and the Germanic tribes on the continent. The Germanic tribes were located on the northern frontier of the Roman state along the Rhine and the Danube. Close to the border was Treves; in the third and fourth centuries it was the most flourishing city in Gaul, having churches, military roads, and the luxury and splendour of the Roman civilisation. The two races came into contact chiefly because of the military exploits and business relations, particularly the wine trade. The main feature of the words of this group of loans is their simplicity, which was due to the low status of civilization of the Teutons or Germans. For instance, look at the following list:

Words are all related to warfare: *camp* (battle), *segn* (banner), *mil* (mile), *straet* (street), etc. Words related to trade: *ceap* (cheap), *mangian* (to trade), *mynet* (coin), etc.

Words related to wine trade: *win* (wine), *flasc e* (flask), *cylle* (leather bottle), *sester* (jar), *eced* (vinegar), etc.

Architectural words: *cealc* (chalk), *copor* (copper), *pic* (pitch), *tigele* (tile), etc.

Household articles: *cytel* (kettle), *mese* (table), *teped* (carpet), *pyle* (pillow), *cycene* (kitchen), *cuppe* (cup), *disc* (dish) *line* (rope), etc.

Food: *ciese* (cheese), *spelt* (wheat), *pipor* (pepper), *popig* (poppy), *butere* (butter), etc.

Miscellaneous: *plume* (plum), *pise* (peas), *pawa* (peacock), *sicor* (safe), *casere* (emperor), etc.

None of the above borrowings speaks of any kind of special technical knowledge or show any penchant for learning. These are common everyday words, and they are mostly transmitted orally. Thus, many have changed in their pronunciation and spellings and there is no pattern visible in this change.

1.5.2 Latin of the First Period or Latin through Celtic Transmission

You have already learnt about the Celts and you must remember that they were the original inhabitants of the island now known as England and for a long time in history they were colonized by the Romans—from 43A.D., when Emperor Claudius sent his troops, to 449 A.D., when the Anglo-Saxon invasion began. It is probable that Latin as a spoken language may not have survived after the Romans left but the Celts had already learnt a few Latin words and those remained in their language. Thus when the Angles, Saxons and Jutes—the Germanic tribes— came, they must have learnt these words from the Celts. A.C. Baugh speaks of 600 such entries. We may learn a few as examples: *chester* (it comes from the Celtic word *ceaster*, which in turn comes from the Latin word *castra* that means camp or Old English town or enclosed community; this word proved useful in making place names, some of which still survive like, *Dorchester*, *Manchester*, *Gloucester*, *Winchester*, *Worcester*, *Lancaster*, etc), and other words like, *port* (harbour, gate or town; L. *portus*), *munt* (mountain; L. *Mons montem*), *torr* (tower, L. *turris*), Celtic *wic* (village; L. *vicus*), etc.

1.5.3 Latin of the Second Period or the Christianisation of Britain

The greatest influence of Latin on Old English was occasioned by the advent of Christianity into Britain in 597 A.D. Latin was seen as the language of the Christian religion and later of a higher culture. Till the end of the Old English period, i.e., 1066, this phase of borrowing continued, leading not only to the introduction of new words but also the introduction of new concepts. Linguists have divided these borrowings into two groups depending on their chronology and also characteristics. The words that were borrowed before the Benedictine reform (the incident which is

seen as the watershed mark in English religious history) are mostly related to the Church and its services, its physical fabric and its ministers. For example: *abbot, alms, altar, anthem, ark, chalice, disciple, epistle, hymn, litany, martyr, manna, psalm, priest, shrine, relic, rule, temple, tunic*, and so on. The church also had a great influence on the everyday domestic life of the people. This is seen in the adoption of words related to clothing, food items, such as, *cap, sock, silk, beet, lentil, millet, pear*. A number of words related to education shows another aspect of the church's influence, for example, school, master, verse, etc. Old English borrowed Latin verbs too, such as *aspendan* (to spend; L. *expendere*), *temprian* (to temper;L.*temperare*).

The influence of Latin upon the English language rose and fell with the fortunes of the church and the state of learning so intimately connected with it. As a result of the Benedictine reform and renewed literary activity a new series of Latin words found its way in the language. These words were different from the early loans as they were less popular and had a more philosophical and learned nature. For instance, the list includes words like: *apostle, cell, cloister, collect (noun) creed, dirge, font, idol, nocturn, prime, prophet, Sabbath, synagogue*, etc. A great number of plant and tree names are also recorded in this period, such as: *coriander, cucumber, ginger, cedar, cypress, fig, laurel*, etc.

1.5.4 Latin of the Third period or Latin Borrowings in Middle English

- In the Middle English period, French was the dominating cultural and technical source for the new words. Hence, the extent of Latin borrowing is difficult to determine. Some of the Latin words came to English via French. But a number of words were directly borrowed from Latin into Middle English The Latin borrowings differed from their French counterparts in being less popular and in gaining admission chiefly through the written language. But since the churchmen used Latin as a spoken language some words may have directly passed into spoken English. The words were miscellaneous . We may, however, refer to some technical,

You must have already noticed that from the Middle English period or even, earlier Latin gradually ceased to be seen merely as a language associated with the Christian religious belief. It had actually become a language of learning or erudition and the words borrowed have become more and more secular in nature. Moreover, the Latin of the zero period and the first period was borrowed chiefly

legal, scientific and ecclesiastical terms: *abject, adjacent, allegory, history, homicide, contempt, custody, distract, frustrate, incarnate, include, legal, lucrative, minor, magnify, nervous, notary, ornate, lucrative, polite, popular, prevent, private, project, quiet, rational, reject, script, secular, solar, solitary, summary, testify, innumerable, zenith, zephyr*, and so on. Since several words had endings like *–able, -ent, -al, -ive* ,etc. these endings became familiar in English, and are still used to form English derivatives. A number of them have been anglicized by adding native endings. Latin suffixes such as '—ate' (from '—atus'), '—ic' (from '—icus') and ' —al' (from '—alis'), have become part of the English language as in *educate, elastic, abysmal.*

through the oral medium. From the third period onwards the borrowing has been mainly through the written language. The best example must be the Latin borrowings of the Modern English period. Both Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton wrote some of their famous books in Latin. It thus turned out that in the modern period, which witnessed the expansion of philosophy and science, scholars would always borrow new words from this foreign language.

1.5.5 Latin of the Fourth Period or Latin Borrowings in Modern English

[From Early Modern to Contemporary English]

Linguists have considered the period from Henry the Eighth's reign onwards to be the Modern English period. At the beginning of this period due to the phenomenon generally referred to as the Renaissance, a revival of interest in the classics resulted in a large influx of Latin words. C.L. Barber says, 'Latin loans in Old and Middle English are a mere trickle, but in early Modern English the trickle becomes a river, and by 1600 it is a deluge. The custom of borrowing directly from Latin or going to Latin sources to form new words for new concepts continues in English. We shall take a look at these borrowings in this section:

- Some words are taken over bodily in their Latin form with their Latin spelling, like, *genius, species, cerebellum, militia, apparatus, focus, torpor, squalor, tedium, lens*, etc. In some cases, however, the original Latin meaning of the words is not retained. For instance, *lens* meant lentil, and it was applied to optical glass because a double convex lens looks like a lentil seed.

- Borrowing also took place in some specific fields. For example, there are some scientific words like *equilibrium*, *momentum*, *vacuum*; some mathematical terms like *radius*, *calculus*, *area*, *series*; some legal terms like *affidavit*, *alias*, *caveat*; nouns like *relaxation*, *relegation*; adjectives like *offensive*, *relevant*; verbs like *investigate*, *imbue*; and everyday words like *album*, *circus*, *miser*, etc.
- In some cases the loans were given a more anglicized form. For example, Latin *desparatus* becomes English *desperate*—here the ending has changed. The ending may be omitted like *complexus* becoming *complex*.
- The Latin words are in many ways influenced by the French words because English had borrowed words both directly from Latin and also via French loans. Remember, many French words are derived from Latin. This peculiar incident of borrowing through another language had led to many interesting developments. For instance, Latin ending '—itas' becomes English '—ity' (as in *immaturity*), Latin '—entia' and '—antia', may become '—ance', or '—ancy' (as in *transcendence*, *delinquency*, *relevancy*), etc. In some cases English had retained the French pronunciation of the Latin words but corrected the spelling after coming across the original Latin word. For example, *perfect* was first borrowed as *perfet*, from the French word *perfait* which was borrowed from the original Latin *perfectus*. When the English came across the Latin form they introduced the 'c'. Similarly 'c' was introduced in Modern English *verdict* (ME *verdit*<French *verdit*<Latin *uredictum*), 'b' was added to debt (ME *dette*<French dette<Latin debitum), 'p' was added to receipt (ME from Anglo-Norman *receite*<Latin receptum), etc.

The simultaneous borrowing of words from both French and Latin sources has given rise to synonyms at three levels, where the first is native, second French and the third one is Latin. Their degree vary from being popular, literary and learned, for instance: *rise—mount—ascend, ask—question—interrogate, goodness—virtue—probity, fast—firm*

—secure, fire—flame—conflagration, fear—terror—trepidation, holy—sacred —consecrated, time—age—epoch.

- More than 10,000 Latin words were borrowed through the written language, many through the writings of Thomas More and William Shakespeare. For instance words like *acceptance*, *denunciation*, *compatible*, *dissipate*, *comprehensible*, *combustible*, *implacable*, found its way into the English

language through the works of More just as *antipathy*, *allurement*, *emphasis*, *emulate*, *hereditary* owe their introduction to Shakespeare. Remember the list is by no means an exhaustive one.

- Jespersen has argued that this excessive borrowing from the Latin loans was due to the 'mental laziness' of the English people who found it more convenient to borrow the foreign word rather than look for their own native resources. So in spite of the presence of native adjectives, Latin adjectives were borrowed. However, every word develops its own shade of meaning as time passes by and now the overwhelming presence of similar adjectives has added to the richness and variety of the English tongue. For example, look at the adjectives like *watery* and *aquatic*. Both are adjective forms of *water*, first formed from native sources by adding '–y', the second borrowed from Latin. Today they have very different usages. One may have 'watery eyes', but 'aquatic animals' are more common. Similar cases can be seen in the following list where the first word is native and the second Latin—*fatherly*: *paternal*, *motherly*: *maternal*, *heavenly*: *celestial*, *daily*: *diurnal*, *bloody*: *sanguinary*, *kingly*: *royal*, etc. Some native words have only corresponding foreign adjectives, for example—*mouth*: *oral*, *ox*: *bovine*, *nose*: *nasal*, *eye*: *ocular*, *mind*: *mental*, *school*: *scholastic*, *book*: *literary*, *house*: *domestic*, *town*: *urban*, *letter*: *epistolary*, etc.

- The extensive borrowing of Latin words has given rise to a manner of writing known as **Johnsonese**. The term owes its origin in the style adopted by Dr Samuel Johnson. He was such an avid follower of Latin expressions and syntax that his prose was verbose and full of expressions which common readers without a classical education may find it a bit too difficult to understand. A number of 18th century writers wrote in this style . We give below some examples you may find interesting:

Instead of saying 'a great crowd came to see', you find 'a vast concourse was assembled to witness', instead of 'the great fire spread' 'the disastrous conflagration extended its devastating career' and the simple 'to be starved to death' became 'to sink from inanition to non-entity'.

1.5.6 Latin influence on English Grammar and Syntax

Latin influenced English not only in vocabulary but also in grammar and syntax. For a long time European students were compulsorily taught Latin grammar at school.

On account of this Latinate construction of English sentences was considered the correct form. It was considered wrong to say in English 'It is me'even though it is a very common English usage. But in Latin the 'be' verb must always take the nominative after it instead of the accusative one. Therefore students were taught that the correct form was 'It is I'. The absolute participle, as in 'this being the case' came into English in imitation of Latin construction. Owing to this influence words like *who* and *which* became more popular as relative pronouns instead of *that*, which is their old native counterpart. Milton's grand style is in many ways a result of the borrowing of the Latin syntax. So pervasive was the imposition of Latin that John Dryden, in the late 17th century, wrote '*the age I live in*" (normal English syntax) in the first edition of his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, But in the next edition he changed it to '*the age in which I live*"(according to rules of Latin syntax) Thus, C. L. Wren writes: 'English is a Germanic language, belonging therefore to a different group of the Indo-European family from Latin: yet the ghost of the Latinate tradition still haunts our classes.'

1.5.7 Summing Up

- Latin influence is continuous, holistic and highly literary in nature. The words borrowed, chiefly in the early period, were mostly religious in nature because of association of the language with Christianity, whereas, those borrowed in the modern period are extremely erudite in character.
- A free and uncontrolled Latin borrowing has got both pros and cons. On the positive side, it gave rise to a number of synonyms by virtue of which the English language has been endowed with variety. You can repeat the same thought without rewriting the same words and express different and subtle shades of meaning. For example, the Latin derivative l*egible* means 'hat can be read', the native *readable* means 'worth reading . Moreover, so much of borrowing made the English mentally lazy.

1.5.8 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-type questions

1. Discuss the phases of Latin borrowing before the Renaissance.
2. Assess the extent and nature of Latin borrowings in Modern English.

3. According to linguists like Otto Jespersen, the extensive borrowings from Latin have been both good and bad for the English language . Would you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Briefly survey the different phases of Latin loans in English and show how the Latin influence spans everyday life as well as scholarly learning.

Mid-length questions

1. Discuss the effect of the Latin influence on English grammar and syntax.
2. Show how the Christianisation of Britain led to the spread of the Latin influence on the English language.
3. Discuss the nature of the Latin influence on English during and after the Renaissance.

Short questions

1. What is 'Johnsonese'? Discuss with examples.
2. Why does English have a large number of synonyms? Are they good or bad for the language?
3. Show how a number of English spellings were modified by the Latin influence.
4. Why do modern grammarians say that it is not necessary for English to follow the rules of Latin grammar?

Unit-6 □ England from 1066 AD to 1400 AD

Structure

1.6.0 Introduction

1.6.1 Background

1.6.2 The Norman Conquest and the English Language

1.6.3 Middle English Poetry

1.6.4 Middle English Prose

1.6.5 Middle English Drama

1.6.6 Summing Up M.E Drama

1.6.7 Recommended Reading

1.6.8 Comprehension Exercises

1.6.0 Introduction

In this unit we are going to look at the Middle English period, specifically from 1066 AD to 1400 AD. However, we will also study a bit of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and try to understand the important literary activities of the times. This unit will cover a historical background of the age, the influence of Norman Conquest on the English language, Middle English Poetry, Middle English Prose and Middle English Drama. You will definitely notice in course of your reading how different the literature of this period is from the earlier Old English period and its Anglo Saxon Literature. We hope you will be able to relate the 'why' and the 'what' of this transition, as you read on. Do keep in mind right from the beginnings of your systematic study of literature that it is always integrally related with the life and times of which it is necessarily a product.

1.6.1 Background

This period witnessed several developments in the history of England – the establishment of the Norman dynasty; the internal conflicts among king, nobles, clergymen and common people; and several wars both at home and abroad. From the literary point of view far more significant were the general movements of the times:

the rise of religious orders; their initial enthusiasm and eventual decline; the growth of the spirit of chivalry and romance; sympathy for women and the poor; the Crusades and the increase in the European outlook which would ultimately lead to the rebirth of the intellect, better known as the Renaissance. All these hinted at the growth of intelligence that was palpable in the literature of the Middle English Period.

1.6.2 The Norman Conquest and the English Language

The Norman Conquest refers to the invasion and conquest of England by William, Duke of Normandy in the year 1066 A.D. The last Saxon king, Edward the Confessor died without an heir and Duke William laid claim to the throne of Wessex on the basis of a promise once made to him by King Edward. Edward had been succeeded by his kinsman Harold II who rejected his claim. William crossed the Channel and in the Battle of Hastings Harold and the Saxons were defeated. William became England's king and for a long period that followed, the kings of England were also, simultaneously, Dukes of Normandy. This political situation very naturally made for closer connections between England and the mainland of Europe, especially, because Normandy, (now a province of France) lay in the north of France and shared a close border with England. A look at Plate 6 in Module 3 Unit 1 will give you an idea of the route that the Normans traversed to reach England.

The Norman Conquest of England in 1066 is considered to be one of the landmarks in the history of England. It imposed a French-speaking ruling class on England. French retained its position of being the regular language of the aristocrats for more than two and a half centuries after the Conquest. As a result Norman-French developed as the literary language of the highest social classes. Later when English ousted French as the language of the literature of England, it was a language changed in many ways – it had enriched itself with French vocabulary and had lost Anglo-Saxon inflections, though it had not wholly lost connection with its Anglo-Saxon tradition.

With the Norman Conquest, the heroic age with its heroic ideals was bidden adieu. There was the emergence of a new Europe. By the beginning of the twelfth century, a Christian civilization was established in this new Europe. Thus came in a stable culture with its own norms of politeness both in life and literature. With the passing away of the heroic age, new kinds of courtly sophistication prevailed over the heroic ideals. With the Norman Conquest, England came into contact with continental civilization, particularly French culture. As a result English literature acquired polish, new ease and skill. Also there were significant changes in pronunciation and word structure. Any reader of English literature of this period can note a number of different

Middle English dialects. After the Conquest, Wessex lost its political and cultural importance and its dialect, West Saxon, that had earlier been the most important literary language, lost its position. Since French became the language of the aristocracy, writers in English used the language of their own region and this led to the emergence of diverse dialects as written language. When French started to recede from the limelight, English gradually started to become popular and a new standard form of literary English began to evolve. By the end of the Middle English period, the dialect of London became the most influential English dialect. This dialect was basically a Southern dialect in origin. However, by the time of Chaucer it had become East Midland in character. As a result modern English derived from the East Midland dialect which had become the standard literary language. (For details of the changes in English language, please refer to Module 3 Unit 1 in this paper).

1.6.3 Middle English Poetry

Since the poetic output of this period is both remarkably different from the previous, and because it is diverse in nature, an entire Unit (Module 2 Unit 7) has been devoted to the genre. Learners are advised to read the two Units together.

1.6.4 Middle English Prose

The sermons, translations and several didactic works which are essential parts of Middle English prose, though of little literary interest, are quite important for the philologists and the historians. The earliest writings of this category after the Norman Conquest are those titled as the *Katherine Group*. These include the lives of three saints, Katherine, Margaret and Juliana, a treatise discussing the advantages of virginity and the disadvantages of marriage, a homily where Wit (the informed master) is in conflict with Will (the foolish mistress) over the control of the Soul. The prose style is alliterative with a rhythmic effect. The writings are addressed to women, like *Ancrene Riwle* which is a manual of instruction for three young girls who are would-be-anchoresses. It is a prose work written probably about 1200 and is rich in didactic and devotional material. It is also a very realistic historical document describing matters of daily life. The prose style is made interesting by the use of proverbs, anecdotes and character sketches. Walter Hilton's prose work *The Scale of Perfection* is another significant document of English prose style. It debates the claims of active and contemplative life. Michael of Northgate's *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (*Prick of Conscience*) is a translation of a thirteenth century didactic work. The translation is marked by

dullness and inaccuracy. However, from the linguistic point of view, it is significant as the author's own autograph copy is preserved. It is also considered to be a seminal text in the South-eastern, particularly Kentish dialect.

John Wyclif, another important prose writer of the Middle English period, was an active controversialist, politician, philosopher and reformer. He attacked certain important practices of the Church and issued a large number of pamphlets dealing with the social injustices of the time. He wrote many Latin books to support his revolutionary opinions. He is famous for the first complete translation of the Bible in English. Though the entire translation was not done by Wyclif himself, it was done under his inspiration and influence. Nicholas of Hereford is thought to have translated part of the earlier of the two versions (completed between 1382 and 1384) and John Purvey the later (completed soon after 1388). The translation is from the Latin text of the Vulgate and does not possess much grace or life. However, it has a simplicity and pointedness that makes it appealing to the readers.

John Mandeville's best-known book is *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. It is a translation from a French work written between 1357 and 1371. The French work was translated into various languages, including English. The English version has a preface which introduces the author as Sir John Mandeville. Recently the existence of an actual Mandeville has been denied and the real author is considered to be Jehan de Bourgogne who died in 1372.*Travels* is now regarded as a compilation from several popular books based on voyages, including those of Friar Odoric and Marco Polo. The book includes incredible details of the writer's experiences in different countries. The prose style is straightforward and clear with colloquial touches here and there. It is a book marked with a distinct literary style and flavour which includes short, freely dispersed and tersely phrased narrations.

Sir Thomas Malory's reputation is largely dependent on his famous work *Morte d' Arthur* which was written as late as the ninth year of the reign of King Edward IV in 1469. Almost whatever we know about Malory is contained in the preface of Caxton, the first printer of the book. Like the *Travels* of Mandeville, *Morte d' Arthur* is also a compilation made from a number of French romances dealing with King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table. Malory treated his materials skilfully to suit his purpose. Though the sources of the book are diverse, a uniform dignity is maintained throughout. The entire book is suffused with the essence of romance and medieval chivalry. The blending of dialogue and narrative makes the writing lively and colourful. The style has a simple clarity and transparency and is full of poetic cadences.

1.6.5 Middle English Drama

The history of English drama begins with priests beginning to expand the rituals of the Catholic church with some dialogues spoken by the priests themselves, which dramatized some of the rituals of Easter and Christmas. It also had other sources like pre-Christian seasonal festivals, St. George and Robin Hood plays, Maypole dances and other folk activities, but we do not have enough surviving material about them. We cannot even draw a line of continuity between the origins of English drama in the Middle English period and the classical drama of Greece and Rome which had much earlier stopped being a vital force. The only remnant of classical drama can be located in the mimes or professional strolling players who were found throughout the Middle English period in diverse parts of Europe. However, Middle English drama owes very little to them.

Major dramatic elements were present in the rituals of the Christian Church where celebrations of Christmas and Easter involved all the dramatic moments of Christ's life from birth to Resurrection. As early as the tenth century Easter representations of Christ's empty tomb were made interesting with the help of dialogue between one figure sitting outside and three others who come in, as if in search of something. Such representations were considered to possess instructional lessons and were popular at Easter and such other feasts. The writers also sought sources in New Testament stories like the Annunciation and the Nativity and in the popular stories of the Old Testament such as those of the Fall, Noah and Daniel. Gradually liturgical drama which was enacted within the Church underwent expansion, with additional characters and dialogues and came out to the courtyard. Then with the clergymen dissociating themselves from such plays, it moved to the village square or to the marketplace. Once this shift took them outside the church premises, Latin easily gave way to English, for the demand for vernacular modes of representation was a long standing insipient longing. These plays were performed in the open. By this time the liturgy or church service element was almost gone. The plays had begun to tell long, elaborate stories and included a number of characters, not only Biblical, but sometimes ingenuously devised. But the religious element remained strong, since the Bible stories were dramatized. These are called the Miracle plays.

Miracle plays developed quite rapidly in the thirteenth century and by the fourteenth century there was an evolution of complete cycles of plays. Since the enactment of the plays were now not confined within the church, suitable seasons were required for the performances. The feast of Corpus Christi (in May or June) established in 1264 and confirmed in 1311, was considered to be a perfect day for the performance of miracle plays, both because of the time of the year and also because it was a

procession in which dramatic performances were staged on wagons ('pageants') which moved to different spots of the locality. As drama gradually came to acquire secular dimensions, control of performances passed to the trade guilds which were responsible for the dramatic productions. Each guild selected a separate episode from a cycle and it involved not only considerable expenditure but also ingenuity as far as the arrangement of the superstructure and stage properties were concerned. Nearly complete cycles of miracle plays survive from those of Chester, York and Wakefield. The Chester cycle, composed between 1350 and 1450, contains twenty-five plays beginning with the Fall of Satan and ending with the Day of Judgement. The plays are written in eight-line stanzas with *rime couee or* tail rhyme. The stories are simple with realistic touches here and there. However, the dialogues and the action are immature. From the York cycle forty-eight plays have survived, though originally there were fifty-four. A distinction can be made amongst these plays which can be divided into four groups. The first group is crude and didactic in tone. The second group shows the influence of the alliterative revival and indicates the writer's metrical skill. The third group introduces elements of humour and finally the last group contains powerful dramatic elements. The Wakefield cycle is also known as Towneley Plays (because the manuscript was owned by the Towneley family) and contains thirty-two plays. These are marked by a strong sense of realism and have better literary qualities than the plays of other cycles. Some of the plays reveal note of real poetry while others possess ironic humour and realistic characterisation. Among these are included a Noah and two shepherd plays (the *First Shepherds'Play and the Second Shepherds'Play*).

While miracle plays were still very popular, another dramatic form, with more direct links with Elizabethan drama, evolved. This form is called the morality play and it is remarkably different from miracle plays since it has no connection with biblical stories. Morality plays deal with personified abstractions of Virtues and Vices which are in constant struggle for the possession of a man's soul. Abstractions like Justice, Mercy, Gluttony are other common characters. The morality play borrows from contemporary homiletic technique and deals with subjects which were popular among medieval preachers. A very common theme of these plays is the 'Dance of Death' which portrays Death as God's messenger who summons all and sundry. References to morality plays are found in the fourteenth century. However, the fullest development of these plays is found in the fifteenth century. The earliest complete extant morality play is *The Castle of Perseverance* written in about 1425. It is quite elaborate, involving thirty-four characters. The theme is the conflict between the central character Mankind's Good Angel and his supporters on the one hand and his Bad Angel supported by the Seven Deadly Sins on the other hand. *The Castle of Perseverance* is one among the three plays found in the Macro MS. The other two

are *Wisdom* and *Mankind*. The best-known morality play is *Everyman* where the personified abstractions play their parts with dramatic logic and the action involves simple dignity. The characters are portrayed effectively and there is a noble pathos running throughout the play:

O all thing faileth, save God alone;

Beauty, Strength, and Discretion;

For when Death bloweth his blast,

They all run from me full fast.

This play is the most appealing of all the surviving morality plays of the fifteenth century. Everyman, the central character, is summoned by Death to undertake a prolonged journey from where he can never return. Everyman fervently searches for friends who can be his companions but nobody like Fellowship, Goods, Kindred, agrees. Only Good Deeds becomes ready to be both his guide and companion. However, she is weak because of the sins committed by Everyman. So she recommends him to her sister Knowledge, who again leads Everyman to Confession. After Everyman does penance, Good Deeds becomes strong enough to be his companion, along with Discretion, Strength, Five Wits and Beauty. But when the time arrives for Everyman to enter into his grave, all other companions except Good Deeds, refuse to join him. An angel announces the entry of the soul of Everyman 'into the heavenly sphere' and a 'Doctor' points at the moral.

This play is sometimes considered to be a translation of a Dutch morality play titled *Elckerlijk*.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century a kind of morality play developed that dealt with moral problems in more realistic and comic way. This kind of secular play is called the Interlude which is the latest predecessor of the drama proper of Elizabethan age. By the sixteenth century the Interlude included scenes far removed from the medieval morality plays. It introduced real characters, broad farcical (sometimes coarse) humour and set scenes, an innovation in English drama. The Interlude continued to be written and staged well into the Tudor period. By the time of Henry VIII it had begun to be used for political satire and lost much of its humour.

It is difficult to trace the transition from medieval religious drama to Tudor secular drama since many of the texts have been lost. However, there is continuation of dramatic tradition from the simple native drama enriched by foreign influences to more sophisticated and secular drama. Particularly interesting is the transformation of the personified character of 'Vice' that develops from a horrifying tempter to a purely comic figure. It is undoubtedly true that the Interlude was an immense advance upon the morality play. The most accomplished writer of the Interlude is John

Heywood. *The Play Called the Four PP* is his best creation where there is a description of a lying match among a Palmer, a Pedlar, a Pardoner and an Apothecary. The play is composed in doggerel verse. Another play of Heywood *A Merry* Play *between Johan the Husband, Tyb his Wife, and Sir Johan the Priest* deals with the conventional theme of a meek husband, a shrewd wife and her lover, a priest. This play is a farce and has sharp wit and clever sayings. In both the plays of Heywood, the plots are rudimentary where the writer does not succeed in developing a sustained dramatic structure. Drama in its fullest form started to appear around 1550 where the influence of Seneca and other classical dramatists could be observed. This dramatic form would reach its zenith in the Elizabethan era.

1.6.6 Summing up M.E Drama

Major dramatic elements were present in the rituals of the Christian Church. Liturgical drama, which was enacted within the Church, gradually grew more secular and moved to the marketplace or other convenient locations. Once outside the church premises, English replaced Latin. These plays were performed in the open and were largely separated from the liturgy, but the Bible provided the subjects. These were called the miracle plays. Nearly complete cycles of miracle plays survive from the towns of Chester, York and Wakefield. While miracle plays were still very popular, another dramatic form, with more direct links with Elizabethan drama, evolved. This form is called the morality play. It is remarkably different from miracle plays since it has no connection with biblical stories. The Morality play deals with personified abstractions of Virtues and Vices which are in constant struggle for the possession of a man's soul. Abstractions like Justice, Mercy, Gluttony are other common characters. Towards the end of the fifteenth century a kind of morality play developed that dealt with moral problems in more realistic and comic way. This kind of secular play is called the Interlude which is the last predecessor of the drama proper.

1.6.7 Comprehension Exercises

Essay Type Questions:

1. What are the three major groups of Middle English drama? Discuss the growth and development of them.
2. Write a brief assessment of Middle English poetry.

Middle-Length Questions:

1. Write an essay on Middle English Prose.
2. How do the miracle and morality plays contribute to the development of Middle English drama?

Short Questions:

1. How did Norman Conquest influence the English language.
2. Comment on the contributions of John Mandeville and Sir Thomas Malory in the development of English prose.
3. Name the best-known morality play. Why is this play considered to be the most appealing of all morality plays?

1.6.8 Suggested Reading

1. A.C. Baugh. *Literary History of England Vol 1.* London: Routledge, 1994
2. Boris Ford. *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: The Age of Chaucer.* Penguin Books, 1971
3. David Daiches. *A Critical History of English Literature Vol 1.* Ronald Press Company, 1960. Repr. Random House India, 2007
4. Legouis and Cazamian. *A History of English Literature Vol 1.* Macmillan, 1927

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Module - Two
Middle English Literature

Unit-7 □ Trends in Middle English Poetry

Structure

2.7.0 Introduction

2.7.1 Middle English Poetry – Evolution and Trends

2.7.2 Middle English Alliterative Poetry

2.7.3 Middle English Lyrics

2.7.4 Middle English Romances

2.7.5 Chaucer, Gower, and Langland

2.7.6 Summing Up

2.7.7 Comprehension Exercises

2.7.8 Suggested Reading

2.7.0 Introduction

In this unit we shall be taking a look at the poetry of the Middle English period. The Middle English period, according to historians of English language and literature, approximately spans the years 1066 — 1400 A.D. In 1066 A.D. the Normans from northern part of France conquered England in the Battle of Hastings, defeating Harold Godwinson, the last Anglo-Saxon King . Henceforth, a long line of Norman-French monarchs would rule England.

The Norman Conquest brought in sweeping changes in English language and culture. A very large number of loan words from Latin and French, covering areas as diverse as religion and fashion, food and law, entered the English language. English grammar was strongly impacted by the influence of Latin grammar. In literature, the major change was the introduction of rhyme and metre. Anglo –Saxon alliterative measure did not die out entirely however. There was to be a brief spurt of revival of alliterative verse. But lyric poetry, unknown in A.S. literature, comes in and thrives.

Since the English language underwent major changes during the period, and without special training it is not easy to understand Middle English verse, we have decided to provide you with a historical survey, rather than ask you to study Middle English poems in detail. However, notice that we have put in the year 1400 as the

outer limit of the Middle English period. The year is important, because it is the year of death of the most important Middle English poet ; Geoffrey Chaucer. In a later Unit you will get the opportunity to read an extract from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and enjoy Chaucer's humour as well as get a glimpse of medieval society through Chaucer's eyes.

2.7.1 Middle English Poetry—Evolution and Trends

It is difficult to trace the course of poetry during the eleventh and twelfth centuries since very little is available. Some fragments of didactic and religious poetry indicate a continuation of Anglo-Saxon alliterative kind of poetry, though in a looser form. A striking breakthrough in the tradition is *Orrmulum* written by an Augustinian canon named Orm about the year 1200. The poem is of enormous length (around ten thousand extant lines have survived) and is preserved probably in the writer's autograph copy itself. It consists of several religious homilies addressed to a fellow canon. It is composed in north-east Midlands dialect. Each line has the same metrical pattern with fifteen syllables and a 'feminine' ending and is, as a result, very monotonous. The poem has an original phonetic spelling which is complicated because of the frequent use of double consonants. *Cursor Mundi* is another lengthy (thirty thousand lines) religious poem dealing with all the significant incidents of the Old and New Testament stories and other religious topics as well. The poem is encyclopaedic in nature and exhibits immense ability and skill of the writer to handle such a vast panorama of materials. Although a religious poem, it tells stories of illicit love affairs of great men like , Julius Caesar and humourously comments that to be a great man in this world you need an illicit lover! This didactic writing is made interesting by the employment of variety in the metre which is primarily in short couplets. This poem serves as a suitable introduction to the medieval view of world history. Read below an extract in modern English

Therefore bless I that paramour[Virgin Mary]
That in my need does me succour
That saves me on earth from sin
And heaven bliss me helps to win.

The literary convention of verse debate, so popular in Latin and French, was employed with immense success in *The Owl and the Nightingale* where the two birds are engaged in a long argument which is not only spirited but also full of legal tricks present in a twelfth century lawsuit. The birds are used allegorically to point at the

monastic and the secular ways of life and also to bring out the differences between didactic and amorous kinds of poetry. The focal points of interest lie in the dramatic quality of the narrative and the ease with which the short rhyming couplets make the dialogues interesting. The vividness of character delineation is another reason for the popularity of the poem. Some scholars suppose that the author was Nicholas of Guildford, because near the beginning of the debate the two birds agree to refer their differences to 'Master Nicholas of Guildford". The verse form used is the four-stress couplet. Below is an extract in modern English translation.

The Nightingale began the match
Off in a corner, on a fallow patch,
Sitting high on the branch of a tree
Where blossoms bloomed most handsomely
Above a thick protective hedge
Grown up in rushes and green sedge.

2.7.2 Middle English Alliterative Poetry

The alliterative tradition of Anglo-Saxon literature can be observed to be popularly used in Layamon's *Brut*, a late twelfth century metrical history of Britain based on Wace's *Roman de Brut*, a French poem, which in its turn, was derived from the Latin *Historia Regum Britanniae* (History of the Kings of Britain) by Geoffrey of Monmouth. *Brut* is of particular interest because the story of King Arthur, retold in a number of Middle English romances, makes its first appearance here. A more impressive use of the alliterative tradition is found in a unique manuscript preserved in the British Museum- the manuscript containing four alliterative poems written in West Midland dialect. These poems are *Pearl*, *Purity*, *Patience* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The first three are religious poems among which *Pearl* is both an elegy on the poet's deceased daughter and also an allegory of the Christian faith. It contains beautiful, moving passages marked by sincerity and passion. It is one of the most interesting allegorical religious poems of the Middle Ages. It is also a dream poem or a vision poem. A father mourns that he has lost a valuable pearl. He falls asleep in a garden and dreams that he has vision of a pearl-maiden who stands on the other bank of a river and tells him that his pearl is not lost , but has found a place among blest people. She speaks to him of the Christian doctrine and shows him a vision of heaven when he tries but cannot reach her. Some critics think the poem is possibly an allegory . The poet lost his daughter and consoles himself that she is with God.

But it may also be a didactic poem about Christian doctrine, within a framework of personal elegy.

Purity and *Patience* are more didactic and exalted. *Patience* is a homily on the virtues of patience and the story of Jonah helps the poet to explain those virtues. These poems are marked by long alliterative lines which bear testimony to the poet's skill.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is considered to be one of the best of all Middle English allegorical romances. In this poem the poet excels in characterization, descriptive details, handling of plot and use of alliterative long lines. Lyrical element is also introduced through the depiction of the movement of seasons. The story element has connections with folklore and is subjected to multiple allegorical interpretations. The main adventure involved in the plot is the challenge of an exchange of blows with the Green Knight, a challenge that is accepted by Gawain, a knight in King Arthur's court. . Consequently the Green Knight visiting Arthur's court on the occasion of New year's feast is beheaded by Gawain but the former picks up his head and promises to return a similar blow to Gawain one year later at the Green Chapel. During his search for the Green Chapel, Gawain takes refuge in a castle and is entertained by the lord and the lady of the castle. Every morning when the lord goes away for hunting, Gawain is tempted by the lady. However, he retains his courtesy and at the same time repulses her advances. But on the third day he accepts a green girdle which, according to the lady, Gawain would require during his encounter with the Knight. Gawain is hit three times at the Green Chapel by the Green Knight who reveals himself as the lord of the castle. The wound caused on Gawain's neck by the third hit is for hiding the truth about the girdle he received from the lady. Gawain, being humiliated, reproaches himself for this and after his return to Arthur's court tells this story as an example of moral failure, not as a heroic exploit. There is an unmistakable sophistication in the grace of the narrative, technical skill of versification, charm and humour in conversations and sheer brilliance in depiction of the hunting scenes and the changing beauties of nature. It is a perfect example of an Arthurian romance which is enriched through the ideals of courage and heroism. The poem is a harmonious blending of the folk elements of the Celtic, the vigour of the Anglo-Saxon and the sophistication of the French.

Since all the four poems are found in the Cotton MS (i.e. in the collection of Sir Robert Cotton), and because of similarities in style, it is thought that they might be the work of a single author. The poems share a moral , didactic vein, but they author was not necessarily a clergyman . *Sir Gawain* also shows familiarity with

courtly life and manners. The vocabulary shows a large number of French words and the dialect used is northwest Midlands dialect.

2.7.3 Middle English Lyrics

Another significant form of Middle English poetry is the Middle English lyric. You will remember that the most natural expression of Old English poetry is in epic or heroic and other types of narrative verse but not in lyric. A few pieces like *The Husband's Message*, *The Wife's Lament* and *The Seafarer* possess certain lyrical elements but cannot be considered as lyrics in the sense that later generations have come to define the term. A few lyrical fragments which date back to the thirteenth century are primarily the result of liturgical and clerical inspiration. In the Middle English period lyrics can be distinguished into two categories- the religious and the secular. The religious lyric is not restricted to any national boundary and belongs to literary and ecclesiastical traditions. On the other hand, the roots of secular lyric can be traced in the native soil, in the secular Latin lyric or in French and Provençal poetry. The native influence on Middle English lyric form is palpable in folk songs. Though specimens of such songs are not readily available but evidences are there that popular songs were sung by women accompanied by dancing. There are records in the deeds of the twelfth century chronicler Hereward the Exile that a parish priest In Worcestershire was so inspired by singing and dancing that took place in the churchyard for a whole night, that the next morning during the service he sang the refrain 'Swete lamman dhin are' (Sweet leman, thy favour) instead of *Dominus vobiscum*. There are various other references to popular songs in the later centuries as well. However, there is practically no evidence of any direct influence of Provençal poetry upon English lyric. Some elements of the troubadour lyric of France which can be located in the English lyrics probably reached England with the help of French poets.

Among the English secular lyrics one of the most melodious deals with the poet's happiness over his good fortune that has helped him to fall in love with Alysoun. There is a vivid description of her brown eyes, fair hair and 'middel smal'. The lyric also expresses the apprehension of the lover that his beloved might be snatched away from him: 'Icham for wowing al forwake,/ Wery so water in wore,/ Lest eny reve me my make'. A favourite theme of these lyrics is the contentment of the lover to dwell happily on his lady's graces. In one lyric the poet compares the beauty of the lady-love with flowers, gems, birds and even medicinal herbs and then concentrates on describing her teeth, mouth and every detail of her physical beauty. Sometimes despair is also expressed by the poet: 'Foweles in pe frith/ Pe fisses in pe flod./ And I mon waxe wod./ Mulch sorw i walk with/ For beste of bon and blod.'

A common French convention employed in these lyrics is the poet-lover coming across a love adventure during the course of his wandering: 'Nou sprinkles the sprai:/ Al for love icche am so seeke/ That slepen I ne mai.' There is a long history of lyrics being associated with spring. *Cuckoo Song*, one of the most famous lyrics of the Middle Ages, expresses pure delight at the return of spring: 'Sumer is i-cumen in,/ Lhude sing, cuccu!/ Groweth sed and bloweth med/ And springth the wde nu./ Sing, cuccu!' Just as spring symbolises mirth, winter is associated with the poet's melancholy mood over some wrong meted out to him: 'Mirie it is while sumer ilast/ With fugheles song,/ Oc nu necheth windes blast/ And weder strong.'

Unfortunately, Middle English secular lyrics are not preserved abundantly, perhaps because religious orientation governed culture and literature in a big way, at least till the coming of Chaucer. The great majority of lyrics of this period that are found are therefore overtly religious or moral in nature. The religious lyrics are marked by sincerity and are sometimes brilliant examples of imaginative fervour and beauty. The devotional aspect of these lyrics is blended with emotional exuberance. Though all these lyrics are primarily appeals to Christ or the Virgin Mary for salvation of the soul, there are several variations. Many of these lyrics addressed to Virgin Mary are full of praises for her. She is depicted as the tender mother, the source of bliss and the Queen of Heaven. The way in which she is described, as the 'flower of all' or the 'brightest in bower', reminds us of secular love lyrics. These religious lyrics deal with diverse situations of the Virgin's life and she is regarded as the connecting thread between God and the human beings. The lyrics dealing with the grace of Christ are full of praises where the poet fervently pleads to Christ for salvation. Richard Caister's *Ihesu, lord, þat madist* me is a brilliant example of this category of religious lyric. Another lyric, *Quia amore langueo*, is marked by sheer beauty:

In a valey of this restles minde

I sought in mounteine and in mede,

Trusting a trewe love for to finde.

Upon an hill than I took hede;

A voice i herde, and neer I yede,

In huge dolour complaininge tho,

'See, dere soule, how my sides blede,

Quia amore langueo.'

There are several religious lyrics which focus on the sacrifice that Christ made for man. Sometimes Christ is portrayed as complaining that man has discarded him

and many a times he is shown to be merciful, forgiving man for all the wrongs committed. Later poems on Christ attain a spirit of happiness and rejoicing when these lyrics are linked up with festivities like Christmas and Epiphany: 'Now may we singen as it is/ *Quod puer natus est nobis*.' The popularity of the carols brings in the mood of joy even more: 'Make we mery, bothe more and lasse/ For now ys the tyme of Crystymas.' Thus Middle English lyrics, both secular and religious, contribute significantly to the development of Middle English poetry.

2.7.4. Middle English Romances

The shift from Old English heroic poetry to medieval verse romance marks a remarkable transformation in temperament. While heroic poetry is realistic, romance is escapist in nature where characters fight either on principles or as a ritual and the primary emphasis is on the hero's character. Medieval romance is divided into three categories- 'Matter of France', 'Matter of Britain' and 'Matter of Rome' which includes tales of Alexander the Great. This division was made by the late twelfth century troubadour poet Jean Bodel based on the subject matter of these romances. The earliest amongst these is the 'Matter of France' which deals with the diverse activities of Charlemagne and his knights. A brilliant example of this is *Chanson de Roland*. However, with the growth of this 'Matter', the focus shifted away from the folk legends of Charlemagne to the exploits and adventures of individual warriors who were associated with him. These romances were sometimes produced by the monks who considered these romances to be a means to attract patronage by identifying their patrons with Charlemagne's heroes. The 'Matter of Britain' is centred on the Arthurian stories whose references can be found in the historic writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* and Layamon's *Brut*. Most of the later Arthurian romances have evolved from the Breton legends and not from the English chroniclers. These romances deal with the different adventures of the knights of the Round Table and focus on the ideals of courtly love quite elaborately. Among the surviving English 'Matter of Britain' special mention should be made of *Morte Arthure* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* for their literary qualities. The subject matter of the 'Matter of Rome' romances is the ancient classical world as perceived from the medieval perspective. The handling of ancient classical stories by medieval romancers helps us to peep into the minds of the medieval people. It is the depiction of classical culture tempered by medieval sentiment and the sources from which the stories are derived are not from the mainstream classical literature. For example the story of Troy is derived not from Homer, but from the fourth century Latin writer

Dictys Cretensis. These romances deal with destruction of Troy, the grand personality of Alexander the Great, Dido's pathos and so on. These romances are of primary interest to modern readers not for their literary quality; rather because they provide an insight into the medieval imagination. Another very significant 'Matter' which Jean Bodel did not mention is a group of romances, which because of their subject matter, are included in 'The Matter of England'. This group deals with material from Germanic sources of English history, particularly a portion of oral legends celebrating English heroes as Offa, Earl Godwin and Eadric the Wild. *King Horn* is the earliest extant romance belonging to this group which is a brilliant instance of discarding courtly elements of the French by the English romancers who gave more emphasis on adventure in comparison to the love element. Another notable romance belonging to this group is *Havelock the Dane* which also focusses on adventures and is worth-mentioning because of its vitality.

Apart from these four 'Matters' there are other miscellaneous romances which deal with independent subjects. *Floris and Blancheflour* revolves around a popular love legend of the east which came into Europe through the Crusades. Another such medieval romance is *Sir Orfeo* in which the classical story of Orpheus and Eurydice is treated in the fashion of a Breton *lai* (a short rhymed story) and thus transformed into a fairy tale far distant from the Greek myth. It is a translation from a French original in the south of France. The setting is changed from Greek to medieval. The romance is marked by simplicity and naivety and the story is well-constructed.

There are several other unclassified Middle English romances dealing with diversified themes as tolerance of abused woman, conventional courtly situations, history and folklore. The verse forms of all these romances vary from short rhyming couplets to complicated stanzas. The stylistic variations are also remarkable. Another interesting aspect of these romances is the clue that modern readers get about the practices and temperaments of the medieval times. Just like the verse romances there are several Middle English prose romances. A famous example of this is *Morte d' Arthur*. This will be discussed in Middle English Prose.

Given below is an illustrative chart of the major Romances based mainly on Bodel's division. This will help you identify the main trends that you can back up with your detailed study of the Middle English period from the suggested reading list:

Matter	Major work(s)	Leading figure(s)	Features
Matter of France	*Chanson de Roland*	Charlemagne and his Knights	Written by monks, who considered these as means of attracting patronage; hence focus often shifted away from folk legends of Charlemagne to adventures of individual warriors associated with him.
Matter of Britain	*Brut; Morte Arthure, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	King Arthur	Adventures of Knights of the Round Table; ideals of courtly love.
Matter of Rome	*King Alisaunder*; *Siege of Thebes*	Alexander; Aeneas; Trojan War; Oedipus and the city of Thebes	Depiction of classical culture tempered by medieval sentiment.
Matter of England	*King Horn*	Offa; Earl Godwin; Eadric	Adaptations from Germanic sources of English history; cutting down on French elements and focussing on adventure.
Miscellaneous Romances			See text above

2.7.5 Chaucer, Gower, and Langland

The three great writers of Middle English Period without whom any discussion of Middle English poetry remains incomplete are **Geoffrey Chaucer**, **William Langland** and **John Gower**. **Geoffrey Chaucer** is undoubtedly that poet of the

Middle English period in whose capable hands both English language and literature attained maturity. His range, complexity, humorous tone, essentially humane outlook and technical brilliance place him much above the other poets of his time. His acquaintance with European literature enabled him to deal in English with themes and attitudes prevalent in European literature. He was a keen observer of human nature and portrayed it with a balance between sympathy and irony. His training in courtly and diplomatic lifestyle helped him to present diverse characters in his works with utmost conviction. His poetry also depicts the classical world of Greece and Rome tempered by medieval imagination. He was inspired by the tradition of courtly love embodied in the famous medieval French allegorical poem *Romaunt de la Rose* and the later French developments on it. During this period, when the influence of French courtly poetry is most marked on him, he translated a part of the *Romaunt de la Rose.* The other important poems of this phase are *The Book of the Duchesse* which is probably Chaucer's earliest composition and dates back to 1369. It is written in dream allegory tradition on the death of Blanche, the Duchess of Lancaster. Other poems of this period include *An A.B.C.*, *The Compleynt of Mars* and *The Compleynt unto Pite* ('Complaint' in medieval English meant a poem singing of unrequited love or of personal misfortune). The stage of his poetic career, sometimes referred to as the Italian period is marked by significant advances upon the French period in Chaucer's increasing sense of perception, greater technical expertise and originality. *Anelida and Arcite* and *The Parliament of Foules* belong to this group of poems. The latter uses the convention of dream allegory and the *demande d'amour (*this is a poem in the form of discussion or debate on love- problems) and is marked by a celebration of St. Valentine's Day. It is a marvellous example of Chaucer's comic spirit revealed through the characterisation of the birds. *The House of Fame* is one of the significant poems in English, particularly from the perspectives of character delineation and conversational elements. This work of Chaucer in inspired by Dante's *Divina Commedia* and departs from the environment of trance, though the dream framework is still retained. *Troilus and Criseyde* is considered to be Chaucer's best narrative work. The intense feeling of pathos and the deft employment of the rhyme royal elevate the stature of this Chaucerian work to masterpiece. The narration of a love story enriched with psychological intensity, use of controlled digressions, acute sense of structure and handling of detail bring this work very close to the genre of the novel. It is inspired by Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. The Italian group also includes *The Legend of Good Women* where Chaucer plans to tell nineteen tales of virtuous and loving women but ultimately finishes only eight of them. Here Chaucer comes back to the love vision and regards this work as a penance for having written heresies

against love and portraying faithless women earlier. This poem is the first example of Chaucer's use of the heroic couplet, and that too, with skill and freedom. The English period of Chaucer is considered the time of his greatest achievement when he composed one of the landmarks of English literature, *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer was deeply influenced by Boccaccio for the general idea of this poem but that influence was tempered by his English sensibility. It deals with twenty-nine pilgrims who are going to pay a visit to the tomb of Thomas a Becket at Canterbury and during the course of this journey they meet at the Tabard Inn in Southwark where they decide to tell tales from diverse literary and folk sources to while away their time. Chaucer, with his keen power of observation and knowledge of human character, chooses the pilgrims from all ranks of society, from the chivalrous knight to the humble ploughman. This gives Chaucer the opportunity to blend his literary knowledge with his observant nature. The *General Prologue* succeeds to set the scene and establish the characters. The poem is unfinished but it is marked by a fresh approach to literature, brilliant use of irony, humour and spontaneity. Chaucer's followers lacked both his range of vision and the technical skill and it was only after the arrival of Shakespeare on the English literary scene that Chaucer's unique combination of broad genial humour, penetrating insight into characters, range of knowledge and sheer technical mastery could be found again. You will definitely enjoy the peek into Chaucer's power of drawing secular characters in the Portrait of the Wife of Bath that follows in Module 2, Unit 8. We shall give you a foretaste of Chaucer's humour from one of his most enjoyable tales, *The Nun's Priest Tale* . It's a well –known beast fable, but Chaucer's genius is seen in the way he humanises the birds and animals. In the extract, the cock Chauntecleer's favourite wife Pertelote scolds him for being scared by a dream .

> Avoy!' quod she, 'fy on yow, herteles!
> Allas!' quod she, 'for, by that God above,
> Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love; *90*
> I can nat love a coward, by my feith.

Whatever information we can gather about **William Langland** is from the manuscripts of his poem *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* or the poet's own remarks during the course of the poem. These manuscripts appear in three forms, respectively the A, B and C texts. The A text is the shortest with about 2500 lines, while the B text is a longer one containing more than 7200 lines and the C text, based upon B, is even longer with nearly 7300 lines. Earlier it was presumed that all these three texts were composed by Langland. However, recent researches prove that though the A text is undoubtedly the writing of Langland, the other two contain additional material by later writers.

The poem is based on the poet's vision on the Malvern Hills in which he saw Piers the Plowman. In this trance the poet perceives a fair 'feld full of folk'. The first vision blends into various other scenes dealing with the adventurous engagements of different allegorical beings and abstract figures like Wit, Study and Faith. Before the advent of the Messianic deliverer, Piers the Plowman, all these virtuous powers suffer terribly. It is only Piers who succeeds in bringing back the balance correctly. There is an undercurrent of criticism running throughout the poem against all forms of vices practised in the Church. The poet also focusses on the virtues of common people and sympathetically portrays their struggle in life. It becomes evident through the poem that Langland is concerned with religious, social and economic problems of his time. *Piers the Plowman* is marked by simplicity, energetic rhythm and the easy handling of alliterative lines. The poem is remarkable in its vividness of description of contemporary life and is a harmonious blending of popular imagination and individual vision.

John Gower is a typical representative of his times, drawing inspiration from the materials that were readily available to him. He was more of a conservative and moralist poet who lacked originality and imaginative fecundity. His first work is *Speculum Meditantis* (French name 'Mirour De l'omme , Mirror of Mankind) is composed in French. Written in 12 –line stanzas of octosyllabic couplets, it is primarily a manual of sins and sinners where the poet offers a detailed description of vice being the result of man's corrupt nature. The poet suggests repentance to be the only remedy of such vice. Gower's next work, *Vox Clamantis* is in Latin. It is a dream allegory based on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. It narrates the story of violence and anarchy and stresses upon the corruption rampant in contemporary society. His last work, *Confessio Amantis*,(Confessions of a lover) written at the command of the King Richard II, is in English. This poem, employing an allegorical setting, talks of the seven deadly sins. The confession of an aging lover to the priest of Venus is the frame narrative. Within are other short narrative poems This poem uses several stories dealing with multiple subjects. Though Gower lacks richness of imagination, he presents a brilliant picture of his age and proves himself to be a master story-teller.

2.7.6 Summing Up

It is difficult to trace the course of poetry during the eleventh and twelfth centuries since very little is available. Some fragments of didactic and religious poetry indicate a continuation of Anglo-Saxon alliterative kind of poetry, though in a looser form. A striking breakthrough in the tradition is *Orrmulum* written by an Augustinian

canon named Orm about the year 1200. *Cursor Mundi* is another lengthy (thirty thousand lines) religious poem dealing with all the significant incidents of the Old and New Testament stories and other religious topics as well. The literary convention of verse debate, so popular in Latin and French, was employed with immense success in *The Owl and the Nightingale*. The alliterative tradition of the Anglo-Saxon literature can be observed to be popularly used in Layamon's *Brut*. More impressive usage of the alliterative tradition is found in a unique manuscript preserved in the British Museum- the manuscript containing four alliterative poems poems, namely, *Pearl*, *Purity*, *Pateince* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is considered to be one of the best of all Middle English allegorical romances and is a harmonious blending of the folk elements of the Celtic, the vigour of the Anglo-Saxon and the sophistication of the French. Another significant form of Middle English poetry is the Middle English lyric which can be distinguished into two categories- the religious and the secular. The religious lyric is not restricted to any national boundary and belongs to literary and ecclesiastical traditions. On the other hand, the roots of secular lyric can be traced in the native soil, in the secular Latin lyric or in French and Provencal poetry. These lyrics, both secular and religious, contribute significantly to the development of Middle English poetry. The shift from Old English heroic poetry to medieval verse romance marks a remarkable transformation in temperament. Medieval verse romance is divided into three categories- 'Matter of France', 'Matter of Britain' and 'Matter of Rome'. 'Matter of France' deals with the diverse activities of Charlemagne and his knights. 'Matter of Britain' is centred on the Arthurian stories. The subject matter of the 'Matter of Rome' is the ancient classical world as perceived from the medieval perspective. Another very significant 'Matter' is a group of romances called 'The Matter of England'. This group deals with material from Germanic sources. The three major poets of Middle English Period are Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland and John Gower. In Chaucer's hands both English language and literature attained maturity. His range, complexity, humour and an essentially humane outlook and technical brilliance place him much above the other poets of his time. William Langland is famous for his *Piers the Plowman*. John Gower is a typical representative of his times drawing inspiration from the materials that were readily available to him.

2.7.7 Comprehension Exercises

Essay type questions:

1. Write a brief survey of English poetry in the middle ages.
2. What was the impact of the Norman conquest on English language and literature?

3. Write an essay on the Middle English Romances .
4. 4 Who were the major poets of the Middle English period? Write on their poetic contribution.

Middle –length questions:

1. Write briefly on the development of lyric poetry in the middle ages.
2. Give an account of the better known Middle English alliterative poems.
3. Give an account of Chaucer's contribution to English poetry.

Short Questions:

1. Write short notes on
   a. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
   b. *Canterbury Tales*
   c. *Piers the Plowman*
   d. Matter of Britain
   e. The Norman Conquest

2.7.8 Suggested Reading

1. Barron, W.R.J. : *English Medieval Romance* (Longman, 1987)
2. Dronke, Peter : *The Medieval Lyric*, 2nd. Edition, (London 1978)
3. Robertson, D.W. Jr. : *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, 1962)
4. *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge University Press, 1999)
5. Dieter Mehl : *English Literature in the Age of Chaucer* (Longman Literature in English Series , 2001)
6. Baugh, A. C., *A Literary History of England.*

Unit-8 □ The French Influence on the English Language

Structure

2.8.0 Introduction

2.8.1 The Historical Background of the French Influence

2.8.2 Extent of the French Influence on English Vocabulary

2.8.3 French Influence on Grammar and Phonetics

2.8.4 Summing Up the French Influence

2.8.5 Comprehension Exercises

2.8.6 Reading List

2.8.0 Introduction

As part of your learning the history of English literature, you are also getting acquainted with the history of the development of the language, which in itself is both complex and enigmatic. In this Unit, you will come across the influence of French langauge, and imperatively culture too, as part of your learning of how it has influenced the English language.

Plate 1

2.8.1 The Historical Background of the French Influence

The Anglo-Normans

Toward the close of the Old English period, an event occurred that had a greater effect on the English language than any other in the course of its history. This was the Norman Conquest of 1066. Now take a close look at **Plate 1** above. The Normans came from the place shown as Normandy which is the

Northern part of France. Unlike the Anglo-Saxons who came intermittently in groups through centuries and gradually settled on English soil, the Normans came in as an army as a result of a political turmoil in England and completely defeated the latter in the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

The Year 1066

For some years before the Norman Conquest, the relations between England and France had been fairly close. In 1002, Æthelred the Unready had married a Norman wife, and when driven into exile by the Danes, took refuge with his brother-in-law, the duke of Normandy. His son Edward, who had thus been brought up in France, was almost more French than English. Edward the Confessor became ruler in 1042 and brought with him a number of Norman friends to important places in the government. A strong French atmosphere pervaded the English court during the twenty-four years of his reign. In January 1066, he died childless. Harold, the son of a powerful West Saxon earl named Godwin became king. His election was challenged by William, Duke of Normandy. Although William had won the Battle of Hastings and eliminated his rival, he had not yet attained the English Crown. It was only after he had burnt and pillaged the southeast of England that the citizens of London decided that further resistance would be useless. Accordingly, they capitulated, and on Christmas Day 1066, William was crowned King of England. See Plate-2.

- William of Normandy (called William the Conqueror), who already controlled northern France, invaded and conquered England in 1066 C.E., with the decisive victory at the Battle of Hastings.

- Old French became language of power, commerce, and religion in England
- End of Old English (looks/sounds very German; the language of Beowulf)
- French merged with Old English to produce Middle English, the language of Chaucer—close enough to modern English that we can recognize it.

Plate 2

Nature of the French Influence

Originally, the Normans had come from Scandinavia. The term 'Norman' comes from the word 'Northman'. They had been granted a territory in France in the early 10th century. The early Normans spoke Old Norse, just like the Scandinavians who settled in England at about the same time. By the early 11th century, however, the Normans had given up Old Norse and had adopted the French spoken by their subjects and neighbours. It is an irony that these people gave up their language twice (once when they settled in Normandy and then when they came to England) and imbibed the language of their subjects twice in their history. French is descended from Latin; it was a Romance language and not a Germanic one. The French as it came to be spoken in England is often termed Anglo-Norman.

Many scholars today prefer the term Anglo-French rather than the term Anglo-Norman because there was considerable input from varieties of French other than the Norman one even during William the Conqueror's time

The history of the French or Anglo-Norman language in England falls into a number of episodes. In the first decades after 1066, those who spoke French were the Norman invaders. They took charge of the administrative, military, legal and spiritual matters of the country and brought in a feudal system of economy and a different kind of lifestyle with which the natives were not fully acquainted.

Interestingly, English, though spoken by the majority of the natives, was no longer the language of power, whereas, the French spoken by the aristocratic few was the language of power. Hardly any literature, which in those days was dependent on royal patronage, was written in English.

Slowly, however, things changed. From the middle of the twelfth century at least, most members of the aristocracy were bilingual because by then they had been settled in the country for such a long period of time. Within another hundred years, we find educational treatises written in French and the target audience is the educated middle class, which means that some parts of the English society also were becoming more conversant in French. French was no longer the language of the aristocracy but another language of culture. Think how good was Chaucer's knowledge of the French literature and he was the son of a winemaker or vintner. With the advent of literary figures like Chaucer and Langland, and changed political scenario that favoured the English nation (gradually the Norman monarchs, who were also Dukes of Normandy, and had extensive landholdings in France, were unable to hold on to

the land as French kings were taking possession of their French territories) , the English language revived, but by this time it has already changed in its shape and style. Thus, we can safely say, that the influence of the French language was instrumental in moving it closer to the form in which we know it today.

2.8.2 The Extent of the French Influence on the English Vocabulary

- Even before the Norman Conquest, social, political and ecclesiastical intercourse had begun among the ruling classes of England and Normandy. This caused the introduction of a few French words pertaining to the new culture and way of life. These included _castel' (fortified building) which replaced the O.E._burg';_capun' (capon) and _bacun' (bacon).
- With the Conquest and the reordering of the government and upper social life we begin to find at first only gradually, but with increasing abundance as the twelfth century advances, the kind of French words which the influence of the ruling power would suggest:_prisun' (prison),_foreste' (forest),_tur' (tower),_market',_rent',_justice'.
- After the Conquest, English became the language of the country, but French of the Norman kind became that of the government and so became a necessity to those who had no share in the ruling. The Church, the law-courts, the pleasures of the aristocracy, trade with the Continent, the art of war – all these and much else became Norman French in terminology. Such terms were thus introduced: *acorden* (to come to agreement), *curt* (court), *cuntesse* (countess), *carited* (charity), *pais* (peace).
- Apart from the *king* and *queen*, most of other words relating to

The Nature of the French Loans

The Normans were felt to be an alien race and they occupied the country as the invaders and rulers. Thus, they were quite conscious of their superiority and they did not mix very easily with the natives as the Scandinavians did. They retained close contact with their own nation for a longer period of time, and thus retained their difference. Moreover, they represented a higher culture, and had their own literature. Hence, the words borrowed from them spoke about a different kind of lifestyle and high standard.

government are taken from French: *govern, reign, realm, crown, state, government, sovereign, council, chancellor, minister, people, nation,* and so on.

- The French also brought the feudal system along with them. So words like: *fief, feudal, vassal, liege,* and words related to rank like *prince, peer, duke, duchess, marquis, viscount, baron,* and so on were borrowed by the English tongue.
- Adjectives related to court life, like *honour, glory, court,* etc are also taken from them.
- Upper classes also took up the military matters into their hands. So the following loans from the various aspects of military life: *war, peace, battle, arms, armour, buckler, banner, ensign; officer, chieftain, captain, colonel, lieutenant, troops, vessel; challenge, enemy, espy, aid, prison,* and so on.
- In the early 13th century, the direct connection between England and Normandy was weakened and as the century advanced the English and the Normans tended to become close again. It was not till the next century that English became the accepted language for a large part of the literature as well as speech for the upper classes. From the mid-13th century, English came to replace French as the language for Parliament, though French continued to be used in the law-courts for centuries longer. Thus so many French terms still remain in use: plaintiff, defendant, privilege, tort (the French word for _wrong‘), malfeasance. The legal terms include words like: *justice, just, judge, jury, summon, sue, plaintiff, plea, plead, property, crime, guile, felony, demesne,* and so on.
- It was also in the 13th century that many cultural terms came into English from French. In France, Parisian French was becoming the dominant dialect. The consequence was that some Norman words already in English were replaced by forms of the more Parisian French type. For example, Norman French had a hard _c‘ (k) from Latin which the new French type replaced by _ch‘. So we may compare the older _canceler‘ with the latter _chancellor‘, _cattle‘ with _chattel‘.
- Naturally with the centuries of French dominance in Church matters, many French terms of religious significance were taken into English, some of which have remained: *miracle, Cardinal, prior, Baptist, prophet.* We find a great many words related to the church, such as, *religion, service, trinity, saviour, virgin, angel, clergy, parish, baptism, sacrifice, sermon,* to say only a few. As the clergy were teachers of morality, thus we have a whole gamut

of words related to moral ideas, from *virtue* to *vice*: *duty*, *conscience*, *pity*, *disciple*, *grace*, *covet*, *desire*, *lechery*, *cruel*, and many others.

- The Normans were the master class so words like *sir*, *madam*, *master*, *mistress*, *servant*, *command*, *obey*, and others, were also borrowed from the French language.
- The knowledge of French was also prevalent among the middle classes. In many towns, especially in important trading centres, men with Norman names were the most prominent burgesses and probably constituted a majority of the merchant class. Latin and French would be found primarily in those places where the business of government was transacted. The likelihood that stewards and bailiffs on manors spoke both languages was great.
- In the early Middle English period (1100-1300) the borrowings were of great variety:
  - Buildings – castel, prisun, chapel, tur
  - Religious – grace, merci, service, miracle, religiun, image
  - Military – werre, bataille
  - Domestic – basin, lamp, beast, furneis (furnace)

These belong to the early Middle English Period, but the 14th century saw a great increase in the number; and by this time many French words that had formerly been limited in use to the upper classes when they used English, had become integral part of the English language. In the first 18 lines of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* there are no less than 18 French words, and Chaucer was writing in a conversational style in the language of the educated London of his time.

- Sometimes the older English word had survived along with its French equivalent, always with some difference of meaning: e.g._writ' beside _scripture'. This has helped to make English so rich in synonyms, or rather in pairs of words which look like synonyms at first sight but actually show subtle difference in meaning.
- In the latter Middle English period the contacts with French continued to produce effects on English. But as in so many ways, M.E., which was specially characterised by general and widespread French influences on the vocabulary, is clearly differentiated by its treatment of French loans. For with the close of the Middle Ages there came a marked change in the kinds of influence that French continued to exert. This change is marked particularly by two things. First, in Middle English, French loans became integral parts of the language, but from the 16th century French became more the source

of particular classes of words, many of which were restricted to the better educated, or to users of special groups of technical terms. Thus the 16th century borrowings from French consisted mainly of terms pertaining to law. Second, later French loan words entered the language in their modern French pronunciation which is seldom or never anglicised.

French words have been so assimilated that they have changed in stress and pronunciation. So we can compare older loans like table, chair, court, peace (which are never thought to be of French origin) with connoisseur, amateur, chef, valet, garage – all of which retain something from the French sounds. They have not been fully assimilated. Also early French borrowings have generally adopted the native English system of stress– as in honour, reason, virtue, favour (the vowel sounds of which have also become completely English). But such words as connoisseur, bizarre, facade tend to show a stressed final syllable which is un-English.

- The development French in modern English shows well how vocabulary may indicate the history, especially the social history of a nation. Besides the military and naval terms we find trading and social words. The following are some 16th century French words still in use: pilot, sally, brigantine, rendezvous, partisan, cache, volley, indigo, vase, moustache, piquant, machine.
- The French were (and still are) renowned for their culinary skills. The animals, as they were reared by the servants, the natives, retained their English names in their lifetime (*ox*, *cow*, *calf*, *sheep*, *swine*, *boar*, *deer*) but the moment they came to the dinner table for the masters' consumption, they received French names: *beef*, *veal*, *mutton*, *pork*, *bacon*, *brawn*, *venison*. The superiority of the French *cuisine* is attested by words like *sauce*, *boil*, *fry*, *toast*, *pasty*, *soup*, *sausage*, *jelly*, *dainty*, and others. Though *breakfast* is English, the more wholesome meals of the day, the *lunch* and the *dinner*, and the *feasts* in general are all French.
- On the whole, the masters knew how to enjoy life. The French influence also showcases an adaptation of a different kind of a lifestyle and appreciation of nature. The list includes words like: *joy*, *pleasure*, *delight*, *ease*, *comfort*, *flowers*, *fruits*, and others. We can also find words related to different games and pastime activities: *chase*, *hunt*, *brace*, *couple*,

A hybrid is a composite word formed of elements from different languages. For instance, here you are reading about the French affixes (prefixes and suffixes) which are added to native or

leash, *falcon*, *scent*, *track*, *cards*, *dice*, *ace*, *deuce*, *tray*, and others. We may also include the terms related to garments and dress in this category: *apparel*, *dress*, *costume*, *garment*, etc.

- The French were the teachers of the English in most matters related to art. Not only words as *art*, *beauty*, *paint*, *colour*, *image*, *design*, etc there are also a great number of special words of technical importance, for instance the words foreign words to make new words related to architecture: *arch*, *tower*, *pillar*, *vault*, *porch*, *palace*, *castle*, *manor*, *mansion*, etc. The professionals who came into a closer contact with the upper class also received a French name: *tailor*, *butcher*, *painter*, *carpenter*, *joiner*, and so on.

English people were always fond of borrowing words from different languages. It has been estimated that 70 per cent of English lexicon is made of loan words while in Old English it is a mere 5 per cent. This behaviour of the language speakers, which amounts to a kind of imitation of the others, gives rise to so many synonyms and also the idiosyncrasies of the language.

- At this point of time you must refer to the introduction and realize that the emerging bilingualism of the English was instrumental in the survival of both the native words and their corresponding foreign loans. This habit of the speakers gave rise to the existence of synonyms. However, you must keep in mind that the two words would never have the same implication. With the French loan words the foreign loan is more formal, polite and refined and is more official, whereas, the native word is more informal, fundamental and closer to the nation's heart. For example, a *cottage* is finer than a *hut*, *aid* is more formal than the humble and heartfelt *help*, *commence* is more literary than *begin*, *nourish* is more scientific than *feed*, and so on. You can well understand the first ones in the above pairs are French while the latter ones are English.

- Finally we may take a quick look at the hybrids. A few example of the popular French affixes would include:

  Suffixes: *shepherd—**ess***, *mile—**age***, *enlighten—**ment***, *pay—**ee***, *picture—**esque***, *drunk—**ard***, etc.

  Prefixes: ***en**—slave*, ***demi**—god*, etc.

- After the beginning of the sixteenth century, French became the source of particular classes of erudite and technical words. These words are used mostly by the educated class and they retain their original pronunciation. Words borrowed in the 16th century: *pilot*, *rendezvous*, *moustache*, *vase*, etc.
- The 17th century was of more significance for the French influence as there was close contact between the two nations in matters of literature and social intercourse. French was the fashionable language at court. French dramatic models influenced Restoration drama. At the same time the borrowings of military technical terms and others of commerce continued: *dragoon, stockade, reprimand, ballet, burlesque, champagne, coquette, liaison, verve, naive, tableau, rapport, decor, forte, soup, group, and quart.*
- The 18th century saw the continued borrowing from French including military terms and diplomatic ones. At the end of the century appear a few special words called forth by the French Revolution. 18th century terms include: emigre, guillotine, regime, corps, manoeuvre, tricolour, depot, salon, bureau, canteen, coterie, brochure, rouge, picnic, ennui, police. Other words include: *guillotine*, *manoeuvre*, *espionage*, *tricolour*, *fusillade*, *canteen*, *critique*.
- The 19th century was the richest of all periods in French loans since the Middle English times, especially in terms of art and letters, of textiles and furniture, and of course military words:
  - Military – barrage, chassis
  - Furniture – reticule, parquet, bric-a-brac
  - Art and Literature – resume, cliché, rococo, Renaissance, matinee, motif, premiere
  - Dress – rosette, profile, crepe, beret, suede
  - Food - restaurant, menu, sauté, soufflé, gratin
  - Social – raconteur, chauffeur, elite, debutante, chic, risqué
  - Diplomatic – attaché, clientele, prestige, impasse, charge, dossier
- In the twentieth century the process of borrowing has continued: revue, vers libre, fuselage, hanger, limousine, camouflage. There is little doubt that the general process of taking in words from French, some permanently others temporarily, is still alive. Generally we may recognise a recent entrant by its retention of most or all of its French pronunciation and stress. A tendency

in recent borrowings has been to take in whole phrases either as they stand in French or by a literal translation. Thus we have enfant terrible' and goes without saying' which is a translation of va sans dire'. Altogether English has taken from French several thousand words most of them before and during the Renaissance and quite a number during the 16th and 17th centuries. In some words, a process of assimilation was at work because there happened to be resemblance between the French words and older native ones. Thus we cannot say how much_rich' owes to O.E._rice' or French_riche'. French_isle' resembled O.E._iland' which became_island'. There was similarity between O.E._hege' and French_haie' which run together in_hay'. There is some confusion between English_rest' (repose) and French_rest' (remainder) – in this case they have coexisted as homonyms.

- The French language has undergone considerable changes since the date when the Normans brought it into England. These changes are reflected in the comparison between the Old French loans that came pouring into the language for about one hundred and fifty years after the Norman Conquest and later borrowings which came from Parisian French or Central French.

  i. Norman French *k* sound was changed into Parisian French *ch* sound. In modern English, the word *catch* (with *k* sound), came from Norman French while the word *chase* (with *ch* sound) was later introduced from Parisian French (Central French).

  ii. Norman French *ch* sound (as in *chin*) was changed into Parisian French s sound. In modern English, the words *change, launch,* have come from Norman French, while the words *champagne*, *lance, Charlotte* (feminine of older Charles), etc. (with *s* sound have come later from Parisian French.

  iii. Norman French *w* was changed into Parisian French *g*. In Modern English, the words like *warden, wage, etc.* came from Norman French, while the words *guardian, gage* have come from Parisian French.

  iv. In many cases the *g* of Norman French has changed into *j* in Parisian French. And the curious fact is that the word *gaol* has preserved its Northern (Norman) spelling, but it is pronounced, and sometimes written *jail* with *j* of Parisian French.

  v. Some early French loan words have been curiously reshaped into thhe recent forms into which French has meanwhile developed. E.g. Old

French *viage* (used by Chaucer) has been reshaped into the new form *voyage*; *leal* (old form) has been reshaped into *loyal* (new form); *flaute* (old form) has been changed into *flute* (new form).

vi. Some early French loan words have changed their meanings in both languages, e.g. M.E. *douter* which as in O.F. *douter* meant to fear' (cf. *redoubt*) has changed its meaning in both the languages. Similarly M.E. *danger* was at first adopted in the Old French sense of dominion, power', but the old meaning was changed and the present meaning was developed in France first and then it was adopted in England too.

The different pronunciations of French loan words, certain reshaping of the Old French loans and change of meanings of a few loans in the light of Modern French bear testimony to the fact that between the French and the English uninterrupted contact must have been going on.

2.8.3 French Influence on Grammar and Phonetics

The accusative case has survived in English only in pronouns. For example, *I* and *we* are in nominative case. The corresponding accusative case forms of these pronouns are *me* and *us*

- Simplification of English grammar by way of reducing Old English inflexions had already began with the coming of the Scandinavians much before the Norman Conquest. With the French influence the process was accelerated. This was mainly due to the stress shift. The English had the predilection (or tendency) of stressing on the first syllable. So the pronunciation of the inflectional endings of Old English words became more and more indistinct whereby, at some point of time the endings became altogether redundant. The originally distinct inflectional vowel endings like *a,o,u,e* were reduced to an indeterminate vowel sound which came to be written *e*. For example, the adjective *'blinde'*(blind) had a singular form *'blinda'* and a plural form *'blindan'*. The inflectional distinction decayed and both singular and plural became *'blinde'*. The Final weak *'e'* dropped out later on.
- As the grammatical systems of the two languages were very different, the loanwords are borrowed in different forms. Old English and Norman French were both inflectional languages, i.e. nouns and pronouns had different

forms for different cases. Nouns and Adjectives were usually taken in the accusative case. For example the proper name *Stephen* or *Steven*. The French name was *Stevyns*, which had the accusative form without the *–s* ending(*Stevyn*), which was adopted in English

- The process of the formation of nouns in _er' has been taken from the French - baker, butcher, painter, carpenter.
- When verbs were borrowed English, it is the stem of the French present plural that served as basis of the borrowed form. For instance, the verb *survivre* is conjugated in the present plural from as *nous survivez* (we survive). Thus when the verb was borrowed, the basis was *survivez* not *survivre* (i.e., the infinitive); hence, in English the word became, to *survive*. Similarly, the verb *punir*, conjugated in the present plural form as *nous punissons*, gave rise to the verb *to punish* in English; again, *finir*, conjugated as *nous finissions* gave rise to the verb *to finish* in English; the French verb *dejeuner*, conjugated as *nous dejeunons* gave rise *to dine*, and so on.
- French verbs in their infinitive forms are sometimes borrowed in English as nouns because of their ending in the —er': *dinner*, *remainder*, *user*, etc.; and from these nouns new verbs in English were formed: *dine*, *remain*, *use*, etc. however, some French infinitives were borrowed intact as verbs, such as *render*, *surrender*, etc.
- A lot of synonyms, one already known as an English word, and one picked up from association with French, became current in Middle English literature. Among these doublets are charity and love, despair and unhope, lord and sire, glass and mirror. French synonyms were considered finer and English ones rather vulgar: so cottage was preferable to hut, dress to clothe. But amity lacks the warmth of friendship. There are similar shades of difference between English and French synonyms: help expresses greater dependence and need than French aid; people have a greater political and social implication than folk; English hearty is warmer than the French cordial. In some cases the chief difference between the native word and the French synonym is that the former is more colloquial and the latter more literary: begin and commence, hide and conceal, inner interior, feed nourish.
- In the formation of plural, Old French had a nominative without any ending (cas') were made to conform to the general rule (singular case/ plural cases). As to the verbs the stem of the French present plural served as the basis for

the English form: thus_ge survis' became_survive',_re solvons' became resolve. Where the French infinitive was imported it was generally in a substantival function: dinner, remainder, rejoinder, merger, user (from dine, remain, rejoin, merge, use – which are the corresponding verbs).

- French words also caused some changes in the pronunciation. French words having long [i] sound got diphthongized into [ai], e.g., *fine*, *price*, *lion*; the long [u], written as ou' changed into [au], e.g., *spouse*, *devour*. This change is due to what we have discussed at the beginning of this section, i.e., the importance of the first syllable in English pronunciation. This habit was unconsciously extended to foreign words when they were first adopted. However, if you go back to the later French loans, you will find that these words have retained their original French pronunciation. It is because by this time the English language was mature enough to borrow the words as they were.
- We have a sort of hybridism, a fusion of two languages when
  - i. an English inflexional ending is added to a French word – as in the genitive ¯the Duke's children
  - ii. verbal nouns in _ing' formed from French words – preaching, serving
  - iii. nouns formed by adding English suffix _ness' to French words – faintness, closeness,
  - iv. similarly courtship, companionship, martyrdom were formed by adding _ship', _dom'
  - v. a great many adjectives in _ful' (beautiful, powerful), and _less' (artless m colourless) and _ly' (courtly, princely) were also formed
  - vi. The most fertile English derivative ending is _able'. It is added to substantives in comparatively few cases – serviceable, companionable. Its proper sphere of usefulness is in forming adjectives from verbs – drinkable, answerable, unmistakable, from which we again make nouns by adding the suffix y/ly' – eg.unmistakably. This practice is extended to group words also though words like _get-at-able', _come-at-able' are more used in conversation than in writing.

Some words which were originally taken from French have proved so useful and indispensable in the English vocabulary that they have thrived and added more and more derivatives, but they have become nearly obsolete in French

itself. One such word is _aim' both as noun and verb. We have in English aimer, aimful, aimless from the original word. But in French the two verbs from which it originates _esmer' and _aasmer' have totally disappeared. Similar is the use of _entrance'. Also such pairs of words as saloon and salon, suit and suite, liquor and liqueur prove that the French influence has not been confined to a particular period and that French words have appeared in more than one shape according to the age of import into English.

2.8.4 Summing up the French Influence

- The French were the masters. Thus, their influence was more holistic and absolute in nature. Moreover, they were much more advanced compared to the English and hence their words invaded the native language in every aspect, starting from the administration to the aesthetics.
- The French language also influenced English grammar particularly in the borrowing of nouns, verbs and adjectives, which were taken from specific grammatical forms.
- The French pronunciation pattern had an impact on English phonetics, particularly in the development of some diphthongs.

2.8.5 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-Type (20 marks)

1. Show how, from the nature and extent of the French borrowings, we can get an idea of the social relationship of the Normans and the Saxons.
2. The philologist Otto Jespersen has called English loan words some of the milestones of general history' Show how, Scandinavian and French loan words can help us reconstruct the early history of England.
3. How did the Scandinavian and French influences contribute to the development of modern English from Old English?

Mid-length questions (10 marks)

1. What was the impact of the French influence on English phonetics and grammar?

2. Show how the English nation was formed from the intermingling of different kinds of people.
3. In which spheres of life was the French influence on the English language most pervasive? Elucidate with examples.

Short questions (5 marks)

1. What do we know about the earliest inhabitants of Britain?
2. The French words appearing in English before 1250 affected which sphere of living?
3. Does English retain traces of the Celts and the Romans?
4. How did the Anglo-Saxons come to settle in Britain?
5. Who were the Normans? Why did they come to Britain?
6. Write short philological notes on: *dinner, beef, veal, chauffeur, royal, government, clergy, baptism, sermon, angel.*

2.8.6 Reading List

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Durkin, Philip. *Borrowed Words: A History of Loanwords in English: A History of Loanwords in English.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Jespersen, Otto. *Growth and Structure of English Language.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

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Grin Verlag: Germany, 2008.

Unit-9 □ Geoffrey Chaucer: Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* – Portrait of The Wife of Bath

Structure

2.9.0 Introduction

2.9.1 Chaucer and his works

2.9.2 The General Prologue

2.9.3 The Wife of Bath (General Prologue – Text) with Annotations

2.9.4 Paraphrase

2.9.5 Critical Understanding of the Text

2.9.6 Summing Up

2.9.7 Comprehension Exercises

2.9.8 Suggested Reading List

2.9.0 Introduction

The contribution of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) to modern English literature, especially poetry is immense. The introduction of socially relevant issues in the realm of literary creation, shifting the focus from the religious to the secular, began with Chaucer. The term 'modern' here is used more in an inclusive sense to denote the era beginning from the Renaissance age, than any particular time frame. Trends in English writing in the hands of Chaucer showed marked dissimilarities from the previous ages i.e. the Old English and early Middle English periods. His models were the classical, the Italian and French writers whom he read profusely. The ease in style and familiarity of tone made his works entertaining as well as instructive in a very subtle way. Among his works, 'The Canterbury Tales' is universally acknowledged as the best of his literary creation. Within the framework of a pilgrimage, he introduces the reader to a cross-section of medieval society. The **Prologue** to the tales includes a set of characters, each replete with his or her own idiosyncrasies,

offering a rare insight into human nature. The Wife of Bath is one such character. In a society where women were still not recognized as individuals, the Wife of Bath stands head and shoulders above her male compatriots, a vividly drawn portrait of a fiercely independent woman. This Unit will acquaint you with the subtly nuanced character portrayal skills of the 'Father of English Poetry'.

2.9.1 Chaucer's Life and his Works

In Mod 1 Unit 3 you have had a brief introduction to the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer, which might have given you some idea as to why he is given the epithet of the 'Father of English Poetry'. Here we shall dwell a bit upon the personal details of his life, to give you an idea of the interesting makings of the man and the vivacious poet.

You will be surprised to know that the poet we are now studying was the son of a wine merchant! He was born in London around the year 1340. He not only enjoyed the benefits of town life, but also the proximity of court life. The brilliant court of King Edward III and life there offered him tremendous opportunities for self enhancement. In 1357, he was made a member of the household of Elizabeth, wife of Lionel, son of Edward III. As a page boy, he had to constantly attend to his masters- being busy in the hall, serving dishes, wine and at the end of the meal, kneeling with the water bowl. The pages attended their masters even in their chambers, brushing and polishing their clothes. While waiting for orders, Chaucer spent his leisure hours observing and learning about his masters. He acquired proficiency in music, dancing, chess and above all perfected himself in the formalities of address and the art of conversation in English and French. Chaucer's art and imagination were shaped by his experiences in court.

Even before going into the creative world of Chaucer, you can well understand how keenly receptive a man he was to life around! Without doubt, such perceptivity would in a big way have shaped his responses to life and its depiction in his art.

Chaucer's works depict contemporary England, where people readily accepted the authority of the church and its teachings. The village parson, parish clerk,

travelling monk or prioress were as much to be seen in real life as in the pages of Chaucer. The focus of religious life was the church building. The Wife of Bath refers to her constant attendance at church for marriages or other services of the Church.. The pages of Chaucer, Gower, Langland, together with many satirical poems of thefourteenth century are full of passages that reflect the many abuses of the time. Chaucer is recognised as the creator of the English versification. The octosyllabic line was in vogue when Chaucer began writing. From France, he also imported the decasyllabic line and under Italian influence, made it pliable. This was to be the heroic line.

The octosyllable or **octosyllabic verse** is a line of verse with eight syllables. It is equivalent to tetrameter verse in iambs or trochees in languages with a stress pattern. Its first occurrence is in a 10th-century Old French saint's legend, the *Vie de Saint Leger*; another early use is in the early 12th-century Anglo-Norman *Voyage de saint Brendan*. It is often used in French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese poetry. In Medieval French literature, the octosyllabic rhymed couplet was the most common verse form used in verse chronicles, romances (the *romans*), *lais* and *dits*. The meter reached Spain in the 14th century, although commonly with a more varied rhyme scheme than the couplet.

Chaucer's first narrative poem, *The Book of the Duchess* (1369) is in the dream allegory convention. The elegiac poem is occasioned by the death of the Duchess Blanche, first wife of John the Gaunt. Chaucer's constant interactions with well-bred women gave him the intimate knowledge of good society of which he made full use in his innumerable feminine portraits.

In *The House of Fame (1380)*, he returns to the dream vision. It is an unfinished poem, the subject matter based on the *Aeneid* . In his dream, the poet finds himself in a glass temple adorned with images of the famous and their deeds. With the help of the very interesting character of the philosophic eagle, the poet goes through the House of Fame. He meditates on the nature of Fame and the role of the poet in reporting the lives of the famous. Chaucer's imaginative faculties are revealed in his splendid description of the magnificent castle.

The poem is regarded as the first of Chaucer's Italian-influenced period and there are echoes of the works of Boccaccio, Ovid, Virgil's *Aeneid* and particularly Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The work shows a significant advancement in Chaucer's art from the earlier *Book of the Duchess*.

The poem Th*e Parliament of Fowls* (1382) is inspired by the poet's reading of *Somnium Scipionis* in Book VI of Cicero's *De Republica.* The poem begins with the narrator reading Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* in the hope of learning some "certeyn thing." The narrator then passes through Venus's dark temple with its friezes of doomed lovers and out into the bright sunlight where Nature is convening a parliament at which the birds all choose their mates. The description of the garden in the poem is very like the setting of *Roman de la Rose*. He soon comes upon the goddess Nature presiding over the birds, who have come to choose their mates on St. Valentine's Day. Three tercel eagles make their case for the hand of a formel eagle until the birds of the lower estates begin to protest and launch into a comic parliamentary debate, which Nature herself finally ends. None of the tercels wins the formel, for at her request Nature allows her to put off her decision for another year. Nature, as the ruling figure, in allowing the formel the right to choose not to choose is acknowledging the importance of free will, which is ultimately the foundation of a key theme in the poem. Nature allows the other birds, however, to pair off. The dream ends with a song welcoming the new summer. The dreamer awakes, still unsatisfied, and returns to his books, hoping still to learn the thing for which he seeks.

Within the garden, we are meant to contrast Venus and Nature. Venus personifies passionate, carnal love. Nature personifies the creative, reproductive force and also represents order and harmony manifest in God's scheme of creation. The poem thus presents the major problem of the dualism of the world and the subsidiary comment on the two kinds of love.

'Troilus and Criseyde' (1385) is a profound and moving treatment of love. A tragedy, set against the backdrop of the Trojan War, it tells of the love of a faithful man for a woman who ultimately proves faithless. The source of the poem is Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato.* Chaucer's command over the high style is evident here. Troilus and Cressida are deeply in love with one another, but after a period of intense happiness, the lovers are separated when Cressida is involved in an exchange of prisoners with the Greeks. She deserts Troilus for Diomede, a Greek warrior. Chaucer is interested in the study of character and an interesting character is Pandarus, the uncle of Criseyde. Chaucer tries to capture the flavor of antiquity as the plot is set in pagan times.

The Canterbury Tales represents by common consent his final poetic achievement. Chaucer may have been describing a real pilgrimage. There had been several previous collections of tales like Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Boccaccio'*s Decameron,* Gower's *Confessio Amantis.* A closer parallel is afforded by the Novelle of Giovanni

Sercambi, which actually employs the setting of a pilgrimage. It was written around 1374 And Chaucer was probably acquainted with the collection and its author. Pilgrimages were a common feature of medieval life and the shrine of St. Thomas Becket of Canterbury was the greatest of English pilgrimages. Chaucer was provided an opportunity to bring together a representative group of various classes of society, united by a common religious purpose, yet ready to give themselves over to enjoyment. With *The Canterbury Tales,* Chaucer has moved away from early dream poetry to the romance of *Troilus and Criseyde* and thence to the present time in England. The set of twenty nine pilgrims set out on their pilgrimage to the shrine in Canterbury. They assemble at Tabard's Inn at Southwark and decide that each pilgrim should narrate two tales on the onward journey and two on the return journey. But the company never reaches Canterbury and only twenty three pilgrims get their turn. Some tales are left unfinished. Chaucer's method of handling his tales is very sophisticated, belonging more to the French school. He is objective, detached and says things without self- commitment. The twenty nine pilgrims are chosen from the whole strata of medieval society. Besides their social existence, they have a universal existence.

The framework of the tales is provided by the **General Prologue,** probably composed around1387, along with individual prologues. The intention was to convey verisimilitude, if not realism. The Prologue offers the reader a proper perspective from which to view the individual tales. The pilgrims described in the Prologue narrate tales that correspond to their persona and enrich our understanding of the larger picture.

2.9.2 The General Prologue

The General Prologue in Chaucer has no past model. None of Chaucer's predecessors presented a gallery of portraits like that in the Prologue. A Prologue is often included in collections of stories with the purpose of announcing the nature of the tales to follow or the circumstances under which the tales are told. The **General Prologue** to *The Canterbury Tales* does not reveal such a purpose until the end. The major part of it is designed, not simply as an introduction but on the model of an independent genre, that of the estates satire .

These were widespread through medieval Western Europe. The various estates or classes and professions in society are the subject matter Estates satire aim to give an analysis of society in terms of hierarchy, social function and morality; the object being to show how far each falls short of the ideal to which it should conform.

The simplest division of society was into three estates, those who fight, those who pray and those who labour typified by the knight, the priest and the ploughman. The satire starts from the top and works down through different examples to peasants. Women were treated as an estate to themselves. The Wife of Bath is capable of counterbalancing some twenty seven men. The basic tripartite division of society is reflected in Chaucer's making his Knight, Parson and Ploughman the three ideal characters on the pilgrimage. Chaucer gives us a chance collection of individuals from real society from professions one might actually find on a pilgrimage in fourteenth century England.

The Prologue leads straight on to the Knight's tale. The originality of the connecting narrative material has been widely recognized. Once the first choice has been made and the Knight begins his story, what happens after this is as natural and haphazard as life itself. The host, Harry Bailly comes to life as the pilgrims ride on. He has the same name as Henricus Bailly or Bailiff, known to have been an innkeeper in Southwark and a Member of Parliament from that borough. He rebukes his flock with little respect to status if he thinks their stories are boring. Chaucer for all his intelligence and piety has no spiritual vision. He rarely condemns and is no zealous reformer. He has a subtle mind too convinced of the badness of the world. He maintains a courtly, well-bred, imperturbable front. In the Prologue he is a descriptive poet with convictions but also an appreciation of types. The attitude of comic satire predominates. The higher aristocracy is excluded as also the life of the great mass of the really poor. This is because the characters of the highest and the lowest were not suitable for comic treatment. In the Prologue we see a middling people and we see them through Chaucer's eyes from a slightly superior moral and social station. Tolerance, moderation and pity are the abiding qualities which help to keep Chaucer's poetry close to life.

The pilgrims are individuals as also representative. Many of them exhibit types of character or of professional conduct. The clergy, regular and secular, are included and there are also represented the learned professions of law and medicine, the merchants and the craftsmen of the guild, officials of the manor, the sailor and the common peasant farmer.

Chaucer does not consciously try to maintain any social hierarchy while introducing the characters in the Prologue. The Knight, who is the first pilgrim described is a replica of the ideal knight of the middle ages. He is said to have just returned from the Crusades, where he has rendered invaluable service. He has not even changed his clothes, he is described as wearing the muddied and blood stained tunic. It is his

religious fervor that has brought him to join the merry party. Heroic prospects are tempered by religious prospects in the knight. Chaucer endows him with the qualities of chivalry, love of freedom, honour and courtesy. The Squire, who is the Knight's son, comes next. He is a character from the new generation and so does not care for the spiritual values of the old world. His character is defined by his love for rich and fashionable clothes and ardor for his beloved. The Yeoman serves as the connecting link between the courtly group and the religious group. Of the women characters, the Prioress is a typical medieval nun, who comes from an aristocratic family. For many dowerless women of the age, this was a ready option. It is a beautiful merging of the aristocratic, romantic heroine and nun. The phrase 'simple and coy' is a formula of approval for courtly heroines. She has the courtly name 'Eglentyne' with its association of white and red roses to which poetic heroines are compared. She is an imperfect Prioress and not quite right as a courtly lady either. Her French is the provincial convent school variety. Chaucer's method is to treat as positive virtues all the things that the satirists regarded as topics for condemnation. She displays the difference between the woman and her office. And all this is done in an apparently simple narrative pattern, where the reader is to make out the differences between the ideal and the actual!

The Monk is also in a thoroughly inappropriate profession. The Knight's portrait serves as a foil to the Monk's portrait. The Knight rides out for love of chivalry, whereas the Monk loves to ride out to go hunting. Chaucer includes the materials for anti-romantic satire.

The Friar's betrayal of his calling is radical. Chaucer's method is not invective customary in anti-mendicant satire. The Friar comes with a set of epithets and attributes that in other circumstances might be complimentary; he is 'worthy'. The three pilgrims in religious orders show a steady decline in standard. His technique in these portraits is to appear to praise the ecclesiastical pilgrims for qualities which are either trivial or irrelevant to their holy profession, as in the case of the Prioress, or totally opposed to it. Readers are not left with a negative impression of these pilgrims. Their vices are natural human weaknesses.

The Merchant represents the class he belongs to, it is the new capitalist society. This class in Chaucer's time held the nation's purse strings. His clothes and demeanour are indicative of his success in business. Chaucer does not show much interest in him.

The Clerk's defining characteristics are his devotion to logic and his horse's leanness. He is the archetypal impoverished student. Logic was the pursuit of wisdom. The Clerk though no theologian, is no less pious for having chosen the more secular branch of learning. He prays for those who have provided him with the means to study.

The Sergeant of Law and Franklin enjoy the pleasures of worldly life taking full advantage of their professions. The Franklin's love of good food betrays his materialism and the fact that his table is always ready for guests is not meant to signify that his generosity is a moral attribute.

The inclusion of a Haberdasher, a Dyer, a Carpenter, a Weaver, and a Carpet-maker reaffirm Chaucer's commitment towards social reality. The Doctor too is a worthy man as his knowledge of medicine is sound and he takes ever opportunity of showing off his merits but we are told that he has amassed all the gold he has during pestilences in the country.

One of the most interesting characters in the Prologue is that of the Wife of Bath. No single motif dominates this portrait. She is deaf; she has a loud voice and would rather listen to herself than to others. Her vices might include pride, wrath, envy, immodesty, lust and so on. Chaucer steers clear from leveling moral accusations against her and chooses to stress on her professional pre-eminence, her clothes, marital status, conduct in church and her sociability. She appears larger than life. She is so widely travelled that only the Knight and the Shipman have travelled farther than she has. She has been to Jerusalem three times and it is obvious that her motive is not simply religious, but because of her love for company; pilgrimage for her is a cover for other activities. She is a great feminist and personification of sovereignty and mastery over the other sex.

Chaucer's criticism is more explicit with another set of characters. Yet he retains the sense of humour, so that the reader is not alienated from the characters. The Summoner and the Pardoner are two pilgrims from whom he withdraws his sympathy. They are the worst of the religious group. The Summoner is the instrument through whom divine justice operates in the world. His appearance is loathsome and his actions morally corrupt. He profits from the sexual offences of the court. The unscrupulous Pardoner misuses his authority to collect money and instead of handing it over to the bishop, he helped himself to it. He also earned money selling relics to the people.

Activity for the Learner

Classify Chaucer's characters in The Prologue according to their occupations, gender and manners. You will find interesting patterns of the cross section of contemporary English society. You might as well tally these with your readings from the Social History of the period.

2.9.3. The Wife of Bath (General Prologue)

Having given a general introduction to all the characters described by Chaucer in **The Prologue**, we now come to the narrative of the Wife of Bath. Notice for yourselves the subtleties of narration in the portrait:

A worthy *woman* from beside *Bath* city
Was with us, somewhat deaf, which was a pity.
In making cloth she showed so great a bent
She bettered those of Ypres and of Ghent.
In all the parish not a dame dared stir
460 Towards the altar steps in front of her,
And if indeed they did, so wrath was she
As to be quite put out of charity.
Her kerchiefs were of finely woven ground;
I dared have sworn they weighed a good ten pound,
465 The ones she wore on Sunday, on her head.
Her hose were of the finest scarlet red
And gartered tight; her shoes were soft and new.
Bold was her face, handsome, and red in hue.
A worthy woman all her life, what's more
470 She'd had five husbands, all at the church door,
Apart from other company in youth;
No need just now to speak of that, forsooth.
And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,
Seen many strange rivers and passed over them;

475 She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne,
St. James of Compostella and Cologne,
And she was skilled in wandering by the way.
She had gap-teeth, set widely, truth to say.
Easily on an ambling horse she sat
480 Well wimpled up, and on her head a hat
As broad as is a buckler or a shield;
She had a flowing mantle that concealed
Large hips, her heels spurred sharply under that.
In company she liked to laugh and chat
485 And knew the remedies for love's mischances,
An art in which she knew the oldest dances.

Annotations

1. L455- She is a middle aged woman and as she mentions in her Prologue, much married, five times in all and ready for her next husband.
2. L456- In her Prologue, she narrates the details of her marital life. Her fifth husband had struck her hard on her ear which caused her deafness.
3. L463- The kerchief was in style from the middle of the century.
4. L466-67- The red hose and soft shoes were highly inappropriate for the occasion. On a pilgrimage, it was customary to dress in sober colours and wear sturdy and simple footwear.
5. L468- The red hue of her face is indicative of her lifestyle. She loved good food and led a lustful life.
6. L470- In her Prologue, she talks at length of her five husbands. The custom of celebrating marriage at the church door was usual from the tenth till the sixteenth century. The service was in two parts- the marriage proper and the nuptial mass, afterward, celebrated at the altar.
7. L471- In her Prologue, she proudly boasts of her male admirers and how she enjoyed the company of men.
8. L473- Though her actions do not suggest that she was a pious woman, she loves to project herself as one. Chaucer ironically mentions her trips to Jerusalem, where she may have gone for reasons other than religious ones.

9. L475- A fragmentary image of the Blessed Virgin is venerated here. At Cologne was the shrine of the Three Kings. Since all these places were frequented by pilgrims, it was not unusual for the Wife of Bath to have ventured out. As she states in her Prologue, her motives were not strictly religious. In fact, the pilgrimage in Chaucer's day was a favourite form of traveling for pleasure.
10. L478- The Wife of Bath attributes her amorous nature to 'gap- teeth' or teeth set widely apart.
11. L479- For a widely travelled woman riding at ease on an ambling horse was quite natural.
12. L480, 81- Her hat suggests her fondness for dressing, regardless of the occasion.
13. L482- the flowing mantle is the outer skirt. Her large hips are suggestive of the weight she has gained with age.
14. L484-6- She is quite at home among strangers and laughs and chats with gay abandon. She is quite adept in the art of love. She knows the cures of love and all the rules of the game. With her wide experience she is acknowledged as an authority on the subject.

2.9.4 Paraphrase

There was with us an admirable lady from Bath, who was quite an imposing figure. It was a pity that the lady was deaf. But she had many accomplishments. She was such a good weaver that the fame of her prowess spread far and wide. She was reputed for weaving cloth of such quality that she surpassed the famed weavers of Ypres and Gaunt. These were famous centres of the Flemish wool trade. During the time of church offerings, she aggressively tried to stay ahead of others and if anyone dared to usurp what she felt was her position, the offender had to face her wrath. Whereas the other pilgrims seemed unconcerned about their dress and appearance, this lady was careful. She covered head in expensive handkerchiefs which must have weighed at least ten pounds. Her hose was red in colour and tightly gartered round her thick calves. The shoes she wore were very soft and new. She had a bold look on her remarkable face, which shone bright and red.

She was actually a praiseworthy woman of many talents. She had five husbands who were all dead and gone. She had honourably been married to all of them and

her exploits had extended beyond her husbands to other young men, when she herself was a young woman.

A deeply religious woman, she had been to Jerusalem thrice and passed over many regions and rivers. She had been to Rome, Boulogne and Cologne as she loved travelling. She was a habitual traveler, who loved to explore the world around her.

Her appearance was somewhat unpleasant as she had gap-teeth but it hardly mattered to her. She rode well sitting quite comfortably on an ambling horse. She had a wimple to cover her head as well as a broad hat. To appear young and attractive she tried to hide her ample girth under a flowing cloak. But she knew what she was about and so sharply used her boots to spur on the horse she was riding. She enjoyed the company of her fellow creatures and laughed and chatted merrily with them. One art in which she had no competitor was that of the tactics of love. She knew the remedies and solutions to all problems concerning love and the rules governing the workings of love.

2.9.5. Critical Understanding of the Text

Chaucer's account of the pilgrims described in the Prologue offers an insight into multiple issues that enrich our understanding of the middle ages and the sensibilities of the people of the age. We do not read *The Canterbury Tales merely* for the stories and so also do not read the General Prologue *only* to know more about the tales. The Prologue is a unique creation of Chaucer in which he combines wit, irony, humour and a deep understanding of human nature to create a world of the pilgrims, who belong to the age and are for all times. His criticism of the shortcomings of the flock is not harsh or unforgiving but tempered with a sense of toleration. This is where he differs from Langland, whose attack on the religious orders is relentless.

Chaucer brings to life his characters with his subtle hints, insinuations and suggestive comments rather than direct attacks except with characters like the Summoner and the Pardoner.

The portrait of the Wife of Bath is supplemented by her own account in the *Prologue* to her tale. Chaucer drew on the satirical anti-feminist literature of the age for the Wife's version of her life. In the Prologue to her tale, which may be read as her confession, she reveals all the tricks of her successful domination of her husbands. She condemns celibacy, describing her life with her five husbands and also

confesses her womanly vices. Her assertion is a superb satire on women and her Prologue a comedy of wifely oppression. Her story seeks an answer to the question, "what do women most desire?" and the correct answer is "sovereignty". This is what she seeks to affirm through her speech and actions.

We know more about the Wife of Bath personally and perhaps more intimately than any other pilgrim. This is because of the detailed account of herself that she gives the reader in her Prologue. The vividness of the description makes her what we understand as a 'real character'. Her personal appearance does not take up more than a line. We are told she has large hips. Chaucer begins the description with the mention of her deafness, suggesting that she spoke more than she listened. But this detail turns out to be significant when we get to know the reason of her deafness from her Prologue; it was caused by the blow that she got from her fifth husband. She is skilled in weaving and this detail is very important because it explains why she is the only woman in the group who travels unaccompanied. She is one of the few women of her time who earned her own living. She was a regular church-goer but more concerned about her social standing and thus got angry if anyone went up to the altar before her. Her fine stockings and footwear are signs of her prosperity. She is an experienced lady with five husbands and other company in her youth. Her extensive pilgrimages suggest leisure and prosperity and perhaps devotion. Her widely spaced teeth were a sign of her flirtatious nature, and the medieval insistence on physiognomy as upholding vital character traits would also associate this with her lustful nature. Her bold mannish nature is suggested by her use of the sharp spurs. Chaucer creates in her not only an individual, but also a type.

In the case of the other important woman pilgrim in the group, the Prioress, we further observe how the irony works, by pointing out the ideals to which an individual is expected to aspire. The characters of the pilgrims are determined by the contrast between their estates, or occupation and the persons they actually are. Chaucer was concerned with types as well as with persons.

Now that you have had a primary acquaintance of the characters in the **Prologue**, and seen for yourselves the vivacious Wife of Bath, it would be relevant to institute a comparative study between the two women that Chaucer shows – the Prioress and the Wife. It is interesting to note that the characterization of the Prioress is extremely subtle and the satire sympathetic. As usual, Chaucer dwells at length on the physical details of her dress and manners. As noted previously, she shares traits of the romantic heroine in contemporary literature. Her name, Madame Eglentyne, has the association of elegance and beauty, not quite in keeping with the sedate nature of her

calling. Chaucer's intention was not to disparage her as a nun but to point out some laxities in her conduct.

The mention of her nasal intonation need not be taken too seriously as it was traditional with the recitative portions of the church service. So also her French spoken in the Stratford atte Bowe style was to be expected, as her knowledge of French was such as was derived from an English nunnery. Her immaculate table manners are individualizing traits that make her a remarkable figure. We ought not to read too much in the motto inscribed on her brooch, *Amor vincit omnia,* as it referred both to religious and romantic love. On the other hand, the poet does not seem to be too forgiving about her over indulgence of her pet dogs. It was quite against the rules. We are also to believe that going on a pilgrimage was not expected of a Prioress. The ambiguity of the poet's attitude adds layers to our perception of the woman's position in the middle ages.

The Wife of Bath is admirable for being a mistress of herself in spite of her immoderation, as she does not bear any social responsibility to be a paragon of virtue, whereas the Prioress must display exemplary conduct. The religious orders are viewed from the perspective of idealistic behavior and any departure from convention is unpardonable. It is therefore difficult to group the two women characters in the same category. They belong to a society where different standards apply to the various classes of individuals.

2.9.6 Summing up

1. Geoffrey Chaucer represented his age as well as influenced later writers. He was the foremost writer of the Middle ages whose works looked forward to the future with respect to style, technique and subject matter.
2. His art was influenced by the French style of writing. He did away with the heavy and antiquated style of the middle ages and made his lines easy and flexible.
3. He brought the French decasyllabic line to England, instead of the weak octosyllabic line. He used it in much of his later poetry.
4. Though Chaucer did not belong to the royalty, his employment as a page boy in the court and royal household shaped his art. His close acquaintance with the nobility is evident in many of his of the poems he wrote like *The Book of the Duchess.*

5. Chaucer's works depict contemporary London with all classes of people engaged in myriad activities. Corruption at various levels is pointed out.
6. Dream vision poetry was a common form in the middle ages. Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess, House of Fame* and *Parliament of Fowls* are dream vision poems.
7. His most famous work is *The Canterbury Tales,* written around 1374. It has the framework of a pilgrimage. A group of twenty nine pilgrims set out on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. To pass the time, they plan to entertain themselves by telling tales as they halt in the inn at Southwark.
8. The company includes people from all walks of life, and all have their idiosyncrasies, which makes them a merry band of pilgrims, out to have some fun as they travel.
9. One of the most interesting and complex character is that of the Wife of Bath. She is alone a match for the many male pilgrims who accompany her.
10. The Wife of Bath has had five husbands in the past and is ready for the sixty. She is a skilled weaver and a much traveled woman. Her dress, appearance and ways suggest her affluence.
11. Many of the details about this lady offer us a glimpse into the intricacies of Chaucer's insight into the social realities of the age as well as his understanding of human nature.
12. Chaucer is a writer whose keen observation of the people and life around him and vivid imagination bring to life the pilgrims, whose journey to Canterbury symbolizes the journey of life itself.

2.9.7 Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer type:

1. Which features of the Wife of Bath's persona make her a memorable character?
2. Assess the contribution of Chaucer as a poet who brought in a new style and outlook to English poetry.

3. What have you learnt of the structure of *The Canterbury Tales* and the character sketches in the General Prologue?
4. In what ways does the General Prologue reflect Chaucer's contemporary life?

Mid-length questions:

1. Compare and contrast the Wife of Bath with the other woman character in the Prologue, the Prioress.
2. Give a sketch of the character of the Wife of Bath.
3. Comment on the use of irony and humor in the portrayal of the Wife of Bath.

Short-answer type :

1. What, according to you, are the advantages of Chaucer's choice of the motif of pilgrimage to describe his characters?
2. How important was religion in the lives of the people of the middle ages?
3. Why do you think the manners of the Prioress inappropriate to her social position?
4. Describe in short the physical appearance of the Wife of Bath.
5. Comment on the physical characteristics of the Wife of Bath as described by Chaucer.

2.9.8 Suggested Reading List

1. David Aers — *Chaucer*
2. S.S.Hussey— *Chaucer: An Introduction*
3. D.S. Brewer — *Chaucer*
4. Helen Cooper— *Oxford Guides to Chaucer*
5. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann(Eds)— *Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*

Unit-10 □ Middle English Drama

Structure

2.10.0 Introduction

2.10.1 The Beginning of Drama in Europe : Greek and Latin Drama

2.10.2 The Birth of Vernacular Drama

2.10.3 Miracle Plays

2.10.4 Morality Plays

2.10.5 Interludes

2.10.6 Summing Up Middle English Drama

2.10.7 Questions

2.10.8 Suggested reading

2.10.0 Introduction

In this Unit, we will trace for you the development of drama as an art form in Britain. You will discover how very different the purposes and origins of English drama were, from the classical drama about which you will study in Core Course 2. Notice in course of this Unit the intricate connections between performance and religion, and finally how English drama came to acquire a secularised nature. At the end of this Unit, you should have a fair idea of the history of drama and dramaturgy in England, which will be of much use not just as a piece of history but in your subsequent studies on Modern Drama as well.

2.10.1 The Beginning of Drama in Europe: Greek and Latin Drama

Drama in Europe began in ancient Greece in 6th century B.C. The type of drama which originated was tragedy. It was initially part of religious rituals, most probably associated with the worship of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. The literary meaning of tragedy is 'goat song', suggesting significant link with sacrifice of goats

during the religious festival. It retained its religious links in several ways, for example, the plots were taken from Greek mythology, which was a part of Greek religion. The plays raised high moral questions and posed moral dilemmas. For a long time, authors were not permitted to make comments or bring in political references. No violence was permitted on stage, all deaths being reported. The chorus, a singing group of actors, remained a part of Greek tragedy throughout, although with gradually diminishing importance. The actors wore masks and costumes and special footwear to give them heights and made their movements stately and slow. Comedy developed later. Aristotle opines that comedy developed from phallic songs sung during the festivals of Dionysus.

Athenian theatre was all about open air performance, with excellent acoustics. The entire local population attended the performances. The actors were few in number, beginning with one and gradually going up to three, but no more. There were competitions among playwrights during the festivals and the names of the most famous playwrights which have come down to us from the festivals are Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The most famous writers of comedy were Aristophanes and Menander. Although no complete play by Menander has survived, he is credited with the writing of a new kind of comedy, with a theme of romantic interest and stock characters. This new comedy influenced the two best known Roman playwrights, Plautus and Terence.

After the Romans conquered Greece they adopted Greek theatre, like many other features of Greek civilisation, for their own culture. But Roman drama never rose to the same heights. Roman theatres were built in large open public areas, so that a large audience could be accommodated. Although it did not have a religious origin like Greek drama, it is of interest to note that the stage usually had a structure like an alter, which was used as a shelter by characters, as in Plautus's *Mostellaria* .Plays, both tragedy and comedy, were of two broad types, — those based on Greek subjects and those based of Roman subjects. The actors were professionals, often slaves. The tragic writer whose name and plays have survived for posterity is Seneca. Seneca's plays were closet plays and had a strong influence on Elizabethan tragedy.

All surviving Roman comedies are based on Greek subjects and the two best known names are those of Titus Maccius Plautus (Plautus) and Publius Terentius Afer (Terence). In adapting Greek comedy to Roman taste, they made several changes. For example, they removed the previous prominent role of the chorus and used an episodic structure. The music became a supplement to the dialogues. The action usually took place in the street outside the residence of the characters. Some

of the stock characters of Roman comedy which became the lasting legacy of European comedy are the bachelor who falls in love with a young girl and marries her after overcoming many odds, the old man, usually the father of the young girl, who poses obstacles to the young lovers, the braggart soldier who is actually a coward, the parasite, generally a servant, a matron, who is the mother or the wife, the young girl who initially seems unsuitable, but later proves to be ideally suited to marry the hero.

The decline of the Roman empire, the political chaos, the barbarian invasions, all contributed to the slow demise of Roman theatre . The rise of Christianity was also a major factor. The Christians were highly critical of the growing immorality in the theatres. They were especially antagonistic to the mime plays, which not only used themes like murder, adultery etc, but also targeted the scriptures and the Christians. Naturally, when the Christians attained political power, with Christianity becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire, the church denounced all kinds of theatrical performances. With the fall of the Empire Roman drama disappeared. For five hundred years the field of drama in Europe lay fallow.

2.10.2 The Birth of Vernacular Drama

By an irony of history, the Christian church, which had been directly and indirectly responsible for the death of Classical drama, was to be the chief contributing factor behind the birth of modern drama in the vernacular languages. Dramatic elements were already dormant in the rituals of the Catholic Church. Faced with the problem of explaining the mysteries of Christianity to an illiterate population, the clergy took recourse to explicatory and visual presentations of the scriptures . Around the 9th century we first find that words were being added to the text of the missal (liturgical book containing instructions and text for the mass). The earliest example is known as the 'Quem quaeritis' ("Of whom you seek"). It is a trope in Latin, which is a paraphrase of the dialogue between angels and the three Marys at the tomb of Christ, as implied in the Gospel of St. Matthew. The priests also began to enact the roles, with two dressed in white acting as angels while three dressed in black were the Marys. So successful did these Easter presentations prove that similar ceremonies were introduced at Christmas. With slight changes in the dialogues, the trope was adapted to present a dialogue between angels and the shepherds who came to adore Christ. Gradually other characters were added and the dialogues were expanded. Thus drama was born anew in the cradle of the church.

Medieval drama also had other sources like pre-Christian seasonal festivals, St. George and Robin Hood plays, Maypole dances and other folk activities, but we do not have enough surviving material about them. We cannot even draw a line of continuity between the origins of English drama in the Middle English period and the classical drama of Greece and Rome which had much earlier stopped being a vital force. The only remnant of classical drama can be located in the mimes or professional strolling players who were found throughout the Middle English period in diverse parts of Europe. However, Middle English drama owes very little to them.

The dramatised presentations of the clergy were considered to possess instructional lessons and were popular at Easter and such other feasts. The writers also sought sources in New Testament stories like the Annunciation as well as the Nativity and gradually began to use the popular stories of the Old Testament such as those of the Fall, Noah and Daniel. Gradually liturgical drama which was enacted within the Church underwent expansion, with additional characters and dialogues and came out into the courtyard. Then with the clergymen dissociating themselves from such plays, it moved to the village square or to the marketplace. Once this shift took them outside the church premises, Latin easily gave way to English, for the demand for vernacular modes of representation was a long standing insipient longing. These plays were performed in the open. By this time the liturgy or church service element was almost gone. The plays had begun to tell long, elaborate stories and included a number of characters, not only Biblical, but sometimes ingenuously devised, for example the Marys would go and talk to an 'unguent dealer' before anointing the body of Crucified Christ. But the religious element remained strong, since the Bible stories were dramatised. The English plays based on Bible stories and liturgy are called the Miracle plays or the Mystery plays. We have used the term 'Miracle plays' here.

2.10.3 Miracle Plays

Miracle plays developed quite rapidly in the thirteenth century and by the fourteenth century there was an evolution of complete cycles of plays. Since the enactment of the plays was now no longer confined within the church, suitable seasons were required for the performances. The feast of Corpus Christi (in May or June) established in 1264 and confirmed in 1311, was considered to be a perfect day for the performance of miracle plays, both because of the time of the year and also because it was a procession in which dramatic performances were staged on wagons ('pageants') which moved to different spots of the locality. As drama gradually came

to acquire secular dimensions, control of performances passed to the trade guilds which were responsible for the dramatic productions. Each guild selected a separate episode from a cycle and it involved not only considerable expenditure but also ingenuity as far as the arrangement of the superstructure and stage properties were concerned. Nearly complete cycles of miracle plays survive from the cities of Chester, York and Wakefield. The 4th Miracle play cycle is known as the Coventry plays , or the 'Ludus Coventrae', though opinions differ as to whether the plays were really presented in the town of Coventry.

The Chester cycle, composed between 1350 and 1450, contains twenty-five plays beginning with the Fall of Satan and ending with the Day of Judgement. The plays are written in eight-line stanzas with tail rhyme. The stories are simple with realistic touches here and there. However, the dialogues and the action are immature. The use of old testament matter is comparatively less in the Chester plays .They also show certain marked similarities to the French 'mysteres' (plays on the lives of the saints)

From the York cycle forty-eight plays have survived, though originally there were fifty-four. This is the longest cycle and deals most extensively with Bible history. The cycle begins with the creation story and then goes on to the stories of Adam and Eve, the expulsion from paradise, Abel and Cain, Noah and the flood, Abraham and Isaac, the story of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt. The Old Testament is dealt with in eleven plays. The rest deals with the New Testament. The Annunciation, the Nativity, with the shepherds and the Magi, and the important events of Christ's life all provide plots for the plays. Christ's discussion with learned men at the temple, His Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration on the mountain , His raising of Lazarus from death, etc. The stories of Crucifixion and Resurrection, The death of Virgin Mary and her Assumption are told in a total of 16 plays. The culminating play deals with the last judgment. Fittingly , the last play was performed late at night at the spot where important public announcements were made in the city of York. The plays were staged by different trade guilds; for example the story of Noah by fishermen and mariners, the Adoration of the Magi by goldsmiths , the last Supper by bakers the burial of Christ by butchers.

A distinction can be made amongst these plays which can be divided into four groups. The first group is crude and didactic in tone. The second group shows the influence of the alliterative revival and indicates the writer's metrical skill. This anonymous author is referred to as the 'York Metrist'. The third group introduces elements of humour. For example, Noah's wife is shown as a termagant who argues with him, telling him that she should have been given more time for getting ready and expresses her annoyance by hitting him on the head. The last group contains

powerful dramatic elements. This group also shows strong realistic touches in incidental details. For example, in the play on crucifixion, as the soldiers nail Christ to the cross, they comment on the large cross. When they handle it they say that it is too heavy and hurts their back . Similar realistic touches in several other plays , like the denial of Peter, the mortification of Christ etc and a distinctive portrayal of negative characters like Herod, Caiaphas, Pilate etc. indicate a single hand and the author has been called the "York Realist'. Read below some dialogues from the Crucifixion play.

4TH SOLDIER. Behold, himself has laid him down,
In length and breadth as he should be.

1ST SOLDIER. This traitor here tainted of treasoun,
Convicted. Go fast and fetch him then, ye three.
And sen he claimeth kingdom with crown,
Even as a king here hang shall he.

The Wakefield cycle is also known as Towneley Plays (because the manuscript was owned by the Towneley family) and contains thirty-two plays. The plays bear a close similarity to the York plays but the cycle is more composite . Around nine plays of the cycle show remarkable dramatic power. Most of them are written in a distinctive thirteen –line rhymed stanza (it was originally thought to be a nine- line stanza , but modern scholars have rearranged the lines to make stanzas of thirteen lines)These are marked by a strong sense of realism and have better literary qualities than the plays of other cycles. Some of the plays reveal notes of real poetry while others possess ironic humour and realistic characterisation. Among these are included a Noah and two shepherd plays (the *First Shepherds' Play and the Second Shepherds' Play*). This anonymous author is honoured by scholars with the title 'the Wakefield master'. The Wakefield master has a great gift for a variety of humour, ranging from good- natured to satirical. Even in a solemn play like Doomsday, we find the devils carrying on a lively dialogue. They comment that they have an unusual amount of evidence against women and if Doomsday had delayed, they would have had to make hell larger. The best play of the cycle is the *Second Shepherds' Play*. It is a pre-nativity farce of mock nativity. Mak has stolen a sheep and when the other shepherds come to search his house he and his wife hide the sheep in a cradle and pretend his wife has given birth to a child. There are a number of typical references to the hard lot of farmers and shepherds, the high taxes etc. The cycle begins with the fall of Lucifer and ends with the Last Judgment.

The town of Wakefield had a small population during the middle ages. And although the MS mentions four trade guilds, their names had been entered by a later hand. So in the opinion of some scholars, unlike in the other towns, in Wakfield the plays were sponsored by Governmental or religious sources and not by trade guilds. We would like you to read an example of the humourous dialogue between Mak and his wife Gill (in modernised English) below.

Gill : Come they ere he be slain and here the sheep bleat –

Mak: Then might I be ta'en. That were a cold sweat!

Go bar The outer door.

Gill: Yes, Mak, For if they come at thy back –

Mak: Then might I buy from the whole pack

The devil, and more.

Gill : A good trick have I spied, since thou can none:

Here shall we him hide till they be gone:

In my cradle, abide. Let me alone,

And I shall lie beside in childbed and groan.

Mak: Get thou ready;

And I shall say that born this night

A boy-child saw the light.

The fourth and last cycle of miracle plays is the Coventry plays. Only two plays have survived, having been copied from a now lost original manuscript. The so called *Ludus Coventriae*, as already mentioned, has been proved to have no connection with the town of Coventry. In its fullest form the Coventry cycle contained ten plays, all on New Testament subjects. One is a nativity play, portraying events from the Annunciation to the Massacre of the Innocents. The second surviving play deals with Christ at the temple and his discussion with the Doctors. The first play has a fine carol, which is popularly known as the Coventry carol .We give below a part of the lyric of the Coventry carol.

Lullay, lullay
My little tiny child
By-by, lullay, lullay

Oh, sisters two
How may we do
For to preserve this day?

This poor youngling
Of whom we do sing
By-by, lullay, lullay

Herod the King
In his raging
Charged he hath this day

His men of might
In his own sight
All children young to slay

2.10.4 Morality Plays

While miracle plays were still very popular, another dramatic form, with more direct links with Elizabethan drama, evolved. This form is called the Morality play and it is remarkably different from miracle plays since it has no connection with Biblical stories. Some scholars think that the Morality plays are another step towards secularisation of drama , since the plots were not taken from Bible stories. There is a close link between the Morality play and the Allegory , another popular medieval form. Morality plays deal with personified abstractions of virtues and vices which are in constant struggle for the possession of a man's soul. Abstractions like Justice, Mercy, Gluttony are other common characters. The human characters are generalised classes, like Everyman, Mankind, King, Bishop etc. The Morality play borrows from contemporary homiletic technique and deals with subjects which were popular among medieval preachers. A very common theme of these plays is the 'Dance of Death' which portrays Death as God's messenger who summons all and sundry. The central theme is always the problem of man's salvation and the conduct of life as it affects his salvation. We might say that the object of the Morality playwrights was to preach a sermon in dramatic form. In fact, medieval sermons were often delivered very dramatically and a few allegorical characters already occur in some miracle plays . It is possible that these provided the source material for the development of the Morality plays .

References to morality plays are found in the fourteenth century. However, the fullest development of these plays is found in the fifteenth century. The earliest complete extant morality play is *The Castle of Perseverance* written in about 1425. It is quite elaborate, involving thirty-four characters. The theme is the conflict between the central character Mankind's Good Angel and his supporters on the one hand and his Bad Angel supported by the Seven Deadly Sins on the other. *The Castle of Perseverance* is one among the three plays found in the Macro MS. The other two

are *Wisdom* and *Mankind*. *Mankind*, similar in theme to the other moralities, offers however a stronger comic element. Five of the villains or tempters are comic characters . There is a unique mixture of theological and obscene language. A. W. Pollard has suggested that this was done to entertain an audience of uneducated, common people. The play mentions gathering money from the audience and even asks for audience participation in the action when the two Vices, Nowadays and Naught ask the audience to sing obscene songs with them. We give below a small excerpt from the play, in original Middle English with modern translation, showing how the Vices lead Mankind astray.

NEW GYSE. There arn but sex dedly synnys, lechery ys non, As yt may be verefyede be ws brethellys euerychon.xall goo robbe, stell, and kyll, as fast as ye may gon. "I wyll," sey. MANKYNDE. I wyll, ser. NOWADAYS. On Sundays on þe morow erly betymexall wyth ws to þe all-house erly to go dyn And forbere masse and matens, owres and prime. "I wyll," sey.	New Guise: There are really only six deadly sins–and Lechery ain't one of them. Got to any brothel if you need proof of that. You shall also rob, steal and kill as fast as any man can move. Say you promise! Mankind: I promise

There are certain differences between Morality plays written before the protestant Reformation and those written after. In the pre-reformation plays we find the catholic approach, i.e. man's salvation depends upon his good works and his following of the Sacraments. In the post-Reformation plays, the stress is more on God's grace, Bible reading etc. Late Morality plays of the Tudor era even take up such secular subjects like the importance of political unity or learning. In John Skelton's (C1463 —1579) *Magnificence*, the central character, Magnificence, is tempted by political vices like Crafty, Conveyance,Courtly Abuse and restrained by political virtues like Measure, Perseverence, etc. The plot is modelled on *The Castle of Perseverence*, but its moral is political.

The best-known morality play is *Everyman*, where the personified abstractions play their parts with dramatic logic and the action involves simple dignity. The

characters are portrayed effectively and there is a noble pathos running throughout the play:

O all thing faileth, save God alone;

Beauty, Strength, and Discretion;

For when Death bloweth his blast,

They all run from me full fast.

This play is the most appealing of all the surviving morality plays of the fifteenth century. After a prologue in which the audience are exhorted to listen, God Himself is the first to speak, lamenting man's total absorption in riches. Everyman, the central character, is summoned by Death to undertake a prolonged journey from where he can never return. Everyman fervently searches for friends who can be his companions on the journey but everybody, for example Fellowship, Goods, Kindred, all refuse him Only Good Deeds becomes ready to be both his guide and companion. However, she is weak because of the sins committed by Everyman. So she recommends him to her sister Knowledge, who again leads Everyman to Confession. After Everyman confesses his sins, repents and does penance by scourging himself, Good Deeds becomes strong enough to be his companion, along with Discretion, Strength, Five Wits and Beauty. They go with him to a priest to take sacrament. But when the time arrives for Everyman to enter into his grave, all other companions except Good Deeds, refuse to join him. Even Knowledge says she cannot go with everyman to the grave although she promises to stay with him until death. So Everyman, accompanied by Good Deeds, enters his grave. An angel announces the entry of the soul of Everyman 'into the heavenly sphere'. At the end a Doctor of Divinity points out the moral that in the end a man will only have his good deeds to lead him to salvation.

This memory all men may have in mind;

Ye hearers, take it of worth, old and young,

And forsake pride, for he deceiveth you in the end,

And remember Beauty, Five Wits, Strength and Discretion,

They all at last do Everyman forsake,

Save his Good Deeds, there doth he none take:

But beware, for if they be small,

Before God he hath no help at all;

No excuse may be there for Everyman:

This play is sometimes considered to be a translation of a Dutch Morality play titled *Elckerlijk*.

Morality plays were structured simply ,since their purpose was to preach to the people . They could be performed in any open public space, with minimal props. They were most probably performed on the same level of the audience rather than on raised platforms. Early Moralities often have crude language, but Moralities like Everyman show that the anonymous authors had gradually acquired a sophistication.

2.10.5 Interludes

Towards the end of the fifteenth century a kind of Morality play developed that dealt with moral problems in more realistic and comic ways. This kind of secular play is called the Interlude, which is the latest predecessor of the drama proper of the Elizabethan age. The name 'Interlude' suggests that initially some simple form of dramatic entertainment was presented between plays or at intervals of other forms of entertainment. By the sixteenth century the Interlude included scenes far removed from the medieval morality plays. It introduced real characters, broad farcical (sometimes coarse) humour and set scenes, an innovation in English drama. It moved away from the abstractions of the medieval Christian church and towards topical, realistic themes and characters. Instead of anonymous playwrights we also begin to get the names of individuals. The Interlude continued to be written and staged well into the Tudor period. By the time of Henry VIII it had begun to be used for political satire and lost much of its humour.

Interludes were generally performed in noblemen's houses. Henry Medwell's *Fulgens and Lucrece* is one of the earliest examples of Tudor Interlude. It was also the first play on record to introduce a love theme. The facts we get about its performance also show it to be a typical Interlude. It was performed at Lambeth Palace, during an entertainment arrange for Flemish and Spanish ambassadors. It had two parts, the first was performed at end of the midday feast, the second in the evening. On the other hand, an earlier play by the same author has close similarities with Moralities. Medwell's *Nature* has the theme of man's life from childhood to old age, his temptaion and fall, the Seven Deadly Sins and his final repentance. However, we notice a shift away from the unrelenting moral sternness of the earlier moralities. 'Nature' tells' Man' to follow the joint guidance of 'Reason' and 'Sensibility'.

The most successful and best known writer of Tudor Interludes is John Heywood. He was employed at the royal court as a musician and wrote at least seven Interludes. Although a catholic, he continued to serve four of the Tudor monarchs, before and after Henry VIII's break with the catholic church. Since his business was to entertain

the king and his court, Heywood used witty dialogue and lively action. His early Interludes have two or at most three characters and are little more than debates on set subjects. *Witty and Witless* debates whether it is better to be a fool rather than a wise man. In *Gentleness and Nobility* a knight and a merchant argue who is the better gentleman between the two of them. Then a plowman comes and argues his case with conviction. Later plays of Heywood employ four characters. *The Play Called the Four Ps* is his best creation where there is a description of a lying match among a Palmer, a Pedlar, a Pardoner and an Apothecary. The play is composed in doggerel verse. Another play of Heywood, *A Merry Play between Johan the Husband, Tyb his Wife, and Sir Johan the Priest* deals with the conventional theme of a meek husband, a shrewd wife and her lover, a priest. This play is a farce and has sharp wit and clever sayings. Another clever play is *Weather*. In it he compares the inability of men to agree upon the best weather and their similar inability to decide upon matters of politics and religion. It has ten characters and Henry VIII is represented as Jupiter. In the plays of Heywood, the plots are rudimentary and the writer does not succeed in developing a sustained dramatic structure.

Three writers of the Tudor period changed the character of the Interlude by turning it into a weapon for political satire and religious propaganda. In John Skelton's *Magnificence* the characters are like Morality play abstractions, e.g. Adversity , Despair, Mischief, Good Hope etc. A good prince is led into evil ways by bad counsellors. Adversity overwhelms him. Then Hope and other virtues advise him to give up excess of luxury and exhibition. John Bale was a powerful writer and a strong proponent of the protestant Reformation. He turned some Bible stories into drama, e.g. *John Baptist's Teaching in the Wilderness*, *The Temptation of Our Lord by Satan* etc. His comedies like *Corrupted by The Sodomites* or *Pharisees and Papists* were strong attacks on Catholics. *King John* is a most interesting example of Bale's ability. In it, he combines elements of history with Morality features. The widow England, her blind son Commonalty and a patriotic King John are portrayed as victims of the Catholic clergy The play ends with blessings pronounced upon Elizabeth I, as the champion of truth.

The Interludes began to lose their popularity and their aristocratic patrons as they grew more political. However, they continued to be written till the reign of queen Elizabeth. Drama in its fullest form started to appear around 1550 where the influence of Seneca and other classical dramatists could be observed. This dramatic form would reach its zenith in the Elizabethan era. But for a long time Englishmen continued to refer to any play as an 'interlude'. Elements from the Moralities and Interludes survived in the Elizabethan plays. We understand how well known and

popular the medieval plays were from such references as Celia and Rosalind's dialogue about Orlando's reddish hair being a sign of 'dissembling', since Judas was traditionally shown with red hair ; or in Hamlet's advice to the players about not 'out-Haroding Harod'. The stock Morality and interlude devices survive in evil characters disguising themselves as virtuous people or in angels and evil powers in tussle over men's souls, as in Marlowe's Dr. Faustus :

Good Angel. O *Faustus*, lay that damnèd book aside
And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul
And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!
Bad Angel. Go forward, *Faustus*, in that famous art.
Good Angel. *Faustus*, repent: yet God will pity thee!

2.10.6 Summing up M.E. Drama

Major dramatic elements were present in the rituals of the Christian Church. Liturgical drama, which was enacted within the Church, gradually grew more secular and moved to the marketplace or other convenient locations. Once outside the church premises, English replaced Latin. These plays were performed in the open and were largely separated from the liturgy, but the Bible provided the subjects. These were called the miracle plays. Nearly complete cycles of miracle plays survive from the towns of Chester, York and Wakefield. While miracle plays were still very popular, another dramatic form, with more direct links with Elizabethan drama, evolved. This form is called the morality play. It is remarkably different from miracle plays since it has no connection with Biblical stories. The morality play dealt with personified abstractions of Virtues and Vices which are in constant struggle for the possession of a man's soul. Abstractions like Justice, Mercy, Gluttony are other common characters. Towards the end of the fifteenth century a kind of morality play developed that dealt with moral problems in more realistic and comic way. This kind of secular play is called the Interlude, which is the latest predecessor of Elizabethan Drama.

2.10.7 Questions

Essay-type (Long answer type) 18 marks

1. Write an essay on the development of English drama during the middle ages.

2. What were the miracle plays? Write on the features of the extant miracle play cycles .
3. In what way were the Moralities and the Interludes an advance upon the miracle plays?

Mid-length questions 12 marks

4. Briefly discuss the beginnings and the decay of classical European theatre .
5. What kind of relationship existed between the church and the theatre in Europe in the middle ages ?
6. Give an account of the York /Wakefield plays .
7. Discuss the development of the Tudor interludes.

Short answer type 7 marks.

8. Write a short note on *Everyman.*
9. What do we know about the performance of the miracle plays?
10. How do we distinguish individual hands amidst the anonymous medieval dramatic writings?

2.10.8 Suggested Reading

1.3.8 Recommended Reading

1. A.C. Baugh. *Literary History of England* London: Routledge, 1994
2. Boris Ford. *The Pelican Guide to English Literature: The Age of Chaucer.* Penguin Books, 1971
3. David Daiches. *A Critical History of English Literature Vol 1.* Ronald Press Company, 1960. Repr. Random House India, 2007
4. Legouis and Cazamian. *A History of English Literature Vol 1.* Macmillan, 1927
5. Hardin Craig. *English Religious Drama of The Middle Ages.* Oxford, 1955.
6. E.K.Chambers. *The Medieval Stage.* Oxford, 1903.

Modified and expanded by Sandhya Sen from Paper I , Module I, Unit 3

NOTES

Module - Three
The Renaissance

Unit-11 □ Impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation

Structure

3.11.0 Introduction

3.11.1 Brief histories of the Renaissance and the Reformation

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3.11.4 Impact of the movements on the society of England

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3.11.6 Summing up

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3.11.9 Further activity

3.11.10 Answer Keys to Activities

3.11.0 Introduction

You must have heard the terms *Renaissance* and *Reformation*, and perhaps even read something about these movements in your school level study of History or even English literature. Based on what you know already, try and define the two movements, using a sentence for each; then compare your definitions with what is set out below:

- (a)...the great flowering of art, architecture, politics and the study of literature, usually seen as the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern world,...

(From your reading of Paper 1 you already know which period is referred to as the Middle Ages in the History of English Literature. So you can well understand what kinds of differences are being suggested from the Middle Ages when we are talking of the 'flowering of art, architecture, politics ....')

- (b)...the great religious movement of the 16th cent(ury), aiming to reform the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, and ending in the establishment of the various Reformed or Protestant churches...

Both (a) and (b) have been taken from *The Oxford Companion to English Literature, 5th Edition,* edited by Margaret Drabble. Which definition, do you think, refers to which movement? Since each movement is obviously too complex to be defined in a single sentence, more detailed discussions on these will follow in the pages of this unit.

This unit will therefore help you focus on two of the most significant movements in European, as well as English, history: the **Renaissance** and the **Reformation**.

The progress and distinctive features of these two occasionally-overlapping movements will be dwelt upon; as well as their impact on the cultural and social spheres in England.

Finally, we will make a brief survey of the different kinds of literature associated with the two movements.

3.11.1 Brief Histories of the Renaissance and the Reformation

The Renaissance

The word *renaissance* (sometimes spelt *renascence*) means 'rebirth'. In connection with the history of literature, the term originally refers to the rediscovery, by post-medieval Italian scholars, of ancient Greek and Roman culture and texts. This happened most notably after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when the sacking of the Roman city by the Turkish invaders caused many scholars to escape to Italy, carrying with them precious manuscripts of classical antiquity. These documents were now available to Italian and other scholars, and led to a renewed interest in the cultural and intellectual ideas of the classical ages. You may refer to the Timeline charts at the end of SLM's for EEG 1 and 2 for more precise details of the happenings of this great period of multiple transitions.

The term has subsequently been used to indicate a time span following the Middle Ages, and to include a number of political, economic and cultural developments in Europe between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. (Some critics believe the movement began even earlier, with Dante and Petrarch in fourteenth-century Italy.) During the Renaissance Europeans were exposed to ideas of the universe, and the

place of human beings in it, that differed from what the medieval Roman Catholic Church (or the Church of Rome) had imposed on them. The medieval worldview laid down by the Church preached that humans should subdue bodily desires and encourage spiritual purity, considering life on earth as merely a preparation for life after death. Instead, the Renaissance worldview believed that human existence on earth itself possessed both value and interest; that there could be a balance between physical and intellectual development; and that human beings might attain and enjoy knowledge and beauty.

The new ideal encouraged individualism in life and art. Other developments in Europe contributed to this as well. These included voyages of discovery; the replacement of the older Ptolemaic system of astronomy by the Copernican theory; increased access to literature following the introduction of printing; decline of the prevailing feudal system, and economic and political changes leading to stirrings of early European nationalism.

The impact of the Renaissance was felt at different times by different European nations. If Italy was one of the earliest to feel the stirrings of the movement, its influence in general spread to the west and north, creating a great impact in countries like France and Spain before eventually reaching England. When the cultural results of the Renaissance began be noticed, therefore, Italy, France and Spain had already begun producing works, and a sense of needing to catch up with them was to energise England and inspire her creative minds, notably writers, to concentrate on the composition of a body of national literature.

Some scholars believe that the crowning of the first Tudor king, Henry VII, in 1485 marks the beginning of the English Renaissance; it is also held by some that the end of the movement coincides with the passing of King James I in 1625.

Activity for the learner

To see and understand for yourselves how widespread the impact of the Renaissance was in contemporary Europe, look up the interactive map by keying in the following link on your internet browser:

http://www.worldology.com/Europe/renaissance_lg.htm

The Reformation

The word *reformation* means the improvement or correction of something that is wrong or corrupt. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams notes that the Reformation (or, as it is sometimes called, the Protestant Reformation) was a

sixteenth-century religious movement developing out of the Renaissance. But it was linked to the very spirit of individual expression and experience, and the resistance to imposed systems and structures, which inspired much of the human activities during the European Renaissance.

The Reformation is commonly considered to have begun with Martin Luther, the German reformer, who in 1517 protested against certain actions and teachings of the powerful Roman Catholic Church, headed by the Pope. There had been, even before Luther, theologians who had observed that the Church was moving away from its originally simple religious objectives. However, Luther's response was inspired by his belief that it was not the prescriptions of the Church, but a person's individual faith and spiritual responses, which brought about his salvation. In that sense Luther's protest may be seen as an assertion of Renaissance individualism, and may be related as well to larger issues of the time, including profound socio-economic changes in Europe and the emergence of new nations.

Luther inspired a number of protests in other European countries, led by personalities such as John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox and, ultimately, even the English king Henry VIII, against the conduct of the Church and its priests, and the authority of the Pope. The Reformation led to a division in the Christian world, and to the setting up of a number of Protestant or non-Roman-Catholic churches in different European countries, including England, where the breakaway church was known as the Anglican Church (or the Church of England).

If the beginning of the Reformation in Europe can be given a date, its duration is more difficult to fix with certainty, though some historians feel it reached a high point in the mid-seventeenth century. In English history, the movement began when in 1534 King Henry VIII formally announced himself to be the Supreme Head of the English Church. Then followed about one-and-a-half centuries of conflict, with kings owing religious loyalty to either Rome or England, till the Glorious Revolution of 1688 led to the Bill of Rights that claimed, among other things, that Parliament was more powerful than the king, who incidentally could not be a Roman Catholic.

3.11.2 Salient Features of the two Movements

The Renaissance and the Reformation proceeded and developed in different ways among the many nations that felt their impact. We take a look here at some of the main features of these movements in Europe, and especially in England.

It is customarily held that the **Renaissance** had begun in Italy by the fifteenth century, if not earlier, and spread through Northern Europe and then England. For various reasons, not the least being its insular geographical position off the north western coast of mainland Europe, England was slow to receive the ideas that were well-established elsewhere. The crowning of the first Tudor king Henry VII in 1485 is sometimes suggested as the beginning of the English Renaissance; England had by that time seen an end to the infighting between feudal groups of aristocrats, and something like a modern state was about to emerge. However, it was only later, during Queen Elizabeth's reign that the movement flourished in England.

The delayed arrival of the Renaissance in England had some specific consequences. Scholars in a number of European countries had been influenced by the Greek and Roman classics, and had even produced their own works inspired by the same by the time the Renaissance came to England. As a result, English scholars could study works produced by continental disciples of the classics, and this was an influence that characterized English literature.

One of the most noteworthy features of the Renaissance was the emergence of Humanism; this was an intellectual movement developed by secular scholars rather than the priestly personages who had dominated learning in medieval times. Briefly, humanism may be defined as a philosophy that emphasizes human interests rather than divine ones, and upholds the dignity of man and the study of human culture. Two of the greatest works of the English Renaissance show, in different ways, the influence of humanistic vision: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, typically in the utterance beginning "What a piece of work is man!"; and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, notably in Book IV, where Satan spots, among all the creatures in Eden, Adam and Eve, "(t)wo of far nobler shape erect and tall.." This was a distinctly new development from the literature of the earlier periods.

In Europe, the Italian scholar and poet Francesca Petrarch was an early humanist and noteworthy source of inspiration for English writers. A later scholar, the Dutchman Erasmus, is important for students of English literature because of his interactions with early English humanists and educationists, including Sir Thomas More, John Colet and Thomas Linacre.

The Renaissance also brought in a significant modification to the idea of *virtu* or "virtue", which in the Middle Ages signified moral excellence, but in the works of Niccolo Machiavelli and other writers, indicated an amoral ability to act in a decisive way. Machiavelli's *The Prince*, for example, argues that in order to function

effectively, a ruler may need to behave in ways that are beyond conventionally-accepted moral codes. Such explorations of Renaissance virtu abound, among others, in the plays of Christopher Marlowe.

Another distinctive characteristic of the Renaissance is the expression of new attitudes to art, architecture and literature, in a period of extraordinary creativity. England's creative genius, when compared to that of, say, Italy, expressed itself more in literature, and less in art and architecture. An abundance of poets, dramatists and prose writers helped in the creation of a rich and complex national literature in England. Its high point would undoubtedly be represented by the brilliance of Elizabethan drama, which you will study in some detail in later units and modules.

In most European countries, the Renaissance was followed by the Reformation, which often developed out of the former movement. In England, however, the events of the Reformation practically coincided with the blossoming of the Renaissance which, as has been noted earlier, came later to the island than elsewhere on the continent.

Unlike the religious nature of the **Reformation** in most European countries, England experienced the movement more as a political phenomenon, a tussle for authority between the Pope and the English ruler, King Henry VIII, who in 1534 snapped all ties with the papacy in Rome, dissolved the English monasteries and took away all their wealth. The immediate provocation was the Pope's refusal to grant the English king a divorce, but behind it lay a long history of English dissatisfaction with the supremacy of the Pope, as was made clear by the considerable popular support that Henry VIII gathered.

As far as religious issues were concerned, the newly- formed Anglican Church (or the Church of England) moved more slowly and carefully than other Protestant institutions in Europe, while bringing about changes. There tended to be an alternation between a following of older Catholic traditions and newer reformed practices, till eventually a middle ground was laid down, which owed something to both traditions.

It is also worth noting that the progress of the English Reformation was not followed in neighbouring Scotland or Ireland, areas related to the English state. In Scotland, the efforts of the priest John Knox resulted in the spread of Calvinism, an extreme Protestant philosophy deriving from French reformer John Calvin. In contrast, Ireland remained loyal to Roman Catholic principles, which was a cause of bitter and long enmity with England.

To make sure you have grasped what this section has covered, here is a brief check-list of salient features. Go through each, and put REN after each sentence if you think it refers to the Renaissance, and REF if you think it is about the Reformation:

1. It was the earlier of the two movements to occur in most European countries.
2. It was a predominantly religious upheaval.
3. A defining characteristic was the idea of humanism
4. In England, in connection with this movement, the King ordered that monasteries were to be done away with.
5. English scholars were able to study the works of Continental followers of the classics as part of the influence of this movement.
6. This phenomenon was also characterized by the emergence of new ideas of art and architecture.
7. Calvinism was one of the philosophies related to this movement

3.11.3 Impact of the Movements on the Culture of England

The Renaissance and the Reformation were bound to affect almost all aspects of life in Europe in general and England in particular. We take a look now at some of the cultural effects of the two movements in England, then go on to survey some of their effects on society:

One way in which the impact of the **Renaissance** was felt by different countries in Europe lay in the **revitalizing of national cultures** following the recovery and translation of classical literature. The process, however, worked a little differently in England. Before English scholars could access the classics, Italian scholars, as well as their French, German, Spanish and Dutch counterparts, had examined them and composed translations and critical responses to them. The English scholars, later, felt the influence of these contemporaries as well as that of the classics. For example, it has been pointed out that Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* came from a French version rather than the original Greek.

The classical literary works provided the writers of different countries with models to base their own works on, and this aided the rise of several national literatures throughout Europe. Here, too, England figures in the list, but differently. The nation's insular situation ensured a distance from the abundance of foreign

literary influences, so that **English literature retained its distinctive vigour** longer, and could utilize native traditions despite the availability of foreign ideals. The literary achievement of Edmund Spenser is a great indicator of this. Moreover, the development of a large body of vernacular literature in other countries inspired nationalistic feelings in English writers and the desire to match them.

The introduction of **printing technologies and movable type** in the fifteenth century, first in Germany by Johannes Gutenberg and then in other countries, including England, further aided the development of national literatures. In England, William Caxton is credited with bringing the first printing press, and with it came mass-production of texts, the first attempts to standardise spelling, and the freer movement of ideas and information. The large number of texts would find a ready market in first the nobility and then the emerging newly literate readership among the middle class.

The humanistic philosophy that characterized the European Renaissance also helped to **revolutionize education**. The schools and colleges that were set up had courses which included Latin and Greek, and ancient philosophies, such as Platonism, which had almost been forgotten, but would from now onward influence thinkers anew. In England, secular scholars who were products of the new education and contributed to popularizing it included Sir Thomas Elyot, Sir John Cheke, Sir Thomas Wilson, John Colet and Roger Ascham.

And now for a look at some of the cultural consequences of the **Reformation.** Among the positive effects would be the **intellectual and cultural developments** over the ages in response to the movement, among both Roman Catholics and Protestants. In this connection, scholars point to the academically strengthened universities of Europe, the Lutheran church music composed by J.S. Bach, or the huge altarpieces of Peter Paul Rubens. In England, an important by-product of the Reformation was the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549, which contained in English, instead of the Latin used earlier, prescribed forms of worship in English churches. It provided a model which was followed, with slight changes, by Protestant churches in other countries.

Closely related to this would be **the emergence, in 1611, of the King James Version of the Bible** (or the Authorized Version) in England, commissioned by King James I after the Reformation had encouraged, elsewhere in Europe, vernacular translations of the holy book of the Christians. This was to help common people uncomfortable with the Latin that had for long been used in churches; and to make it easier for them to interpret the scriptures in their own way. The King James

Version was not the first English translation of the Bible, but it was certainly the most influential, for at least three centuries after its publication.

A major offshoot of the Protestant Reformation was the **Catholic Church's delayed response** to the issues that had contributed to the split in the Christian world. This was known as the Catholic Reformation, and sometimes as the Counter-Reformation. It resulted in the setting up of newer religious orders and the rise of more literate and learned priests, in whom spirituality and intellectual sharpness co-existed. The ideas that inspired these people also influenced some writers, including at least one notable English poet. (He is mentioned in the section titled 'Further Activity'.)

3.11.4 Impact of the Movements on the Society of England

The **Renaissance** broke up feudal societies, in which power was concentrated in the hands of wealthy nobles. In England, as elsewhere, the **new merchant classes** that emerged were no longer dependent on agriculture, but participated in a nationwide movement out of the countryside to towns and cities. They took up a number of urban trades, and developed educational skills. This new class over time gained wealth, influence and power.

Some scholars have theorized that it was this newly-developed **social mobility** that made it possible for people from humble origins to make use of opportunities to grow and prosper. From a literary point of view William Shakespeare — the greatest English dramatist of the age — as well as some of his contemporaries, were products of the new social system.

An important concept that was discussed in the time of the Renaissance concerned governance, and **the effect a ruler had upon society**. That is in fact one of the themes in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, a play you will study in the module on 'Reading Drama'. This theme was relevant to English society, as would be demonstrated in the mid-seventeenth century, when a struggle between Parliament and monarchy led to the execution of the English king Charles I.

An interesting example of how the **new social systems were not without their share of problems** can be seen in the periodic attacks of plague which swept through entire regions in Europe. The widespread movement of people to urban areas, and consequent unplanned growth, meant that towns and cities like London lacked proper facilities to protect the population against the rodents that spread the plague. With each plague outbreak, public areas such as theatres would be closed down.

And now, here are some of the ways in which the **Reformation** affected European and English society:

Since religion was so much a part of people's lives, **the Reformation directly affected practically every European**, and forcing a choice between the existing order and the new one. In many European societies, there was an attempt by the authorities to subdue the protesters by force. In England, the initial division between Roman Catholic and Protestant led to social tensions that increased or decreased under different rulers, but the split was followed by others. For example, the Puritans, with a more rigid set of beliefs, emerged out of the Protestant Church and were in turn repressed till some of them eventually left England for America. Some historians believe that today's fragmented societies were actually born out of this religious conflict.

The movement **led to the establishment of national churches** in different countries, such as the Anglican Church in England, and the Lutheran Church in Germany. These churches interacted with believers to create new social systems as they tried to win mass support as well as government approval. To this end they organized public meetings and discussions, involving the newly emerging social order called the bourgeoisie or middle class, so that the religious experience became to some extent a social one as well.

The Reformation **laid much stress on personal piety, and on a sober, simple and dignified lifestyle**. Many of the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, such as pilgrimages, were no longer insisted upon. The Protestant Reformation also questioned the relevance of certain rituals and practices that were part of a believer's life, right from birth to death, in a social setting. Even later, groups like the Puritans strongly disapproved of the pomp and grandeur in church services; some of these had been taken from Roman Catholic ceremonies.

The Reformation essentially desired that believers should go back to the simpler attitudes and practices of the earlier Christian Church, before these were diluted by Roman Catholicism. However, recent studies are also examining **certain social implications of the movement**, which **look forward to more modern attitudes**. It is, for example, argued that by challenging the Roman Catholic distinction between priests and lay leaders, or the requirement that priest and nuns should not marry, the Reformation may be said to have attempted a revaluation of the position of these men and women in society.

3.11.5 Literary Genres Asociated with the two Movements

A number of literary **genres** (or types) and writers came to be associated with both the Renaissance and the Reformation, and this is a brief introduction to some of them in England.

The most noteworthy literary achievements were noticeable in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, in the fields of poetry and drama. The Elizabethan period is known as the **golden age of English drama**. Before this era, there was a time when the English theatre prepared for its period of glory, combining earlier traditions with ideas introduced by the Renaissance and the Reformation. Emile Legouis notes that in the early sixteenth century the popular morality plays, usually dramatized forms of moral lessons, gave way to works like John Skelton's *Magnificence*, which examines corruption in court, and John Bale's religious plays influenced by Protestantism. From 1550s onward, classical elements began to enter English **comedy** via plays such as *Ralph Roister Doister*, in which a classical plot is mingled with characters taken from English life. This kind of fusion occurred in much of the comedy that followed: whether by Shakespeare or Jonson, or later, by Dekker, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher. As classical and English elements sometimes mingled, so did notions of tragic and comic, and of realism and romance, not least in the works of the age's greatest playwright, Shakespeare. Another kind of mingling – of drama, music and dance; of myth, history and fantasy – was seen in the emergence of the **masque**.

In **tragic drama**, classical elements were noticed in *Gorboduc*, the first English tragedy to be written in the blank verse used later so brilliantly by Shakespeare, Marlowe and others. *Gorboduc* was based on the Senecan model of drama, and subsequent plays using the revenge theme and Senecan elements include Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's other tragedies, in different ways, explore themes that concerned people in the time of the Renaissance. Coming immediately before Shakespeare as a writer of tragic plays and chronicles, Christopher Marlowe, in *Edward II* and *Dr Faustus*, deals with such issues as the Renaissance notion of individual worth. Elizabethan tragic drama was also enriched by those dramatists who, with Marlowe, were known as the University Wits. Towards the end of the period came the tragedies of John Webster, who worked with dramatic themes of brooding evil and portrayed strong heroines, characteristics that would gain popularity over time.

Elizabethan **verse**, too, flourished during the English Renaissance. Perhaps the most important poet of his time was Edmund Spenser, whose allegorical romance *The Fairie Queene* was a greatly influential poetic work. Here, as in his adoption of the pastoral form in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Spenser displays the characteristics of a Renaissance artist influenced by the classics. But his poems are sources of Reformation themes and elements as well. In addition, he is one of the earliest poets to believe in the powers of his native language, and tries to create a body of verse with a distinctive English identity.

The majority of other English poets during the Elizabethan age experimented with a **wide variety of lyric poetry.** Influenced by Italian models, English courtiers Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey popularized a number of lyric forms, which later were used by many important writers of the English Renaissance, including Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Shakespeare, Michael Drayton and John Donne. All of them figured in the development of the English **sonnet** and the **sonnet sequence**, deriving from Petrarchan love poetry. In addition, Shakespeare excelled at writing long **narrative poems** such as *Venus and Adonis* or *The Rape of Lucrece*, inspired by classical narratives. Among experimenters in other poetic forms, mention may be made of George Gascoigne, credited with writing *The Steele Glass*: the first Eng **verse satire** to be constructed along lines suggested by Italian models. Many of the poets continued their writing careers into the Jacobean period: a time which also witnessed the achievements of the **Metaphysical** poets, and those of the **Cavaliers**.

In **prose**, the literature of the period appeared in the early stages as **translations** of famous works that express the values of the Renaissance: Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* or More's *Utopia*. Early original compositions were by the English educationists, whose writings constitute a body of English prose of various styles; some like Roger Ascham revealing the influence of Latin; others like Sir John Cheke trying to develop a vigorous native flavour. The **essays** of Francis Bacon, first published at the end of the sixteenth century, soon after those of the Frenchman Montaigne, were important additions to Renaissance English prose of the time. Also written during this period was one of the earliest examples of Eng **critical prose**: Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*.

During this period the different **Bible translations**, culminating in the Authorized Version, and the Book of Common Prayer contributed to creating a rhythmic prose that influenced many writers in succeeding ages. **Religious prose** of a different sort can be seen in the collections of sermons by John Donne early in the seventeenth

century. Religion mixes with science, philosophy and other branches of learning in the prose of Robert Burton and Thomas Browne.

Towards the end of the age being studied here came the works of John Milton. He, perhaps more than any other writer of this era, was equally a product of the Renaissance and the Reformation. In English literature courses it is mainly his poetry that is studied, and he has been referred to as the greatest non-dramatic poet in English. His poetic compositions include **epics**, **elegies**, **sonnets**, **odes** and **masque**, as well as verse paraphrases of the Biblical psalms._However, in a career dedicated to literature, he tried his hand at a variety of literary types, including a staggering amount of prose; and towards the end of his writing career created *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, works inspired by two of the most respected of literary forms in classical ages: the **epic** and **tragic drama**. Whether in his poetry or his prose, he for the most part displayed a preoccupation with issues that assumed great importance during both the Renaissance and the Reformation. These included considerations of political, personal and religious liberty and questions of choice and rule.

3.11.6 Summing Up

Here are a few points concerning what this unit/section has covered. Included is **one observation that is NOT true**. Strike out the incorrect one, and you will be left with a concise summing-up.

- Both the Renaissance and the Reformation believed in the expression of individual belief and experience.
- The Renaissance occurred throughout Europe, but its influence was felt in England later than in some other countries, such as Italy.
- In England the Renaissance was mainly a literary one.
- The Reformation, even more than the Renaissance, affected all levels of society.
- In most countries the Renaissance followed the Reformation.
- John Milton's writings provide a good example of the European literary traditions being influenced by both the Renaissance and the Reformation

3.11.7 Comprehension Exercises

1. Essay type:

a) Attempt an estimate of the progress and impact of the Renaissance on the culture and society of the English people.

b) Examine the distinctive features of the English Reformation and consider its consequences.

c) Mention some of the literary genres that flourished during the English Renaissance and Reformation, and identify the main writers concerned.

2. Medium-length:

a) Mention some characteristics of the English Renaissance.

b) Discuss how European and English societies were affected by the Renaissance and the Reformation.

c) Write a note on the Elizabethan sonnet sequence.

3. Short-answer type:

a) Write a short note on the drama of the English Renaissance.

b) How may the Reformation be said to have contributed to the creation of new social systems?

c) Show your familiarity with any one:

i. *The Fairie Queene*

ii. *Paradise Lost*

iii. *The Authorized Version of the Bible*

d) Discuss the impact of the introduction of printing technologies and movable type in the fifteenth century.

e) Write a short note on Humanism.

3.11.8 Suggested Reading

1. M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th Ed. Thomson Heinle, 1999.

[While most dictionaries of literary terms tend to focus on the Renaissance rather than the Reformation, this glossary specifically considers the latter in relation to the former, and as developing out of it.]

2. Margaret Drabble (ed). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature, 5th Edition.* Oxford: OUP. 1995.

[Provides a concise entry on each of the two movements, indicating progress and impact throughout Europe.]

3. George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 3rd Edition* (Revised by R.C. Churchill). New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 97-144. [Devotes one whole chapter to the impact of these two movements on English literature and society. Subsequent chapters provide even more material, including specific studies of the Elizabethan sonnet and the Authorized Version of the Bible.]

4. Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, 2nd Edition. New York: OUP, 1999. 84-186.

[Has an entire chapter studying, in considerable detail, the verse, prose and drama written in England at the time of these two movements.]

5. Marion Wynne-Davies (ed). Guide to English Literature. [London]: Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1994.

[Includes entries on each of the two movements, and pays special attention to their progress and results in England.]

The internet is always a good source of information, though you need to be careful about the reliability of the material you are using. This is a basic yet trustworthy starting point: a couple of links to specific online pages created by the editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/497731/Renaissance

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/495422/Reformation

3.11.9 Further Activity

Examining the Renaissance man

The notion of the **Renaissance man** (also called Universal man, a translation of the Italian *Uomo universale*) developed in Italy during the Renaissance, and indicates a talented individual who is exceptionally good at a number of activities. Such a person would embody the idea that the human being was the supreme creature in the universe, possessing unlimited abilities that should be developed to their fullest. In

other words, for the Renaissance man, nothing was impossible. Can you think of any Elizabethan playwright whose lines or characters may be related to this notion?

A number of people throughout history have been hailed as Renaissance men, and the term survives even today to refer to talented and accomplished individuals. You might wish to make your own list of such people: from the Renaissance times till today. Would the following people make it to your list? Leonardo da Vinci? Francis Bacon? Benjamin Franklin? Rabindranath Tagore? Why, or why not?

Studying the Counter-Reformation

You will have come across the term **Counter- Reformation** during your study of the Reformation. It refers to a movement within the Catholic Church that developed in response to the Reformation, with the aim of countering or meeting the challenges posed by the Protestant reform movement. You might wish to trace the progress of the Counter-Reformation (sometimes also referred to as the Catholic Reformation), or examine how some English writers (such as Richard Crashaw) reflected, in their works, the influence of this religious counter-development. Here are a couple of online links by way of starting points:

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/140219/Counter-Reformation

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-counter-reformation.htm

3.11.10 Answer Keys to Activities

*Key to check-list

1,3,5 and 6 – REN

2,4 and 7 - REF

***Odd one out in the Summing Up Section:**

"In most countries the Renaissance **followed** the Reformation." This is incorrect. Actually in most countries the Renaissance **was followed by** the Reformation.

Unit-12 □ Developments in Poetry-Elizabethan, Metaphysical and Cavalier Traditions

Structure

3.12.0 Introduction

3.12.1 The Development of Elizabethan Poetry

3.12.2 The Development of Poetry- Metaphysical Tradition

3.12.3 The Development of Poetry- Cavalier Tradition

3.12.4 Glossary of Related Terms

3.12.5 Detailed Summing Up

3.12.6 Suggested Reading

3.12.7 Comprehension Exercises

3.12.0 Introduction

Like the genres of drama and prose, poetry too was largely influenced by the Renaissance. In this unit, you will learn about the development of English poetry during the Renaissance. In the previous unit you have learnt about the overall impact of the Renaissance and Reformation on England and English Literature. The Renaissance opened the floodgates for humanist ideas which had a huge impact on English poetry. The revival of the ancient Greek and Latin classics generated a spirit of free inquiry which replaced the monopoly of religion. The Renaissance ethos upheld the value of liberty and repudiated the limitations foisted upon people by the Church. This new wave ushered in an unprecedented era of literary activity, particularly felt in the field of poetry. In the following pages you are going to learn about the development of Elizabethan poetry. You will also learn about the emergence and development of the Metaphysical and the Cavalier poetic traditions.

3.12.1 The Development of Elizabethan Poetry

Elizabethan poetry flourished under the influence of Chaucerian traditions, folk songs and Italian verse forms. Several kinds of verse forms such as the epic, the

romance, the pastoral, the elegy, the sonnet, the lyric and the satire were explored in this age. However, the sonnet became the most important verse form during the Elizabethan era. The Italian poet Francesco Petrarch soaked up the courtly tradition of love popular during the medieval period and reanimated it by inserting the effervescence of the Renaissance. He achieved a rare synthesis in his poetry by combining medieval mysticism, Neo-Platonism and Aristotelian paganism. He revamped the existing poetic tradition by introducing exquisite melody, matchless diction and rhetorical elegance. Petrarch in his *Canzoniere* and Dante in his *La Vita Nuova* depicted the different stages of the experience of love which cast a lasting influence on the English poets. Elizabethan poetry chiefly focused on the theme of love and the psychological state of the lovers. There was, as a result of the Italian influence, an efflorescence of indigenous tradition.

Wyatt and Surrey

Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey introduced the sonnet form in England. They followed in the footsteps of Petrarch. In their hands English poetry achieved a radical metamorphosis and broke away from the chrysalis of the medieval era. The unpolished verse of such poets of the previous generation like John Skelton, was supplanted by refined and sophisticated poetic diction. Their poems were published in an anthology entitled *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). The title of the volume takes its name from its publisher Tottel. Wyatt contributed 96 love poems to this volume, out of which 31 were sonnets. He started by imitating the Petrarchan sonnet model but introduced the couplet ending to his own English form. He utilised the brevity of the sonnet form excellently in his personal poems, whereas the Italian *Terza rima* was employed extensively in his satires. He translated sonnets from Petrarch. We would like you to read one of the original sonnets of Wyatt given below :

I find no peace, and all my war is done.
I fear and hope. I burn and freeze like ice.
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise;
And nought I have, and all the world I season.
That loseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison
And holdeth me not—yet can I scape no wise—
Nor letteth me live nor die at my device,
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eyen I see, and without tongue I plain.

I desire to perish, and yet I ask health.
I love another, and thus I hate myself.
I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;
Likewise displeaseth me both life and death,
And my delight is causer of this strife.

Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey was another contributor to *Tottel's Miscellany,* who primarily wrote love sonnets, of which "The Fancy of a Wearied Lover", "The Frailty and Hurtfulness of Beauty", "Complaint of the Lover Disdained", are famous. He refined the English form of the sonnet and was the first poet to use blank verse in English in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* Other contributors to this volume were Nicholas Grimald, Thomas Norton, Lord Vaux, and John Heywood. In an age when poetry writing was becoming a fashion at court, this volume gave a broadened range of models, and validated that the continental Renaissance had entered the poetry of England.We give below an extract from Surrey's translation of the Aeneid, Book 4, for you , to get an idea of early blank verse.

Then from the seas the dawning gan arise.
The sun once up, the chosen youth gan throng
Unto the gates; the hayes so rarely knit,
The hunting staves with their broad heads of steel,
And of Massilethe horsemen, forth they brake;
Of scenting hounds a kennel huge likewise.
And at the threshold of her chamber door
The Carthage lords did there the queen await;

Edmund Spenser (1552-99)

Edmund Spenser was hailed as the 'New Poet' during the Elizabethan literary Renaissance. He was born in London and after getting educated at Cambridge University, served the English Royal Court for over 18 years. He has been called the '**poet's poet**' by Charles Lamb , because of his influence on generations of later poets. In his poetry we find a wonderful mixture of Renaissance and Reformation ethos. He frequently borrowed from Virgil, Ariosto and others. However, he eschewed slavish imitation. He rejuvenated the indigenous English culture and language and avoided unnecessary usage of French words, a fault that most of his contemporary poets had fallen a prey to.

His first lyrical work was a pastoral poem, *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), a group of 12 eclogues (a short poem in the classical style on pastoral subjects)

written in the form of a conversation between different characters. He was inspired by the folk tradition of the Greek Sicilian poets, like Theocritus, and united a rural worldview with allegory in this poem. Spenser based each eclogue on each month of the year. He presented the themes of unrequited love, sorrow and friendship in a rustic, idyllic setting and created the figure of the shepherd Colin Clout as a reflection of his own self. Spenser chose to keep his verse decorous in tone and diction, maintaining the Renaissance aesthetic model. He varies the style and rhyme in the 12 eclogues. Metrically he made an innovation by rejecting regular lines of classical pastoral and endorsing experimental forms reminiscent of the usage of Chaucer. Below are some lines from the April eclogue.

Tell me good Hobbinoll, what garres thee greete?
What? hath some Wolfe thy tender Lambes ytorne?
Or is thy Bagpype broke, that soundes so sweete?
Or art thou of thy loved lasse forlorne?

is collection of love sonnets *Amoretti* (1595) was written in imitation of the Petrarchan mode. These poems were written for his ladylove Elizabeth Boyle. He maintained the conventions of Elizabethan courtly love poetry by portraying his beloved as the beautiful ideal, who at first refused and then accepted his heart. This collection contained 89 sonnets. The skill and craftsmanship of the poet is revealed through the subtle employment of words. He introduced the Spenserian form of the sonnet with three quatrains and a couplet, following the rhyme-scheme *abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee.* In *Epithalamion* Spenser celebrated his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle and in *Prothalamion* celebrated the double marriage of Lady Elizabeth and Lady Katherine Somerset. Throughout these poems marriage is endorsed as the natural fruition of the human life-cycle. The lines below are from *Epithalamion* and will give you an idea of the musical quality of Spenser's poetry.

With that, I saw two swans of goodly hue
Come softly swimming down along the Lee;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see.
The snow which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew,
Nor Jove himself, when he a swan would be
For love of Leda, whiter did appear:
Yet Leda was they say as white as he,
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near.

So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,
Seemed foul to them, and bade his billows spare
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might
Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,
And mar their beauties bright,
That shone as heaven's light,
Against their bridal day, which was not long:
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

The work that earned him the highest regard was *The Faerie Queene*. Its elaborate versification and digressive narrative actually stand as an allegory of the political-historical-religious issues of the Elizabethan Age. Spenser had intended to write twelve books, each depicting the adventure of a virtuous knight, but could only complete six. Prince Arthur appears in the poem at intervals and is set to marry Gloriana, the Queen of *Faerie-londe* (a portrayal of Queen Elizabeth). This work had a utilitarian design. It was fashioned as a moral allegory. Theme of nationalism was promoted by the story of the knights. Among his other works mention may be made of *Astrophel* (an elegy on the death of Philip Sidney), *Four Hymns*, *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* and *Mother Hubberd's Tale*.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554- 86)

Sidney was born in an aristocratic family and educated at Oxford University. He was an illustrious member of the Elizabethan court and took part in the military expedition against Spain. He lost his life at the young age of 32 in the battle of Zutphen. His sequence of 108 love sonnets and 11 songs titled *Astrophel and Stella* was published posthumously in 1591 and was heavily influenced by the works of the French poet Ronsard as well as by Petrarch's sonnets. He wrote the lyrics for his beloved Penelope Devereux, who later married Lord Rich. The sonnets maintain the Petrarchan form in the rhyme-scheme of the octave (abba, abba) but Sidney introduced variations in the sestet. The sonnets reflect ingenuity through the use of well-phrased analogies.Read below sonnet 31 from *Astrophel and Stella*

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What, may it be that even in heav'nly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries!

Sure, if that long-with love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case,
I read it in thy looks; thy languish'd grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.
Then, ev'n of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constant love deem'd there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be lov'd, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

Samuel Daniel (1562-1619)

Daniel is best known for the sonnet sequence *Delia*, apart from the haunting soliloquy 'The Complaint of Rosamond' and the poetical essay 'The Civil Wars'. As he was appointed the Master of the Queen's Revels, he also wrote pastoral tragi-comedies and brought out among others, two masques titled 'The Queenes Wake' and 'Hymen's Triumph'.

Michael Drayton (1563-1631)

Influenced by Edmund Spenser, he composed the eclogues '*Idea, the Shepherd's Garland*' in 1593. A collection of love-sonnets, *Idea's Mirror* was published in 1594, which was later developed into the sonnet sequence Idea. His mythological narrative poem 'Endymion and Phoebe' (later revised as 'The Man in the Moon') inspired the Romantic poet Keats to write 'Endymion'. 'Poly-Olbion', a narrative poem of 30000 lines, gives an account of the geographical expanses of England along with its historical tales written in alexandrines. 'England's Heroical Epistles' (1597), an imaginative exchange of verse letters between England's historical lovers, 'The Battle of Agincourt', an ode and 'Nymphidia, the Court of Fairy' a mock-heroic series of poems, reveal the variety of his art. He was the first English poet to write odes in the manner of the Latin poet Horace.He also wrote historical heroic poems like *Robert, Duke of Norrmandy.*

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

He began his career by composing epigrams in Latin and then advanced to English. His lyric poems and songs were published in four consecutive books namely *A Booke of Ayres* (1601), *Two Books of Ayres* and *The Third and Fourth Booke of Ayres*. In honour of King James I he wrote 'The Lord's Masque' in 1613.

Fulke Greville(1554-1628)

He served in Queen Elizabeth's court along with Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney. He is best known for his sonnet sequence 'Caelica' and for his philosophical verse tracts **'A Treatise of Humane Learning'** and '**An Inquisition upon Fame and Honour**'. He also composed an elegy on the death of Philip Sidney.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

Marlowe, though primarily famous as a playwright, deserves a special mention for his two excellent **narrative poems**, namely *Hero and Leander*, based on the Greek myth in 1598 and 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love', published in 1600 in *England's Helicon*. An excerpt from one of the poems is given below:

From *Hero and Leander* by Christopher Marlowe

"It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate.
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,
We wish that one should lose, the other win;
And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows; let it suffice
What we behold is censured by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?"

3.12.2 The Development of Poetry- Metaphysical Tradition

Metaphysical poetry emerged in the seventeenth century as a reaction against the overly melodious, sugar-coated phraseology of Elizabethan verse. The strong musical strain of much of the lyrical poetry of the Elizabethan age precluded the possibility of presenting complexity of mood. The metaphysical poets, spearheaded by John Donne, broke away from the idealisation of love which became a characteristic of the poetry influenced by Petrarch. The metaphysical poets combined intellect with emotion. John Crowe Ransom has remarked, "The metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century particularly admired the methodology of science, and in fact they copied it, and their phrasing is often technical, spare, and polysyllabic, though they are not repeating actual science but making those metaphorical substitutions that are so arresting."

It was Dr. Samuel Johnson who, in his 'Life of Cowley' branded Donne and his followers as metaphysical poets. Johnson took the cue from Dryden's derogatory remark that Donne "affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature should only reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love." Dr. Johnson made a disparaging review of the metaphysical poets and criticized them primarily for the excessive use of learning. According to Dr. Johnson, the true criterion of literary excellence lay in "the power to please many and please long." He found this quality lacking in metaphysical verse. In the 20th. century however, the metaphysical poets , especially Donne, were reinstated to high critical acclaim. T. S. Eliot gave the metaphysical poets a proper aesthetic assessment. Eliot observed, "one reason why Donne has appealed so powerfully to the recent times is that there is in his poetry no attempt at organisation; rather a puzzled and humorous shuffling of the pieces; and we are inclined to read our own more conscious awareness of the apparent irrelevance and unrelatedness of things into the mind of Donne."

Significantly modern in style, metaphysical poetry eschewed the traditional subject-matter of poetry. The poets refused to follow the footsteps of Petrarch. They desired to say, as Dr. Johnson wrote, "what they had hoped had been never said before. They endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts and were careless of their diction." In them we find, on the face of it, a note of playfulness. But probed deeply, we find they are loaded with seriousness and erudition. This alliance of levity and seriousness is a major feature of metaphysical poetry. They ransacked different branches of knowledge and culled materials from them. But their proposed aim was not to display their vast knowledge. Their poetry was chiefly targeted to provide acute realism. In Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress", for example, we find that the lover employing hyperbole after hyperbole to prick the bubble of romance and confront the lady-love with the unpalatable truth that life is not a pastoral idyll but a strife-torn area where time is not at their disposal.

The metaphysical poets were not only original in their thoughts but also in their manner of expressions. Here we find a combination of dissimilar images. This is known as metaphysical conceit. It is a tendency of establishing comparisons between things which are dissimilar or heterogenous. This metaphysical conceit is not something extraneous or decorative; they contribute to the main theme of the poems. Helen Gardner has remarked, "A conceit is like a spark made by stones striking together. After the flash of stones are just two stones. The metaphysical poetry abounds in such flashes." In Donne's "A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning" we see that two lovers are compared to two legs of a compass. Cowley in "The Given

Heart" likens a lover's heart to a grenade shot into a magazine. Donne also compares a flea to a marriage bed. This employment of far-fetched images helps the metaphysical poets frame and sustain the argumentative structure of the verse. Joan Bennet in her essay "Five Metaphysical Poets" remarked, "Experience to the metaphysical poets was as it were, grist to an intellectual will."

In general, metaphysical poetry is characterized by syllogistic structure. They set great store by carefully chalked-out logical connection between the abstract and the concrete. Here thought is blended with feeling. With the help of syllogistic structure, they achieve the 'unification of sensibility' (a phrase coined by T. S. Eliot to mean the interaction of thought and feeling). That is why metaphysical poetry is a felt thought. Their approach to poetry was very modern as they compelled the reader to feel and think at the same time. Let us take the following two lines form Donne's "The Canonisation"-

"And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;"

This extract is illustrative of an alliance of thought and feeling.

The metaphysical poets used contemporary language. Their choice of words was very simple. Their style was characterised by simplicity and colloquial expression. Elizabethan rhythms were usually derived from the classical heritage. Donne and his followers eschewed this rhythm. In their verse, rhythm emerged from meaning. They supplanted diffuseness with compression. The following extract from "The Sun Rising" is indicative of colloquial and realistic tone so typical of metaphysical verse:

"Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time."

Concentration is another feature of metaphysical poetry. It demands the reader's attention to an idea or a tie of argument and does not invite him to pause upon a passage and to reflect upon it. That is why a metaphysical poem tends to have a well-

knit structure. Helen Gardner aptly remarked, "A stanza of Donne or Herbert is not like rhyme royal or Spenserian stanza, an ideal mould into which the words have flowed. It is more like limiting frame in which words and thoughts are compressed, a box sweets compacted lie."

The following poets are generally classified as Metaphysicals, in the sense that their works show most of the features enumerated above:

John Donne

John Donne was the father of metaphysical poetry. He was raised a Roman Catholic but later became a member of the Anglican Church. His poetry was never published in his lifetime but was circulated in manuscripts. His best-known work is ***Songs and Sonnets***, a collection of 55 love poems famous for different moods addressed to several persons. Some of the poems are cynical in tone while the others are warm and candid. Love for Donne is not a soulless convention but a rich feeling that stimulates him to engage with it with a diversity of moods. He usually opened his poems with a startling declaration and ended them with a turn of a phrase. Complex, rich imagery and passionate declarations formed part of his style. His major poems include 'A Valediction, Forbidding Mourning', 'The Extasie', 'Holy Sonnets' etc. Donne uses striking images which are drawn from diverse fields such as astronomy, geography, history. In his Elegies we find Donne giving expression to sensual love in an uninhibited way. His cynical frame of mind is seen here. His 'Satires', written in imitation of Persius, reflect his realism. The Progress of The Soul is a religious work with a deep moral chord, evoking diverse female figures like Eve and Queen Elizabeth in a satirical and pessimistic voice. In his last days he composed 'Divine Poems' which are argumentative in nature, exploring the absurdity and truthfulness of life and devotion. Among his 'Divine Poems', the best-known poems are "Death be not Proud" and "A Hymn to God the Father".

George Herbert (1593-1633) - He was an Anglican poet and his most prominent work is the witty and symbolic 'The Temple' (1633). He used his art to propagate the ideas of the Christian religion, and to explore worldly emotions and faith. 'Denial' and 'The Collar' are some of his best poems and 'Easter Wings' is one of the earliest and finest examples of pattern-poetry. His poetry was not published in his lifetime. Herbert himself described his work as a "picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus, my master; in whose service I have now found perfect freedom."

Henry Vaughan (1622-95) – He was a disciple of Herbert. He was not associated with religion by profession. He studied at Oxford and London, both law and medicine. Death of his wife and his own illness evoked in him a religiosity which made him compose 'Silex Scintillans' (1655) whose sub-title is "Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations". His poems are closely reminiscent of Herbert's poems in "The Temple". Through his verse, he tries to unravel the mysterious realm where God resides, away from the eyes of the human world. There is a mystical quality in his poems like 'The World', 'The Waterfall', 'The Night' and 'The Retreat'- the last one drawing on the concepts of purity and innocence of childhood, reminding us of William Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'.

Andrew Marvell (1621-78) - Educated at Cambridge, he was a colleague of John Milton, a Christian Humanist, and a Member of Parliament. His poems reveal a melodious grace in portraying witty arguments. "To his Coy Mistress" is one of his best works which is based on the theme of 'Carpe diem' (i.e. 'seize the day'). Apart from lyrics like 'On a Drop of Dew' he also wrote satirical poems like 'Flekno , an English Priest at Rome', Edward Albert says of him, "Marvell's work has the subtlety of wit, the passionate argument and the learned imagery of the metaphysicals, combined with the clarity and control of the classical followers of Jonson and the gracefulness of the cavaliers."

Richard Crashaw (1612-1649) - He was another metaphysical poet with a religious inclination. He regarded Herbert as his inspiration and composed 'Steps to the Temple' in 1646. His images and symbols were taken from the physicality of the sensory world, but they successfully highlighted a very distinct Christian viewpoint. He also wrote epigrams in Latin titled 'Epigrammata Sacra'.

Abraham Cowley (1618-67) - He supported the King during the Civil War, was exiled and returned only after the Restoration of monarchy. 'The Davideis' (1656) written in heroic couplets, 'The Mistress' (1647), a group of love-poems and 'Pindarique Odes' are some of his better known works.

3.12.3 The Development of Poetry- Cavalier Tradition

The cavalier poets were a group of poets who were influenced by the poetry of Ben Jonson. Combining gaiety and wit they wrote poetry that was suited to the aristocratic ambience of the court of Charles I. King Charles I was a connoisseur of the fine arts and the cavalier poets tried to entertain him with their verse. These poets were all courtiers. They chiefly wrote on the themes of love and chivalry.

These poets preferred the easy articulations of the classic lyric and eschewed complex images and symbols. Frequent references to Roman mythology rang through their poems suggesting an affinity with the classical poets. Such usage of Roman myths was instrumental in imparting a picturesque touch to their verse. The precision of form was another hallmark of cavalier tradition. The best known among them were Richard Lovelace, John Suckling, Thomas Carew, Robert Herrick.

Like the metaphysical poets, they employed a logical pattern, but they were different from the metaphysical poets as they did not attempt at an intellectualisation of poetry. Dramatic tension, a feature frequent in metaphysical poetry, was found lacking in their poetry. It is true that in their poems we can evince a reflective bent of mind. However, they did not employ erudite conceits characteristic of the metaphysical poets. They stopped short of expanding the scope of the conceits to the fullest extent. Their diction was simple and closer to the colloquial language. This conversational tone imparted a naturalness to their verse, as seen in Suckling's "The Constant Lover":

"Out upon it, I have loved

Three whole days together,

And am like to love three more

If it hold fair weather."

Robert Herrick (1591- 1674)

The best lyric poet among the cavaliers was Robert Herrick. He was educated at Cambridge. He was a supporter of Charles I during his period of struggle with the parliament. Most of his poetry was conditioned by the influence of the court. For his witty style, Herrick is often compared to the Roman poet Catullus.

Among the cavaliers, he was the most religious. As a clergyman, he upheld the moral values in his verse. *Hesperides* (1648) was his collection of secular poems. His religious poems were published in *Noble Numbers* (1648).

Herrick was not only a practitioner of devotional poetry. He wrote on the theme of love too. Many of his poems bore the stamp of sentimentality and pagan sensuousness. The lover in Herrick set great store by enjoyment. His famous lyrics include "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may", "To Anthea", "To Blossoms". Exploration of pastoral beauty was the stock theme of his verse. Herrick described the beauty of nature wonderfully. His fascination for nature is seen in "A Country Life". His note is not that of passion but one of adoring gallantry. He delights in purely physical

beauty and portrays it with the love of a worshipper and the skill of an artist. Read below an extract from one of Herrick's poems.

A SWEET disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:—
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distractión,—
An erring lace, which here and there 5
Enthrals the crimson stomacher,—
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbands to flow confusedly,—

Thomas Carew (1598- 1639)

Carew combined in his poetry metaphysical idiom and cavalier gaiety. In 1640 his collection of poems entitled *Poems* was published. He is chiefly conspicuous for his shorter lyrics among which mention may be made of "Ask me no more where Jove bestows", "To my Inconstant Mistress", "Mediocrity in Love Rejected". In his poems addressed to Celia one can find a tone of urgency. Although he takes recourse to Petrarchan stock-in-trades, poems about Celia evince a note of robust realism. His social consciousness is seen in these poems.

"A Rapture", one of his best poems, deals with the physical attractions of love. Carew wrote some country house poems, a sub-genre of topographical poetry which provided a panoramic picture of houses of the landed elites and a resultant eulogisation of the royalty. In this connection mention may be made of his "To Saxham". Carew composed an elegy for John Donne entitled "Elegy upon the Death of Dr. Donne".

John Suckling (1609- 1642)

Suckling was a prominent figure among the cavalier poets. His poetic output was small. In 1646 a collection of his poems appeared as *Fragmenta Aurea*. He simplified Donne's early cynicism in his verse. He had a wonderful sense of humour which is found expressed in his "Session of the Poets" and the delightful "Ballad upon a Wedding". Suckling was a social critic and diagnosed the evils of society in some of his poems. His "The Wits, or Sessions of the Poets" was a mock-ballad directed at contemporary writers. In "A Ballad upon a Wedding" he took the conventional epithalamium to a new height. In "The Deformed Mistress" Suckling made a parody of the conventional blazons (blazon is a poetic device by means of

which the poet catalogues the physical charms of the female subject). In "Why so pale and wan fond lover?" Suckling makes a satirical dig at the lachrymose Petrarchan lover,

> "Why so dull and mute young sinner?
> Prithee why so mute?
> Will, when speaking well can't win her,
> Saying nothing do't?
> Prithee why so mute?"

Richard Lovelace (1618- 1658)

Lovelace was a formidable name among the cavalier poets. He fought for Charles I during the Civil War and was imprisoned in 1642. No other cavalier poet expressed more beautifully the cavalier code of honour than he. His poems are contained in two volumes: *Lucasta* and *Posthumous Poems*. His famous poems reflect the aftermath of the Civil War. His "To Althea, from Prison", occasioned by the tyranny of the Puritan government under Oliver Cromwell, evinces his plea for freedom:

> "Stone Walls do not a Prison make,
> Nor Iron bars a Cage;
> Minds innocent and quiet take
> That for an Hermitage."

Some of the major themes present in his works are honour, courage, longing and hope for a good life. Traces of metaphysical wit and imagery are found in some of his poems like 'The Grasshopper'. In poems such as "The Falcon", "Another", "The Ant" he discusses the political events of his time allegorically.

3.12.4 Glossary of Related Terms

Sonnet: A poetic form derived from the Italian word 'sonetto', referring to a fourteen line poem following a particular structure and rhyming pattern.

Lyric: A particular type of poem which has a song-like quality (can be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre or harp) and is emotional in appeal.

Ballad: A narrative poem (a poem which tells a story), usually of folk origin which can be set to music. It often has a repetitive stanza or 'refrain' at the end which deals with a romantic or melancholic truth of life.

Blank Verse: Unrhymed iambic pentameter- the most common verse form in English poetry.

Epic: An extended narrative poem with the following features:

- Serious or elevated subject matter
- Elaborate metaphors and exalted language
- Celebrating heroic deeds of the protagonist/s
- Grand style
- Invocation to the muse and presence of a supernatural, higher authority
- High moral tone

Ode: A lyrical poem in praise of or dedicated to someone.

Heroic couplet: Rhyming pairs of lines in iambic pentameter, suitable for epic or narrative poetry.

Terza rima: A typical verse stanza form which consists of an interlocking three-line rhyme scheme (aba bcb cdc). This was introduced by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri.

Rhyme royal: Stanza consisting of seven lines, usually in iambic_pentameter following the rhyme scheme ababbcc. Extensively used by the medieval poet Chaucer and considered to be a suitable measure for composing narrative poetry.

Masque: Form of festive courtly entertainment (pageant) that flourished in 16th- and early 17th-century Europe.It combined dialogue, song dancing and pantomime.

Pattern-poetry: The lines were designed to form a specific shape (such as a swan, an egg, wings, etc.) and with a similar theme. Of Greek origin , pattern poetry was practised by some 17th. century poets, for example, George Herbert. You may take a look at Herbert's "Easter Wings' in an anthology of metaphysical poetry, to get an idea.

3.12.5 Detailed Summing Up

The Development of Elizabethan Poetry

- The Renaissance saw the encouragement of poets by the Tudor court. The court- poets wrote poems which ranged over a variety of subjects including friendship, love, jealousy and betrayal.

- The rich, noble patrons of arts played an important role in influencing the literary genres, as the poets had to cater to their tastes and value their judgement in order to continue being in their favour.
- The sonnet, the epic, the elegy and the pastoral — all forms of poetry followed particular conventions , descending from classical literature and entering English poetry through Italian or French poetry .
- The poets depict intimate feelings and make passionate declarations of love in their poetry . But often , the poetic persona is a creation of the poetic convention although sometimes there are touches of personal experience. The theme of 'carpe diem' was a recurrent motif , in all forms of lyric poetry.
- The concept of humanism can be traced in most of the works, and the search of earthly beauty and perfection was a recurring theme. Neo –Platonism was a strong influence . Greco-Roman myths were often retold in experimental verse.
- The employment of subtle wit and double meanings in poetry was fairly common.

The following are some of the important forms of poetry which flourished in the period spanning the early and late Tudor period.

- Lyrical Poetry of all types, especially the sonnet.
- Descriptive and narrative poetry, mainly allegorical and pastoral works with references to Greek mythology.
- Religious and didactic poetry.
- Satirical poems.
- The Epic.

The Development of Poetry- Metaphysical Tradition

Metaphysical poets broke away from the traditional Petrarchan verse. Metaphysical poets such as John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan and others made an amalgam of emotion and reason. Some of the features of their poetry are as follows—

- The poems are characterised by a note of realism.
- Most of the metaphysical poems have a dramatic beginning.

- They used the diction and rhythm of spoken speech in place of refined and ornamental diction.
- 'Unified Sensibility' (a union of reason and emotion) is a hallmark of metaphysical verse.
- Employment of far-fetched comparisons known as metaphysical conceit is a special feature of metaphysical poets.
- Metaphysical poetry is remarkable for its syllogistic structure. Its argumentative nature enhances the readers' interest in following the progress from stanza to stanza.
- Concentration is another feature of metaphysical poetry.

The Development of Poetry- Cavalier Tradition

Cavalier poets were court poets. They were different from the metaphysical poets in the sense that their poetry is less intellectual and more emotional. Famous cavalier poets were Robert Herrick, John Suckling, Richard Lovelace and Thomas Carew. They were inspired by the poetry of Ben Jonson. Some of the features of their poetry are-

- Their poetry gave expression to the life and culture of the upper class.
- They were influenced by classical ideas.
- Love and chivalry are oft-treated themes in their verse.
- Cavalier poetry is marked by gaiety and wit.
- In cavalier poetry we find frequent references to Roman mythology.

3.12.6 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type:

1. Discuss the development of Elizabethan poetry.
2. Write an essay on the contribution of the metaphysical poets to English literature.
3. Write an essay on the contribution of the cavalier Poets to English literature.
4. Discuss the development of the sonnet from Wyatt to Shakespeare.

Medium Length Answers:

1. Discuss some of the common themes found in the Elizabethan sonnets.
2. Assess the contribution of Edmund Spenser as a Renaissance poet.
3. Assess the contribution of John Donne as a metaphysical poet.
4. What are the main points of difference between Elizabethan and metaphysical poetry?

Short Answer Type:

1. Briefly write on any two metaphysical poets belonging to school of John Donne.
2. Who are the cavalier poets? Comment on the works of any two of them.
3. Assess the contribution of Edmund Spenser as an Elizabethan poet.
4. Assess the contribution of Sir Philip Sidney to Elizabethan poetry.

3.12.7 Suggested Reading

History of English Literature by Edward Albert.

A Short Oxford History of English Literature by Andrew Sanders.

The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature by George Sampson.

The Pelican Guide to English Literature (Volume 2): The Age of Shakespeare (Ed. Boris Ford).

The Pelican Guide to English literature (Volume 3): From Donne to Marvell (Ed. Boris Ford).

Unit-13 □ The Rise of Secular Drama in England

Structure

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3.13.0 Introduction

As in the genres of poetry and prose, drama too was largely influenced by the Renaissance. In this Unit you will see for yourselves how different from medieval dramaturgy and varied in itself the dramatic output of this period was. Notice that the one significant break in dramatic traditions found here is the complete independence from any kind of religious motives. Of course, the Interludes in the earlier period had already signalled this break; but the departure is much more pronounced in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The insistence here is on incorporating in themes and characters, the diverse aspects that contemporary culture had incorporated as a result of the Renaissance. You have had some acquaintance with this multiplicity in the previous unit(s). You will also do good to connect with the continuities with Classical Drama that are mentioned in Module 1 Unit 3 of Core Course 2. Given below are some of

the significant heads under which we shall be studying anew the developments in the drama of this period:

- To understand the movements that influenced the development of drama.
- To identify the major dramatists and their plays.
- To study how playhouses and patrons were important
- To note how drama suffered a decline and ultimately the theatres were shut down.

3.13.1 The Movements that Influenced Drama

"The Renaissance is a European phenomenon. In all literatures in the sixteenth century the same general causes were at work: the liberation of thought from the scholasticism that bound it; the revolt against spiritual authority incited by the Reformers, who were later the bitterest enemies of the same revolt; wonder at the new earth and sky as revealed by navigators and astronomers; perception of greater beauty in the Greek and Latin classics—especially in the former, which had lately been recovered. But while these characteristics were common to all, the effect of the Renaissance in each country was the formation of a national literature. In the Renaissance as in the Reformation there was a strong element of individualism. The desire for literary beauty led to an intensive cultivation of the language spoken by each nation, to an increased use of its own power of expression." (Legouis 62)

The word Renaissance as you already know, literally means 'rebirth' and signifies the complex processes of change that transformed England like many other European countries during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The "new learning" had already made itself felt in various parts of Europe during the 14th and 15th centuries. The revival of classical learning also fostered an interest in the vernacular language. Those scholars who helped to bring about a revival of learning were called Humanists. They shifted the focus from God to man and promoted an interest in the commonplace. The Humanists flourished around 1490 to 1578 (Legouis 64) and included names like William Grocyn; Thomas Linacre; John Colet; Sir Thomas More and the Educationists like Sir Thomas Elyot; Sir John Cheke and Roger Ascham among countless others. "Humanism did not long remain undisturbed. Scarcely had it reached literature when the Reformation crossed and thwarted it." (Legouis 67) A large number of Humanists were forced to choose between the Pope and Luther or Calvin.

The **Bible** and the **Prayer Book** got translated in several versions, notably by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale and introduced the "biblical dialect" in English prose. The vernacular language translations of the Bible culminated in King James

I sanctioning the *Authorized Version* of the Bible in 1611. The dissolution of the monasteries between 1535 and 1539 (Legouis 68) gave rise to antiquarians and chroniclers like John Leland, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, John Stow and John Speed. The Reformation manifested itself in literary movements in Scotland as well. The reduced influence of the church and the rise of Protestantism meant the beginning of the 'modern era'. In England the Act of Supremacy that declared the King as the Head of the Church of England was passed. The King began to confiscate church property, demolishing some, and selling others. This helped in the growth of a new class of gentry who would patronize the arts and drama in the future. Elizabeth tried to reconcile the papists and the Protestants but neither was appeased by the measures she adopted and the Queen was to be troubled throughout her reign by the schism. The Reformation movement led to the dominance of Puritanism which gradually turned an enemy of drama and led to the closing of the theatres in 1642.

3.13.2 Drama in Transition

"None the less it is a fact that although the Renaissance and the Reformation beckoned her onwards to new paths, England remained more faithful to the past than did the Continent. This is explained by the increasing influence of the people, later exerted particularly strongly in the theatre; popular taste in literature is for things of the past." (Legouis 63)

English drama traces its origins to Christianity. Plays were written by priests and performed in the church precincts. Early plays were called 'Mysteries'—they took their stories from the Bible and 'Miracles'—those plays dealing with incidents in the lives of saints and martyrs. The miracle plays were viewed with disfavour by Protestants and Humanists. Later the plays shifted out of the church and into the market places. Four cycles of plays have been preserved—those of Chester, Coventry, York and Towneley. These plays contain religious instruction and sometimes crude jokes in the Biblical scenes. In *The Second Shepherd's Play* that you've read in Paper 1, remember how Mak steals a sheep and hides it in his wife's bed, passing it off as a baby in a cradle.

Drama evolved into the 'Morality play' which replaced Biblical characters with personified abstractions. Vice was a common and sometimes comic character in a Morality. A famous example of the Morality play was *Everyman*. "The Reformation early sought to use the moralities for her own ends; and the attempt was made simultaneously in Scotland and England." (Legouis 75) In Scotland Sir David Lyndsay

and in England John Bale wrote moralities mingling the political or historical with the religious. Bale's *Kyng Johan* anticipates Shakespeare's *King John*. Skelton's morality *Magnyfycence* written about 1516 is the first example of a secular morality. It gives Henry VIII apparently a lesson in wisdom and against extravagance. The influence of the Renaissance appears more clearly in *The Four Elements* (1519) and the play of *Wyt and Science* (towards 1540). The next stage of drama was the 'Interludes'. These were short plays with mainly ordinary characters like citizens or friars. There was broad farcical humour too. The Interlude was the predominant form of drama under the Tudors. John Heywood (1497?-1580?) showed a keen sense of stage-craft. Heywood's Interludes are comic dialogues or slight jesting scenes, based as a rule on French originals. The best known is *The Four P's* which involves a dispute between the Palmer, Pardoner, 'Pothecary (apothecary) and Pedlar about who can tell the biggest lie. "During 1520 to 1578 no masterpiece was produced." (Legouis 74)

Drama after 1550 shows the Classical influence: The "high comedy" of the first purely secular play in English, Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrece* (1497) had inspired no immediate successors. From 1550 onwards various writers produced original comic plays in English adopting the five-act structure, the unity of action and consistency of characterization from Latin playwrights like Plautus. Before 1552 Nicholas Udall wrote *Ralph Roister Doister*, a robust comedy. In the play Ralph is a braggart and a fool, Matthew Merygreke is inspired by the "parasite" figure of classical comedy and Dame Custance or Constance is a loyal English matron and her servants resemble real English servants. "Mirth", says Udall "prolongeth life and causeth health". (Legouis 76) *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (c.1559) acted in Cambridge is an equally vigorous native comedy. Mother Gurton loses her needle while mending the breeches (trousers) of her husband Hodge. The whole village is turned upside down and finally Hodge discovers the needle was all along in his breeches!

Romance was not considered necessary to comedy despite the success of Richard Edwards' lost plays *Damon and Pythias* (1564) and *Palamon and Arcite* (1566). Between 1550 and 1578 many English plays were performed. Some of these like *Appius and Virginia*, John Pikeryng's *A newe Enterlude of vice, conteyninge the History of Horestes...*(1597?) were like moralities, Thomas Preston's *Cambyses* (1569) was in form like a Shakespearean history play and Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) was notable.

Early English Tragedy was shaped by the Senecan plays of Italy and by Seneca himself whose dramas were translated by 1581. The Senecan form was a vital influence

in England and later playwrights adopted its pattern of high tragical action, the revenge motif, the ideas of fate and retribution told in blank verse, the mechanism of the supernatural in the shape of a ghost, the chorus and the play-within-a-play. *Gorbuduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex* (acted c.1561) was written jointly by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. It was written in blank verse and had a loftiness of style. Gorboduc abdicates in favour of his two sons Ferrex and Porrex. The younger prince kills the elder. The Queen takes revenge for the murder. There is rebellion, a civil war; the King and Queen are killed before things settle down. Spanish, Dutch and Italian plays also influenced the fledgling English theatre. Thomas Hughes' *Misfortunes of Arthur* (acted 1588) was an embryonic tragedy, lacking the vitality and vim of later tragedies. Gascoigne's *Jocasta* was acted in 1566 and was adapted from a play by Euripedes.

The History play was called the Chronicle play. John Bale's *King John* was a morality play with real figures from the reign of King John. *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *The Troublesome reign of King John* were predecessors of the history plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare. All these playwrights transformed plots and writing material from different sources into plays reflecting the might of their ruler.

3.13.3 The Stage

It was the formation of companies of professional players and their patronage by powerful noblemen that helped to establish drama on a more secure footing. The first company to obtain a Royal grant of a patent was that of the Earl of Leicester in 1574. The performances took place at first in the inn-yards, but in 1576 the first theatre was built outside the city boundaries. James Burbage, a joiner by trade, erected a playhouse beyond the city walls. The playhouses included the Red Lion, the Theatre, the Curtain, the Rose, the Swan, Fortune, Red Bull, the Hope, Blackfriars, Whitefriars, Paul's and the most famous the Globe. The Shoreditch Theatre was either the "first or the second permanent playhouse constructed in Europe since late antiquity" (Mullaney 18). In his *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579) Stephen Gosson attacks and states a number of objections to public theatre. The real fear was that of the illusory effect a play could produce and thus seem like the work of the devil. By the end of the century the city was ringed with playhouses to the north and south, posted strategically outside the jurisdiction and powers of civic containment and control or in the "liberties". Here the citizens pursued pastimes in the gaming houses, marketplaces, taverns, bear-baiting arenas and brothels which stood beside monasteries, sites of executions and at the extreme ends leprosy or 'lazar' houses.

From 1594, London was where the players were officially licensed by the Privy Council to perform in their own custom-built playhouses, week after week and year after year. On this stage the actor was important. His dress was gaudy and expensive and his delivery and timing needed to be perfect. There were no women performers yet and boys or young male actors played those parts (which sometimes caused uneasiness and disapproval). The audience was heterogeneous, made up of the "groundlings" and courtiers. Andrew Gurr's important study *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* shows how women also attended public theatres in significant numbers and included courtesans, aristocratic ladies and citizens' wives. Leading actors were very sought after and if they sometimes owned shares in the theatre they could make their fortune. Plays were later rehearsed before The Master of Revels before their public performance because theatre had become prominent and was therefore potentially dangerous. The story of companies between 1572 and 1642 is one of increasing royal favour and protection. Patrons included the Earls of Leicester, Essex, Sussex, Pembroke and Oxford, Lord Strange, Lord Admiral's Men, The Queen's Men, Lord Chamberlain's Men and later The King's Men in the time of James I. For nearly forty years London never had fewer than six playhouses with four regular companies (enjoying royal patronage), performing daily except on Sundays and for most of Lent, or when the plague set everyone apart.

3.13.4 The Dramatists and Their Plays: University Wits & Others

The number and diversity of the plays make classification difficult as does a lack of exact dates. The principal predecessors of Shakespeare in the history of English drama were the "University Wits". These were young men who were associated with Oxford and Cambridge universities that trained their students in rhetoric with the aid of Seneca, Terence and modern Latin imitations. The most notable were Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Kyd and Lyly. Among the plays acted before court were the plays of John Lyly (1554?-1606) whose comedies were euphuistic romances. These witty comedies like *Campaspe* (1581), *Sapho and Phao* (1582), *Endimion* (1586), *Midas* (1590) address and flatter the various attributes of the majesty of the queen, Elizabeth. The mythological pastorals were *Galathea*; *Love's Metamorphosis*, *The Woman in the Moon* and *Mother Bombie*. Lyly wrote a prose ('euphuistic') that was artificial in structure and language but refined in manner, witty and graceful beneath the artificiality. His plays paved the way for Shakespeare's *Love's Labour Lost*, *As You Like It* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

George Peele (1558-1597) also flatters Elizabeth in his graceful pastoral *The Arraygnement of Paris* (1581) He uses the same ornate manner in his scripture drama *The love of David and Fair Bethsabe, with the Tragedy of Absalon*. He turned to history in his rambling chronicle play *Edward I* and parodied the romanticists in *The Old Wives' Tale*. In the play Madge, the old wife begins to tell a story but breaks off after several false starts, once the actors enter. In the story two brothers are seeking their sister who is under the spell of a magician.

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) wrote *The Spanish Tragedie* which revealed great dramatic power as did another play written by an unknown author *Arden of Feversham* (1586). The latter play is based on details of a recent crime taken from Holinshed's Chronicle. The subject is the murder of a rich citizen, Arden, by the tailor Mosbie who is the lover of Alice, Arden's wife. Alice instigates Mosbie to commit the crime but dies repentant. The play has a striking realism. Kyd's play borrows heavily from Seneca, especially his scenes of horror, madness and the supernatural. *The Spanish Tragedie* is a revenge drama. Horatio is the son of Hieronimo, the marshal of Spain. He is murdered for daring to love Bel-Imperia, a Spanish princess. She and Hieronimo swear to discover the murderers and take revenge. Hieronimo pretends to be mad to find out his son's murderers. At Bel-Imperia's wedding where she is about to marry Horatio's murderer, Hieronimo enacts a play which enabled him to attend the wedding and at the same time take revenge. Every member of the wedding party is killed or kills himself. Kyd's revenge formula was successful and inspired many imitators. Kyd may have written a *Hamlet* twelve years before Shakespeare's famous play but it is now lost.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) wrote a play that attracted as much attention as Kyd's play. This was *Tamburlaine Parts 1 and 2*. Marlowe was a University wit who graduated from the University of Cambridge. He brought his intellectual expertise to the profession of writing plays. His Tartar conqueror Timurlane was a humble shepherd who goes on to become the master of Asia and shows how man can aspire to the infinite. *Doctor Faustus* (1588) is based on a thirst for infinite knowledge. The main character Faustus sells his soul to the devil in exchange of twenty-four years of wish-fulfilment. The agony of Faustus as he realises at last the price he has to pay for his damnation is brilliant. In *The Jew of Malta* (1589) the Jew Barabas wants infinite riches. His greed makes him destroy several Christian enemies, his own daughter until he is caught in the very trap he sets for others. Marlowe's historical play *Edward II* is mature and its versification approaches the tone of the human voice. There are passages of lyricism but some scenes like the abdication and murder scenes are simply brilliant. The play begins with Edward's accession to the throne after the death of his father, it traces his troubled reign which came about because

of his favouritism (Gaveston is his most favourite) and his clashes with his noblemen. The play culminates in Edward's murder and the accession of his able son Edward III who takes revenge. The Queen is a strong figure in the play. Marlowe made his heroes speak in 'high astounding terms' and their power instilled a sense of patriotism in the hearts of his audiences. Marlowe writes in his Prologue to *Tamburlaine* that he will shape the diction and metre of drama away from the prevalent "... jigging veins of rhyming mother wits/ And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay."

Robert Greene (1560?-1592) imitated and parodied the extravagance of *Tamburlaine* in his *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587) and *Orlando Furioso* (1591). Greene wrote a play with Thomas Lodge entitled *The Looking Glass for London and England*. He returned to his own style in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589) and the pseudo-historical drama *The Scottish History of James IV slain at Flodden...* (1592) Greene has more suppleness and grace than Marlowe and his heroines like fair Margaret of Fressinfield; Ida and Dorothea foreshadow the romantic heroines of Shakespeare.

3.13.5 William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) "He was the man," said Dryden, "who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul." (Albert 106) In 1592 Robert Greene wrote in his book *A Groatsworth of Wit* about an "upstart crow" who was "the only Shakescene in the country". In 1595 Shakespeare's name appears on the payroll of the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors, who performed at the Court. This company also played in the provinces, especially during the plague of 1603, in the Shoreditch Theatre till it was demolished, in the Globe Theatre and finally after 1608 in the Blackfriars. During this period Shakespeare prospered and purchased property in Stratford and London. He was an actor also; tradition states he enacted the role of Adam in *As You Like It* and the Ghost in *Hamlet*, minor character roles. About 1610 Shakespeare left for Stratford and his connection with the acting company may have ended when the Globe theatre burned down during a performance of Henry VIII in 1613. Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was a famous poet too. He wrote many sonnets and his lyricism found an expression in his plays as well. Mostly songs, they range from grace and rusticity in his comedies *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and last plays like *The Tempest* to wry humour, nonsense verse, as well as dirges in his famous tragedies.

All the manuscripts of his plays have perished. During Shakespeare's lifetime 16 of his plays appeared singly in Quarto form, but they were unauthorized editions. In 1623, after Shakespeare's death, the First Folio edition edited by John Heminge and Henry Condell was printed containing 36 dramas, minus *Pericles*. Contemporary references like Elizabethan schoolmaster Francis Meres' book *Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury* (1598) mentions twelve of Shakespeare's plays and other works. The style of the plays and internal references of contemporary events help in dating some of the plays. The dates are thus:

1591-92: *1 Henry VI, 2 Henry VI, 3 Henry VI*

1593: *Richard III, The Comedy of Errors*

1594: *Titus Andronicus, The Taming of the Shrew, Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet*

1595: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, King John*

1596: *Richard II, The Merchant of Venice*

1597: *1 Henry IV*

1598: *2 Henry IV, Much Ado about Nothing*

1599: *Henry V, Julius Caesar*

1600: *The Merry Wives of Windsor, As You Like It*

1601: *Hamlet, Twelfth Night*

1602: *Troilus and Cressida, All's Well that Ends Well*

1603: *Theatres closed*

1604: *Measure for Measure, Othello*

1605: *Macbeth, King Lear*

1606: *Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus*

1607: *Timon of Athens*

1608: *Pericles (in part)*

1609: *Cymbeline*

1610: *The Winter's Tale*

1611: *The Tempest*

1613: *Henry VIII (in part)*

Classification of the Plays according to Edward Albert:

1. The Early Comedies: these are relatively immature, the plots are less original, the characters less finished. *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* fall into this category.
2. The English Histories: These plays show a rapid maturing of Shakespeare's technique. The characters are increasingly complex and have depth. He mingles chronicle history and low life. There is more blank verse in the style. *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* fall into this category.
3. The Mature Comedies: The spirit of Shakespeare's comic genius expresses itself. There is the sophisticated wit of Beatrice and Benedick or the clowning of Dogberry and Verges in *Much Ado about Nothing*, the jovial robust humour of Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, the lighter clowning of Sir Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*, the urbane worldlywise humour of Touchstone in *As You Like It*. In style there is much prose and the plays reveal a vitality, warmth and humanity.
4. The Sombre Plays: These are comedies in the sense that their chief characters do not die but the tone is sombre and tragic. They reflect a cynical, disillusioned attitude to life and a fondness for objectionable characters and situations. *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida* fall in this category.
5. The Great Tragedies: These plays are supreme in intensity of emotion, depth of psychological insight, and power of style. They include *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.
6. The Roman Plays: These plays are written at wide intervals and based on North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*. *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* soar in imagination and tragic power.
7. The Last Plays: The dramatist shows a mellowed approach in these plays, the style is more serene. *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* fall in this group.

Shakespeare's characters are memorable, his plays are quotable and the lines contain sweetness, flexibility, and rant where needed. Moving in the realm of poetry the plays express a vast gamut of human emotion and at all times reflect his genius.

3.13.6 Post–Shakespearean Scene & The Decline of Deama

Shakespeare's chief rivals were among the humanists. The hostility shown to him at the beginning by some of the University wits like Greene was renewed later by Chapman and Jonson. Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was the most prominent of Shakespeare's contemporaries. But their styles are studies in contrasts. Jonson was a classicist and deliberately opposed popular taste. Jonson's really great play is his comedy *Everyman in his Humour* (1598). In *Everyman out of his Humour* (1599) Jonson portrays contemporary types. His Aristophanic comedies are *Cynthia's Revels* (1601) and the *Poetaster* (1602). The characters in the latter play satirized his fellow dramatists Marston and Dekker. *The Alchemist* (1610) is a great play. Its main figure Sir Epicure Mammon is a generalised type of human greed and extraordinary vitality. Subtle poses as an alchemist and draws around him a set of dupes and gulls who allow themselves to be cheated by the hope of sudden riches. Ultimately the chief dupers are duped. *Volpone, or the Fox* (1605) is a study of exploitation. The main character is a miserly sensualist. *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* (1609) is more like the Comedy of Manners and the main character cannot tolerate noise. *Bartholomew Fayre* (or Fair, 1614) portrays Elizabethan London and satirizes the growing Puritanism of the day. In tragedy Ben Jonson was less successful. *Sejanus* (1603) and *Catiline* (1611) depict their Roman background faithfully but fall short of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Jonson's characters are "Humour" characters. One element in their nature is displayed throughout the play and exposed to ridicule. Taken from the prevailing medical belief that the human body is composed of four basic humours of fluids (blood, choler, melancholy and phlegm), they determine the characters of individuals. Too much of a particular humour throws a man's character off balance. Thus humour provided Jonson with tools for satire. He brought out the moral diseases of human nature. His humour characters would inspire later novelists like Fielding, Smollett and Charles Dickens.

George Chapman (1559-1634) was also a contemporary of Shakespeare. He translated Homer and wrote plays quite late in his life. His chief comedies are *Al Fooles, Monsieur d'Olive* and *The Gentleman Usher*. These comedies all published in 1605 and 1606 have a graceful style and pleasant wit. In his tragedies he gives way to romanticism, and shows the influence of Marlowe. Moral reflections of Greek and Latin authors peppered his plays. The best known tragedies, founded on contemporary French history, are *Bussy d'Ambois* (1598), *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (1613), *The Conspiracie and Tragedie of Charles, Duke of Byron, Marshall of France* (1608). *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* is a kind of *Hamlet*. Bussy d'Ambois is assassinated and his brother Clermont who is a philosopher decides to avenge his death after

much thought. Byron is depicted as a braggart, full of "overweening ambition" (Legouis 135) Chapman had a sound intellectual base and a romantic temperament but in his plays he sometimes lacked a sense of balance.

Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy

John Marston (1575?-1634) was "a ruffian in style" (Legouis 139) his plays have plenty of coarse and violent speech. His first plays like *Antonio and Mellida* (1600) and *Antonio's Revenge* are melodramas. They contain a few impressive passages of horror. His best plays are a kind of tragic-comedy cf. *The Malcontent* anticipates some of Shakespeare's last plays. His *The Dutch Courtezan* (1605) is a counterpart of Dekker's *The Honest Whore*. *The Parasitaster, or the Fawne* (1606) has heroines similar to Shakespeare's Beatrice and Rosalind but stained with a coarseness. He shared honours with Jonson and Chapman in writing *Eastward Hoe*. The play portrays the life of a tradesman, apprentices and the interior of middle-class households realistically. Marston was incisive and nervous, his talent helped his contemporaries.

Thomas Dekker (1570?-1632) Dekker unites everyday realism with irresistible romanticism. He struggled with poverty and years in a debtor's prison. He wrote mostly in collaboration with other dramatists. The gayest of his comedies is *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599). The hero is Simon Eyre, a jovial London shoemaker, who is vividly described as are his shrewish wife and his apprentices and journeymen. In *Old Fortunatus* (1599?) the poet Dekker is visible in the scene where the goddess Fortune appears with her train of cowned beggars and chained kings. His best known work is *The Honest Whore* which was published in two parts. The first part (1604) shows us the courtesan turning from her shame and responding to love. In the second part she is married to her first seducer, a terrible man, who tries to make her return to her old profession for gain. Unknown to them her father Orlando Friscobaldo is disguised as a servant and watches over her.

Thomas Heywood (1575?-1650) is the nearest to Dekker in terms of pity and gentleness and has been described by Lamb as 'a sort of prose Shakespeare' (Legouis 141). Like Dekker he kept his plays confined to the city and Heywood was an actor as well as playwright. He appeals to the patriotism of his audience sometimes and sometimes he appeals to honest emotion. In *The Foure Prentises of London, with the Conquest of Jerusalem* there is open flattery of the city. The citizens of London play chief parts in his *Edward IV*, *The Troubles of Queen Elizabeth* and *The Fayre Mayde of the Exchange*. Heywood succeeded best in domestic drama—*A Woman Kilde with Kindnesse*, acted in 1603 and *The English Traveller* (1633). A woman destroys her happy home by her adultery and her grieving husband banishes her in a fit of revenge. She suffers agonies of remorse and at last when her husband forgives her she dies

in that instant. Heywood had an instinctive goodness, a broad pity for his fellow humans that was untouched by Puritan rigour.

Thomas Middleton (1580-1627) was a city chronologer and writer of municipal masques and pageants. He was attached to London like Dekker and Heywood and the city was the subject of his plays. Middleton was a cynic and like Jonson showed up the crooked ways and vices of the people. From 1604 to 1612 he wrote several lively comedies. The best are *Michaelmas Terme* (1604), *A Trick to Catch the Old One, A Mad World, My Masters, Your Five Gallants* (1606) and *A Chast Mayd in Cheap-side* (1612). The people who star in these plays are types of revellers, gamblers, thieves and vagabonds. Middleton showed vice openly on stage though he did not approve of it. Towards 1612 Middleton turned his hand to writing tragedies, sometimes in collaboration and showed great skill in doing so. *Women beware Women* deals with the scandalous crimes of the courtesan Bianca Capello and how she transforms from a pure, innocent loving wife into something horrifying. Middleton and the actor William Rowley (1585?-1642?) jointly wrote *A Faire Quarrell* (1617), *The Changeling* (1621) and *The Spanish Gipsie* (1623). *The Changeling* is their masterpiece, drawing horrifying events and bringing to life the character of De Flores with tragic force.

Cyril Tourneur turned to stark melodrama and threw a fantastic light on crime and torture. *The Revenger's Tragedie* (1607) and *The Atheist's Tragedie* (1611) are his major contributions. Vindice in the former play forces his mother to look her villainy in the face and the play has Italian garb.

John Webster (1575?-1625?) has written many plays, some in collaboration with other playwrights but is remembered for two outstanding dramas of horror—*The White Devil* or *Vittoria Corombona* (c.1611) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614) *The White Devil* is based on the character of the end of the sixteenth century Italian beauty Vittoria Accorambona who scandalized Rome with her crimes but Webster also makes us see her fascination even when she is at the centre of a wicked plot. There are extravagant scenes of physical horror and fantastic strangeness. *The Duchess of Malfi* centres on the love of the Duchess for her steward Antonio whom she marries to the disapproval of her brothers. Ultimately the Duchess is driven mad and dies and Bosola takes revenge on the guilty brothers as a manner of atonement. Webster's genius was individual.

John Fletcher and his collaborators wrote several plays collected in the folio of 1647 and the folio of 1679.

John Fletcher (1579-1625) was inclined to write plays and made use of collaborative ventures to meet the players' needs. With Francis Beaumont (1584-1616) who was the son of a judge, Fletcher formed a friendship towards 1607.

Separately Beaumont produced his comedy *The Woman Hater* and Fletcher his half-lyrical pastoral *The Faithfull Shepheardesse*. But they wrote comedies like *The Scorneful Ladie*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* or tragicomedies like *Philaster* or pure tragedy like *The Maides Tragedy* and *A King and no King* (1611) together. All the plays demonstrate knowledge of stage-craft. With Shakespeare Fletcher collaborated on certain passages in *Henry VIII* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. Fletcher had written many romantic tragedies alone like *The Tragedie of Valentinian*, *The Tragedie of Bonduca*, *The Loyal Subject* (1618) and *The Humourous Lieutenant* (1619). He also wrote comedies like *Monsieur Thomas*, *The Pilgrim* and *The Wild-Goose Chase*. Fletcher's chief helper after Beaumont was Philip Massinger. They wrote ten plays together, tragedies like *The False One* or comedies like *The Little French Lawyer*, *The Spanish Curate* and *The Beggar's Bush*.

Shakespeare's Successors till the closing of Theatres

Philip Massinger (1583-1639) was the playwright who dominated the stage both by the sheer number and quality of his plays. He combined Ben Jonson's exaggeration of human eccentricities and vices in his comedies with the romanticism of Fletcher in his tragedies. Massinger's drama is a "drama of ideas" (Legouis 148) His best comedies are *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (before 1626), *The City Madam* (1632) *The Guardian* (1633) and his serious plays are *The Fatall Dowry* (1619), *The Duke of Millaine* (1620), *The Unnatural Combat* (1621), *The Maid of Honour* (1626) among others.

John Ford (1586-1639?) wrote at the same time as Massinger but his plays were narrower in compass. He was a fatalist, morbid and convinced that passion justifies all things. He mainly collaborated with Webster, Dekker, and Rowley. His own works were produced between 1627 and 1633. He wrote a historical play *Perkin Warbeck* and tragedies like *The Lover's Melancholy*, *'Tis Pity Shee's a Whore*, *The Broken Heart* and *Love's Sacrifice*. Melodrama and morbidity mingle with incest unhappy virtue amidst perverse suffering. These themes label Ford's work as decadent but as an artist he ranks high.

James Shirley's (1596-1666) plays were more prolific and varied than Ford's. Lamb called him "the last of a great race". (Legouis 150) His tragedies like *The Traytor* (1631) and *The Cardinall* (1641) show the influence of Tourneur and Webster. There is more novelty in his comedies, lively sketches of fashionable life under Charles I, *The Wedding*, *Changes*, *Hyde Park*, *The Gamester* and *The Lady of Pleasure* written between 1626 and 1635. Shirley also wrote tragic-comedies in the style of

Fletcher. There are many minor dramatists as drama grew greatly during the Renaissance. This growth stopped with the closing of the theatres by the order of Parliament in 1642.

3.13.7 Summing Up

→ We should, on the basis of the foregoing discussion be able to have a fair idea of how the Renaissance and Reformation affected English drama.

→ We should be able to trace the growth and transition from a drama that was religious and was performed on travelling stages to a drama that was secular and later led to permanent theatres being constructed for staging popular plays. We note the need for patronage and its influence on acting companies.

→ We should have an idea of the major playwrights of the period and some of their plays; also note the variety as well as enormous output of such plays.

→ We follow the progress of drama, till its decadence and decline until the closing of the theatres in 1642.

3.13.8 Activity Corner

→ Many of the plays mentioned in this Unit can be found on You Tube. View some.

→ You can see films of Shakespearean plays made by the BBC production or American, English and other language versions which adapt these plays: *Twelfth Night* (UK, 1995), *Macbeth* (USA, 1948 dir: Orson Welles. UK, 1971 dir: Roman Polanski), *Throne of Blood* (Japan, 1957, dir: Akira Kurosawa adapts *Macbeth*), *Romeo and Juliet* (USA, 1996), *The Taming of the Shrew* (USA/ Italy, 1966), *Richard III* (UK, 1996), *Othello* (UK, 1995), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (UK, 1996. USA, 1999), *Julius Caesar* (USA, 1953), *King Lear* (UK, 1971. Japanese adaptation *Ran* by Kurosawa, 1985), *Hamlet* (UK, 1948 dir: Laurence Olivier. UK, 1990 dir: Franco Zeffirelli. UK, 1996 dir: Kenneth Branagh). Modern adaptations include *Ten Things I Hate About You*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *She's the Man*, *Tromeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story*, among countless others.

→ Read Books which adapt Shakespeare's life or his plays like Angela Carter's *Wise Children* (several references), Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (*The Tempest*

story) or Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* (*King Lear*) or Kalyan Ray's *Eastwords (A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* mainly).

→ Look up on the net some words given to the English language by Shakespeare. He has many famous quotes which could be compiled. E.g. "To be or not to be"

3.13.9 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type

1. Trace the growth of drama till the Renaissance.
2. Who were the 'University Wits' and what was their contribution to drama?
3. Write a note on English Revenge Tragedy.
4. Who were the predecessors of Shakespeare in English drama? Describe the contribution of two of them and indicate how they advanced drama.
5. Give an account of the works of William Shakespeare.
6. Describe the kind of plays that were written post- Shakespeare.

Medium Length Answers

1. Describe the importance of Ben Jonson and his drama.
2. Write a brief note on two dramatists who wrote after Shakespeare.
3. Describe the importance of Beaumont and Fletcher.
4. Mention the contribution of Ford and Massinger in English drama.

Short Answer Type

1. What is a Miracle and what is a Morality play?
2. What is an Interlude? Give an example.
3. Name the first English tragedy and give its author and date.
4. Name the first English comedy with its author and date.
5. When was the First Folio of Shakespeare published? Name the editors.
6. Who was Raphael Holinshed? Why is he memorable?
7. Name one comedy and one tragedy by Shakespeare.
8. Mention two tragedies by Ben Jonson.

9. What is the Comedy of Humours? Give an example.
10. Give two examples of Elizabethan City Comedy and state their playwrights.
11. When was the first English theatre constructed? In which year did the theatres close?
12. Name two revenge tragedies and their dramatists.
13. Who was Seneca? Name an English play written under his influence?
14. Name one play by John Ford and one play by Philip Massinger.

3.13.10 Suggested Readings

General

1. Edward Albert (ed.) *History of English Literature*, OUP, India, 5th edn, 1979 rev. J.A.Stone.
2. David Daiches, *A Critical History of English Literature*, Vols. 2 and 3, Special Indian Edition, Supernova Publishers and Distributers Pvt. Ltd., 2001
3. Boris Ford (ed). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol. 2, The Age of Shakespeare*. Penguin Books Ltd, 1955.
4. Emile Legouis, *A Short History of English Literature* OUP, India, 2006.
5. Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, OUP, 2000.

Drama

Muriel Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions in Elizabethan Tragedy*, CUP, Cambridge, 1936.

E.K Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols., OUP, Oxford, 1923.

John. D Cox, and, David Scott Kastan , (eds.) *A New History of Early English Drama*, New York, 1997.

Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, CUP, Cambridge, 3rd edn, 2004.

Hattaway, Michael, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, London, 1982.

Allardyce Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage*, London, 1938.

NOTES

Module - Four

Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature-1

Unit-14 □ Thomas Wyatt : 'Farewell Love' Philip Sidney : 'Loving in Truth'

Structure

4.14.0 Introduction

4.14.1 The Sonnet Form

4.14.2 The Elizabethan Conceit

4.14.3 The Life & Works of Thomas Wyatt

4.14.4 Text of Farewell Love

4.14.5 Notes & References (Glossary)

4.14.6 Discussion & Analysis of Farewell Love

4.14.7 Summing up

4.14.8 Comprehension Exercises on Farewell Love

4.14.9 Activity Corner

4.14.10 Life & Works of Philip Sidney

4.14.11 Text of Loving in Truth

4.14.12 Notes & References (Glossary)

4.14.13 Discussion and Analysis of Loving in Truth

4.14.14 Summing up

4.14.15 Comprehension Exercises on Loving in Truth

4.14.16 Activity Corner

4.14.17 Comprehensive Reading List

4.14.0 Introduction

In this unit we shall give you an idea of the development of the sonnet form in England during the Renaissance i.e. the reign of Queen Elizabeth. You need to remember that the sonnet was a relatively recent poetic form that was imported into England as a result of the Renaissance. The poems in this unit belong to this early

category; hence they will provide you an understanding of how the form was gradually being domesticated in English literature. An in-depth analysis of the two poems, one each by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Philip Sidney will introduce the learners to the conventions and conceits prevalent in the earliest traditions of sonnet-writing in English literature. The themes of virtue, love, beauty and courtly decorum will be discussed and explored in detail.

4.14.1 The Sonnet Form

A sonnet is basically a fourteen line lyric which follows a particular rhyme scheme. It takes its name from the Italian 'sonnetto' which literally means 'little song'. In the Elizabethan Age, it was introduced to English literature by Thomas Wyatt, who is famous for his translations and adaptations of the great works of Francesca Petrarch, the Italian master of the sonnet. A Petrarachan sonnet is usually divided into an octave (containing eight lines) and a sestet (containing six lines) and following the rhyme scheme *abbaabba cdecde* or *abbaabba cdcdcd*. Wyatt was the first to initiate this verse form into English from Italy during the Renaissance. Between 1593 and 1600, there was a burst of writing in this particular genre.

4.14.2. The Elizabethan Conceit

A conceit is a fanciful idea, generally expressed through a decorative comparison or metaphor (a simile where the comparison is implied and not stated). The sonnet tradition endorsed the employment of elaborate conceits in Elizabethan poetry. The conventional sentiments of the poet-lover, that were popularised by the classical poets like Petrarch and Dante, found perfection in the conceits rendered by the English sonneteers. The stereotypical ideals of courtly society usually portrayed the lover as a humble, subservient persona in awe of the pure, uncorrupted beloved, who was always placed on a pedestal to be worshipped. The poet-speaker would constantly try to immortalise the lady love's beauty by drawing extravagant analogies to describe her figure and charm. These conceits were often far-fetched and founded on impossible standards of external feminine beauty. E.g: Skin described 'as fair as snow', or lips 'as red as ruby' etc. The Platonic concept of love being an emotion which rises above physical attraction can also be traced in the devotion of the speaker.

4.14.3 The Life and Works of Thomas Wyatt

Thomas Wyatt, the Elder was the son of Henry and Anne Wyatt, born in Allington Castle, Kent 1503. In 1516 he entered the University of Cambridge and was married to Elizabeth Brooke, the daughter of Lord Cobham. He was introduced to the court of King Henry VIII at a very young age and was sent to a number of diplomatic missions to foreign lands like France and Rome. He received the knighthood in 1535, but later he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for unruly behaviour. After his release, he was sent to Spain as an ambassador. He was imprisoned a second time for suspected treachery, a charge of which he was later acquitted. He died in 1542 and none of his poems were published during his lifetime.

Wyatt is credited with having introduced the Italian sonnet form and the **terza rima** to English poetry. Ninety six of his poems were published in 'Songs and Sonnetts Written By the Ryght Honorable Lord Henry Howard, late Earle of Surrey, Thomas Wyatt the Elder and others' (*Tottel's Miscellany),* which were basically courtly verse written in imitation of Petrarch (e.g. 'I find no peace, and all my war is done', 'How oft have I, my dear and cruel foe'). Some of his popular poems include 'Lux, my fair Falcon', 'Forget not yet', and 'Whoso List to Hunt' (supposed to be dedicated to Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII).

4.14.4 TEXT of Farewell Love

This sonnet was published in *Tottel's Miscellany* in1557 with the title "A Renouncing of Love."

Farewell Love and all thy Laws for ever

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Farewell love and all thy laws forever;
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more.
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore
To perfect wealth, my wit for to endeavour.
In blind error when I did persever,
Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore,
Hath taught me to set in trifles no store

And scape forth, since liberty is lever.
Therefore farewell; go trouble younger hearts
And in me claim no more authority.
With idle youth go use thy property
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts,
For hitherto though I have lost all my time,
Me lusteth no lenger rotten boughs to climb.

4.14.5 Notes and References (Glossary)

Farewell love: An example of personification, where the abstract emotion of love is granted human characteristics.

Thy: Archaic word for 'your'.

Laws: Rules and conventions.

Here we see that the speaker is disillusioned with the noble concept of love and discovers that romantic love has limitations.

Baited hooks: The metaphor or implicit comparison is derived from fishing. Just as fishermen attach bait (piece of food) to the fishing hook to catch fish, the speaker believes that young men are trapped in to falling in love. Hence love is deceptive.

Tangle: Snare, capture

Senec: Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 BC-AD 65) was a Roman philosopher, rhetorician, and dramatist. Wyatt was an admirer of the works of Seneca and even translated some of his writings. Seneca was a stoic thinker who established his theory of the rationality of the human mind, its virtue and ethics. The figure of speech used here is known as Allusion.

Plato: Plato (428–348 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher and poet. According to him, love as an emotion must be chaste, pure (almost divine) and non-sensuous or non-sexual in nature. The figure of speech used here is known as Allusion.

Lore: Wisdom or knowledge

Wealth: The mind's well-being

'In blind error when I did': The figure of speech used here is known as transferred epithet. The adjective 'blind' actually qualifies the speaker 'I' and not 'error'.

Persever: Persevere; keep trying

Repulse: Rejection, refusal

Pricketh: To sting (like a sharp-pointed needle or arrow)

'Hath taught me to set in trifles no store': This is an example of inversion

Aye: all

Sore: Painful, injurious

Hath: has

Trifles: false stories told to fool or cheat someone

Store: value

Scape forth: venture forward, move on

Lever: preferable

Authority: Right

Idle youth: immature young people (they fall in love easily). The figure of speech synecdoche is employed here.

Property: good looks, charm

Thereon: next

Hitherto: from now onwards

Brittle darts: Fragile arrows. The God of Love, Cupid, according to Greek mythology is blind. He shoots arrows from his bow to make people fall in love with each other and thus love is often referred to as blind or misleading.

Lusteth: want

Lenger: archaic word for 'longer'

Rotten boughs to climb: Climbing rotten branches of trees. Proverbially, 'climbing boughs' is one of the heroic deeds done out of chivalry to prove one's love.

4.14.6 Discussion and Analysis

- **SYNOPSIS:**

The speaker rejects or bids farewell to love (or, the object of his love) and all its complicated rules forever. He personifies the emotion of love and asserts that love and its puzzling ways cannot entrap him anymore. He is rather going to follow the teachings of the great philosophers Seneca and Plato, who treated the concept of love rationally and logically. He believes,

he will gain true knowledge and wisdom in this manner and be able to restore his mental well-being and wit. In the next lines, the speaker, obviously a rejected lover, addresses his beloved directly and declares how he had been mistaken in long suffering her resistance, which had been quite painful. This experience had taught him a valuable lesson. He will no longer attach value to such emotions and escape from the clutches of love, which will eventually give him freedom. The speaker equates love with pain, and declares that he would prefer to be free of its past memories.

In the sestet, the poet repeats his farewell to his beloved (whom we may accept as a lady, taking into account the conventional practices of Elizabethan love poetry) and adds that since his heart no longer belongs to her, she can perhaps go and fall in love with other young men. This line may also indicate the fact that love affects and beguiles young people easily. Her beauty and youth may attract other young men who are immature, just like he had once been. Again, the word 'property' may refer to Cupid's arrows. Cupid the God of love, according to Greek mythology is portrayed as a child who shoots a pair of golden arrows from his bow. Once these arrows pierce the hearts of their targets (one male and one female), the two people fall in love. Hence the affected lovers are not really the ones choosing their partners and are completely helpless to prevent this emotion. He compares the beloved's fickle looks (or love's ever-changing nature) to these arrows or darts, which prick to cause pain and are easily broken. Finally he rues the time that he has wasted in courting her and repents his efforts spent in winning her grace. He finally declares that he is past that age and wishes no longer to prove his love to her by accomplishing heroic deeds. The speaker refers to rotten branches in order to show how his love has died and how no new growth of their relationship is now possible.

- **CRITICAL EVALUATION:** According to Harry Blamires "At his best Wyatt has an intensity of feeling, an unaffectedness of phrase, and a directness of tone which, contained within a pressurized rhythmic pattern, sweep the reader into intimate involvement with him. One is carried on the tide." [1]

Most of the poems by Wyatt are acutely gloomy and melancholic in tone. The stock element of a disillusioned lover, who is separated from or forsaken by an unkind mistress, is found again and again. The lover blames the lady for being unyielding and unfeeling, curses the past now that he is disillusioned and questions the nature of love that misleads the young so easily. However,

unlike the Latin models, in this sonnet, the octet and sestet does not really provide a contrast in the emotions depicted and the entire sonnet is built upon a single argument.

- **MAJOR THEMES**
  - **Logic vs. Emotion**: The poet tries to show the distinction between the two forms of love- one, the romantic love that young people express for one another and two, the spiritual love that philosophers like Plato and Seneca rationalised logically in their works. The poet comes to the conclusion that in keeping himself separate from the pangs of disappointed love he will be able to uplift his mental powers.
  - **Inconstancy of the beloved**: The poet had tried very hard and endeavoured for a long time to please the beloved and win her approval. But having failed in this, he feels bitter and ill-used. He thinks his lady love has toyed with his heart and now that he has let go of his fancy, she is free to conquer the hearts of other young men.
  - **The Deceptive nature of Love**: Love as an emotion is personified in this poem as an illusory creature which entraps young immature people with its 'hooks'. The poet realises that love is hurtful, unfair, and deceiving. He had been blind and foolish in trying to attain it and now that he is heart-broken, he understands that he is too old and tired for such an experience anymore. Thus he bids farewell to love forever.
- **STRUCTURE AND FORM:** Rhyme scheme: *abbaabba cddcee.*It is a Petrarchan sonnet with a variation in the rhyme scheme of the couplet. G. Puttenham described the style adopted by the early Renaissance poets as having lofty conceits, lucid language and precise expressions. The sonnet, due to its condensed form, had to rely on the compactness of phrases, directness of address and a balanced metre.
- **STYLE:** It must be remembered that Wyatt gave the English sonnet a new level of craftsmanship. Through rigorous practice, he perfected the form and made way for the later poets. His sonnets are neither completely classical nor entirely romantic in tone. Rhetoric was given plenty of importance in this age. Poetry was meant for the upper classes and it was not just a matter of recreation. It instructed the noble minds while delighting the senses. A perfect combination of sentiment, imagery and logical precision was the

main requisite of a successful sonnet. The sonneteer would draw images from nature and employ them in a coherent manner in order to express his logical argument. Wyatt reveals a typically Elizabethan individualism and love for rationality in his sonnets.

4.14.7 Summing Up

- A rejected lover addresses the abstract concept of love (or his former beloved).
- Rejection of love and complete disillusionment on the part of the speaker.
- Faith in philosophy and reason restored and a wish to return to the dictates of Seneca and Plato.
- Evoking the image of the cruel beloved who is beautiful but fickle in love.
- Love equated with blindness, misery and youthful fancy.
- Pessimistic tone.

4.14.8 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem 'Farewell Love'.
2. Discuss the main theme of the poem 'Farewell Love' with special reference to the typical Elizabethan conventions employed.

Medium Length Type

3. Comment on the use of imagery in this sonnet.
4. Analyse the treatment of love in Wyatt's sonnet 'Farewell Love'.
5. Comment on the note of melancholy in this sonnet.

Short Answer type

6. Explain with reference to context the following lines:
   a) "For hitherto though I have lost all my time,
      Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to climb."
   b) "Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more.
      Senec and Plato call me from thy lore."

4.14.9 Activity Corner:

Read the following poem and see whether it is similar to the poem given in your syllabus:

Sonnet LXXXVII: Farewell! Thou art too dear for my possessing

William Shakespeare

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou knowst thy estimate.
The Charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thy self thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gav'st is, else mistaking,
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgement making.
Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter:
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

4.14.10 Life and Works of Philip Sidney

Sir Philip Sidney, the eldest son of Sir Henry Sidney was born in 1554 to an aristocratic family and educated at Oxford University. He was an illustrious member of the Elizabethan court and took part in the military expedition against Spain. He lost his life in 1586, at the young age of 32 in the battle near the city of Zutphen. He was awarded the knighthood for his immense contribution to the Elizabethan court. He was a poet, scholar, soldier, diplomat, literary critic and statesman par excellence. His sequence of 108 love sonnets and 11songs titled '**Astrophel and Stella**' was published in 1591 after his death and was heavily influenced by the works of Ronsard and Petrarch's sonnets (that were dedicated to his lady love Laura). He wrote the lyrics for his beloved **Penelope Devereux**, daughter of the Earl of

Essex, whom he was supposed to marry. However, their wedding never took place since his parents objected to that union and Penelope went on to marry Lord Rich. Sidney married Frances Walsingham, daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, in September 1583. Critics believe that it was around this time that these sonnets were composed and his wife never really objected to them. "Astrophel" is a combination of two Greek words meaning '**star-lover'** and "Stella" in Latin means '**star**'. The first 35 poems introduce Stella and concentrate on Astrophel's adoration for her; the next one addresses Stella directly and then the rest go on to praise her and win her affection. 'Stella oft sees the very face of woe', 'With how sad steps, O Moon', and 'Come sleep' are examples of some sonnets included in this compilation. Verses on various other themes by Sidney were published under the title 'Certain Sonnets' included in the 1598 edition of 'The Countess of Pembroke's **Arcadia**'. He wrote the prose piece **'A Defence of Poesy'** against Gosson's 'Schoole of Abuse', defending the position of poetry in the world of art.

4.14.11 Text of *Loving in Truth*

Loving in Truth ***(From Astrophel and Stella)***

Sir Philip Sidney

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,—
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe;
Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain,
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows;
And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

4.14.12 Notes and References (Glossary)

Fain in love: eagerly longing for love; also a play on the word 'feigning', which means 'to pretend'. The lover has undertaken the task of duplicating his true emotions on paper in the form of verses.

Grace: favour ; the word' grace' also has a religious connotation. Since the beloved is put on a pedestal and worshipped by the lover in the tradition of Elizabethan courtly love, her 'grace' or 'mercy' has to be earned by him (i.e. the devotee).

Pity: Compassion, kindliness. The beloved is often portrayed as unfeeling, unyielding and cold. Hence the lover hopes that his hard work and labour (in writing the poem) might earn some compassion from the beloved.

Blackest face of woe: Use of personification; 'woe' i.e. anguish or, misery is portrayed as having a dark- coloured appearance.

Inventions: Poetic trends already established by other poets. A method of imitation commonly practised by Renaissance poets was called 'Inventio'. This referred to consulting manuals of classical rhetoric and lists of acceptable figures of speech to insert in their works.

Wits: Intellectual faculty

Entertain: Amuse or interest

Turning others' leaves: Turning the pages of books (compilations of poetry) written by great poets before him.

Fruitful: Productive, Rewarding

Showers: Rainfall. Here the metaphor refers to an inspiring agent.

Sunburnt brain: The poet compares his brain to a dry, arid plain which is thirsty for rain, i.e. fresh, new ideas.

Halting forth: Stumbling or stopping altogether

Wanting: Inadequate

Invention's Stay: Breaking the flow of creativity.

Step-dame study's blows: 'Study' is personified here as a 'stepmother'. The figurative child 'creativity' flees when beaten or forced by 'study' to produce art.

Others' Feet: the works of other poets; a play on 'metrical feet'.

Throes: a severe pang of pain

Great with child: pregnant; this metaphor is employed to compare the artist's production of ideas to the act of giving birth by a mother.

Truant: absentee, since the pen refuses to write.

Spite: Malice

Muse: Divine inspiration; according to Greek mythology the Muses were nine sisters, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, who inspired the arts and sciences.

4.14.13 Discussion and Analysis

SYNOPSIS: The sonnets included in Philip Sidney's 'Astrophel and Stella' are autobiographical in nature and express his intense personal emotions. Sidney's love for Penelope Devereux was unfulfilled in real life and just like his fictional lover, Astrophel, he was a silent gazer who worshipped his beloved from a distance. The first sonnet in this collection is titled 'Loving in Truth'. First and foremost it is a love poem where a lover's sincere feelings find tender expression. Secondly, it is an introspective poem which deals with a poet's dilemma of producing and perfecting his art. The poet-speaker wishes to draw the attention of his lady love and it is through his poetic composition that he wishes to impress her. He believes that his verse might be able to gain her favour and approval.

The poem opens with a confession as the poet declares that his love is honest and true. But when he tries to show that through his poetry, he fails. In the next few lines he goes on to list his expectations. He hopes that his lady love would be pleased by seeing the painstaking effort he takes in composing the poem. Thus, she would oblige him further by reading his compositions and thereby gain the knowledge that he loves her dearly. Finally, she may take pity on the hopeful lover and eventually return his love. In order to entertain the lady love, the speaker knows that his verse must be superlative. Hence he searches for perfect words and phrases to relate his sad, suffering condition. Unfortunately, he lacks ideas. He then expects poetry written in books by other great poets to refresh and influence him just like fresh rain refreshes the sun-dried earth.

The sestet reinforces the idea that words fail him and he finds it rather difficult to compose verses naturally. He knows that 'creativity' or 'invention' is a natural process, pure and spontaneous. It is impossible to manufacture it through study, an artificial method. He refers to 'study' as a stepmother who cannot force the child 'invention' into submission. The words and expressions of other poets appear to be

strangers to his personal thoughts. He gets frustrated and bites his pen in annoyance. He feels helpless and hates himself as all his efforts prove to be fruitless. In the last line to the poem, suddenly he finds an answer to his dilemma. His Muse, the inspiring agent, whispers to him to look inside his heart and then write. The advice is simple yet apt. Words relating the sincerest feelings can only come straight from the heart and not through external, logical devices.

- **CRITICAL EVALUATION:** Through this work, Sidney approaches the dominant poetic conventions of his time. In the sonnet – sequence 'Astrophel and Stella', the lover pleads with his mistress, begs for her reciprocal love, at times fails to resist the temptation of kissing her and thereby angers her. Stella leaves him towards the end, making room for meditative and contemplative verses. Sidney was deeply influenced by the styles of Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, and carried on the legacy of the 14th century Italian poet Petrarch. Literary critics of the 19th century regarded this compilation as a groundbreaking picture of Renaissance court life, since it presented a rather bold declaration of love on the part of Sidney towards a woman married to another man. But in the 20th century, the focus shifted on the distinction between secular and religious aspects in the poems, as well as the physical and the psychological motivations of the speaker. The lover is neither satisfied in the end nor rejected completely.

  A.C. Hamilton writes, "As one 'loving in truth', the lover plans so to entertain his lady by his sonnets...The argument of the sonnet is that he may write not because he reads what other lovers have written but because he truly loves. The forcibleness of his passion is shown in the dynamic clash of verbs: 'loving... studying ... turning', rising to the intensity of 'Biting...beating', and ending with the simple, double imperative 'look...write'." [2]

- **MAJOR THEMES:**
  - **Earthly lover and the idealised lady love:** True to the popular conventions of his time, Sidney's speaker Astrophel is the hopeless, humble, 'storm-tossed' lover, who worships his 'guiding star' Stella from a distance. The lady love is an unattainable figure, who is all purity of heart and grace. The earthly lover must woo her tirelessly to win her consent. The 'dear she' is shy, chaste and virtuous whereas the lover is ever faithful. He charts the movement of her emotions through his verse. Pleasure may turn to knowledge of the poet's sincerity and that knowledge will evoke her sympathy. Finally he hopes that pity will transform to love.

- **Spontaneous art vs. Logical compositions:** The poet- speaker hints at the paradoxical nature of his artistic attempt, right from the onset of the sonnet. It is difficult to mould words which express spontaneous emotions into the brief sonnet form. Renaissance art laid much emphasis on precision of form and elegance of composition. The lover's feelings are genuine, yet when it comes to arranging them neatly for his beloved to read, he finds himself at a loss for words. The poet wishes to give the lady pleasure out of his creation, but himself feels the pain of composing his art. The reader can imagine that perhaps in the past the lover had tried to win her heart through verbal declarations of his love and having failed in that effort, now tries a different approach. The sonnet reveals the typical Renaissance attitude to love, which brings the head and heart together.
- **Renaissance poetry and classical imitation:** The poets during the Renaissance in England concerned themselves with ordering their passionate utterances within the framework of classical rhetoric. They studied the Italian and Latin masters like Dante and Petrarch, and imitated their poetic styles. Thus, the lover in the poem turns the pages of the books written by his predecessors and tries to draw inspiration from them. However, English poetry also saw the emergence of newer verse metres during this age, along with experimentation in the rhyme- scheme and use of well-crafted, original conceits. Hence, finally the poetic Muse correctly advises the poet to follow his own heart. Here we can almost read Sidney's own self-conscious attempt to claim his original technique and shake off the overwhelming influence of the classical masters.

STRUCTURE AND FORM: Sidney introduces variations in the octave-sestet structure of the **Petrarchan form.** The rhyme scheme of the octave is ***abababab*** and that of the sestet is ***cdcdee.*** The ending couplet balances the main idea of the sonnet and provides a final resolution for the poet's problem.Each line consists of twelve syllables, hence are Alexandrines.

STYLE: Though autobiographical, the sonnet reflects ingenuity through the use of well-phrased analogies i.e. conceits. The formality of construction, witty use of metaphors and bitter-sweet tone make the lyric both dramatic and elegant. The classical conventions are maintained to reflect the mood of the lover, who is in turn optimistic and hopeless. The metrical regularity of his verses and sophistication of style adds to the sonnets appeal.

4.14.14 Summing Up

- It is a powerfully dramatic and original sonnet, which rises above its autobiographical elements.
- The poet is modest and self-conscious about his art. He does not hide his shortcomings.
- The lover relates his personal experience taking the reader into confidence. His love is both ennobling and despairing.
- Conceits are developed wittily and used with rhetorical ingenuity.
- The couplet resolves the poet's dilemma with the Muse asserting that true art does not need external stimulus. It springs from the inner core of the heart.

4.14.15 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type:

1. Analyse and comment on the characteristic of the Elizabethan sonnet with reference to the sonnet by Philip Sidney, in your syllabus.
2. Discuss the distinctive features of the sonnet as revealed in Sidney's 'Loving in Truth'.
3. How does Sidney combine traditional and individual elements in his sonnet 'Loving in Truth'?

Medium length:

4. Discuss the nature of love as portrayed in 'Loving in Truth'.
5. Examine the imagery employed in 'Loving in Truth'.

Short Answer type:

6. Attempt an analysis of the structure and style of the sonnet by Philip Sidney given in your syllabus.
7. Explain with reference to the context:

   a) "Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain,

   Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow

   Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain."

   b) "Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

4.14.16 Activity Corner

Read the following poem and see whether it is similar to the poem given in your syllabus:

Amoretti LXXV: ***One Day I Wrote her Name***

Edmund Spenser

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
"Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain assay,
A mortal thing so to immortalize;
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke my name be wiped out likewise."
"Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name:
Where, when as death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew."

4.14.17 Comprehensive Reading List

Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: M.C. Bradbrook

Sir Thomas Wyatt and his background: Patricia Thomson

Elizabethan Poetry: Lyrical and Narrative: A Casebook. Ed. Gerald Hammond

Sir Philip Sidney: John Addington Symonds

Elizabethan Sonnets: Sidney Lee

A Short History of English Literature. Harry Blamires. London: Routlegde, 1974

Sir Philip Sidney: A Study of His Life and Works. A.C. Hamilton. C.U.P, 1977.

Unit-15 □ William Shakespeare: 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' (18) 'That time of year thou may'st in me behold' (73)

Structure

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4.15.11 Suggested Reading

4.15.0 Introduction

In an earlier Unit you have been introduced to the rise of the sonnet as a significant poetic form in England of the Renaissance. The present unit seeks to acquaint you with what is considered the most mature and best expression of the English sonnet - the Shakespearean sonnet. You will be shown how the sonnet evolved both in form and content from the early practitioners in English who were mostly adapting Petrarchan themes in their efforts to give this new found literary type a sound footing in English. The spotlight will be on two particular poems that are chosen in your syllabus. You will be expected to understand Shakespeare's contribution

to the development of the sonnet form, and develop a fair idea of the kind of 'sonneteering' practised by him. In fact Shakespeare so popularised the sonnet as a poetic form that is still known by his name to this day and celebrated across the world as a fine example of love poetry. This 'love' however takes different and complex forms, so much so that there are still endless debates on it. This happens largely because of the very Shakespearean trademark of introducing the sudden *volta* (comes from Italian and literally means turn of thought). Effectively, this becomes an implicit questioning of the very form or content he is describing and using. As learners, you are therefore encouraged to analyse the sonnets closely, discover the adept use of all such poetic devices, and go through the activities suggested so that there is a comprehensive understanding.

4.15.1 A Recap of the Elizabethan Sonnet Tradition

A sonnet, as you know by now, is a lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter (a line having a total of ten syllables) lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet named after the fourteenth century Italian poet Petrarch is usually divided into an Octave of eight lines and a Sestet of six lines. The rhyme scheme of the Octave was usually a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a and for the Sestet it was either c-d-e-c-d-e or c-d-c-c-d-c. Petrarch's sonnets as in the collection *Canzoniere* describes the idealized beloved desired by the poet/lover who elaborates her beauty and longs for her. The beloved in such poetic tradition is mostly difficult to win and it is perhaps this difficulty that further enhances the poet/ speaker's attraction towards her. The medium of poetry becomes the elusive space of union that can only be dreamt of by the lover. The Sestet would usually bring a turn of thought to that narrated in the Octave. In that sense you might also say that the Petrarchan sonnet tradition looks upon homosexual love from a position of relative inequality between the lover and his beloved.

The Elizabethan sonnet introduced both formal and thematic changes in the sonnet. It was introduced by Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey in the early sixteenth century in England. Their sonnets were chiefly translations from Petrarch's Italian and Ronsard's French sonnets. The Earl of Surrey in fact gave this English form of the sonnet a rhyming metre and divided the poem into quatrains different from their original format. At first their translations circulated in manuscripts only. They were later published in Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonnets* also known as Tottel's *Miscellany* in 1557.

While Wyatt and Surrey's sonnets were important for acquainting English poets with the form, it was Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) which really popularized the sonnet sequence in England and started the trend of sonneteering

amongst poets of the Elizabethan era. Some of the well-known English poets of the time who proved their mettle in the form are Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, William Drummond of Hawthornden and, of course, Shakespeare among many others. For most of these poets, their sonnets were inspired by the Petrarchan tradition, describing the poet's love for a woman in idolized and idealized terms. The lady is seated on a pedestal too high to be reached and won.

Shakespeare introduces many changes as he plays upon the Petrarchan theme to write about the poet's love for a young man, a dark unconventional mistress and also a rival poet with whom the poet competes for the fair youth's attention. When he does describe the 'Dark Lady' of his sonnets the terms used make fun of the Petrarchan idealizations, bringing his readers face to face with reality and its multiple and complex emotions. Idealized love is instead reserved for the Fair Youth of his sonnets who he eulogizes, praises, desires but is unable to own or be united with permanently. These sonnets then become a space for reflection on various other themes such as death, mortality, politics, immortality wrought through verse, sexual desire and conventions that define beauty and gender. In comparing the early and later Elizabethan sonnet tradition, you can thus understand how the dramatic genius of Shakespeare affected in a positive way and brought about a maturing effect in poetry.

In the Shakespearean sonnet, the poem is rhythmically divided into three quatrains and a couplet, usually rhymed as a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g in iambic pentameter. Most of the sonnets published in the 1609 quarto are in this schema, except sonnets 99, 126 and 145. The unexpected *volta* usually appears in the couplet where a new perspective is added to the theme of the poem and is intrinsic to the charm of the Shakespearean sonnet.

Activity for the learner

Make a comparative study of the pre-Shakespearean and Shakespearean sonnets in your syllabus. You could focus on areas like Theme, Versification, Rhyme scheme, reversal or parallelism in the development of the thought process. Identify what we have called the 'volta' here. You may take help from your counselor in doing this.

4.15.2 Brief Overview of Shakespeare's Sonnets

❖ **HISTORY**

Shakespeare's sonnets appeared in Quarto form in 1609 when it was published by Thomas Thorpe. It announced the sonnets to be "Never before imprinted" although sonnets 138 and 144 had been published previously in *The Passionate*

Pilgrim. There is a great deal of debate on whether Thorpe published a stolen copy of the sonnets or not owing to the fact that he signed the Dedication which the poet usually signed. However the sonnets are arranged so methodically, it seems unlikely that Shakespeare had not wished them to be published. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to the 'Fair Youth' loved by the poet , sonnet 127-152 to the 'Dark Lady' desired by the poet, the last two sonnets a little set apart and disconnected from the sequence, sonnets 78-86 within the first sequence as a subset describing the Rival Poet with whom the poet of these sonnets competes for the Fair Youth's attention and the ending of the sequence with a long narrative poem called "A Lover's Complaint' written in seven line stanzas in rhyme royal (a-b-a-b-b-c-c).

The Dedication at the beginning of the sonnets has been scrutinised in detail to find clues regarding the identity of the dedicatee and hence the 'Fair Youth' and also for the circumstances of publication. You might wonder why that is necessary, but these details are taken as being important signifiers in analysing so complex and richly allusive a collection of poetry as the sonnets we are studying now.

The Dedication:

"TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF.
THESE.INSUING.SONNETS.
Mr.W.H. ALL.HAPPINESSE.
AND.THAT.ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OUR.EVER-LIVING.POET.
WISHETH.
THE.WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTURER.IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.
T.T."

'The Onlie Begetter' of the sonnets could refer to the inspiration behind the sonnets Mr. W.H. to whom happiness and eternity are wished by the poet. The word 'onlie' might be thus interpreted as 'sole' or 'peerless'.

There are many speculations regarding who Mr. W.H might be, the main contenders being William Herbert, the Third Earl of Pembroke (who was the dedicatee of Shakespeare's First Folio as well) or Henry Wriothesley, the Third Earl

of Southampton , his initials reversed (the dedicatee of Shakespeare's poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece)*. However, it remains a puzzle why a Lord should be addressed as 'Mr.' by the publisher Thorpe. The Earl of Southampton remains a popular choice given his friendship and patronage of Shakespeare for many years and his handsome appearance correlating with the 'Fair Youth' described in these sonnets.

There is of course another theory as propounded by Bertrand Russell that W.H is a typing error for W.S or W.Sh or the poet's initials who is therefore the only 'begetter' or creator of these sonnets and is wished happiness and eternity by the 'Ever-Living-Poet' ,i.e. God who 'makes' or 'creates' us all.

The capital letters and periods following every word of the Dedication might be an attempt to make it resemble a Roman lapidary inscription in keeping with Shakespeare's ardent wish that the sonnets confer immortality to his feelings for the Youth and more than any monument shall be able to outlive the ravages of time. He insists in sonnet 55,

"...you shall shine more bright in these contents

Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time"

A closer study of this particular sonnet reveals certain important themes Shakespeare reflects on in his collection. He seems to be making an effort towards endearing the young man to the importance of his sonnets in enshrining the youth's beauty and qualities of a lover and at the same time perhaps engaging in this exercise of writing the sonnet as a means of keeping or capturing a portion of the youth's memory for himself in the face of mortality and loss:

"So till the judgement that yourself arise,

You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes."

At the same time, it is to be noted how he introduces doubt in the verse written by him to immortalise the qualities of his beloved, in the image of 'lovers' eyes' which were always unreliable given the proverb 'Love is blind'. Hence while the rhyme is powerful as is the ambition of the poet, there is the fault of imperfection in the vision of those who shall read the verse and be influenced by it.

We can see how Shakespeare introduces several trajectories of thought in the space of a verse, including imagery reminiscent of old, decrepit buildings, war, and the ravages of time and events even as he describes his loved one and his wish to secure immortality in some form for him.

❖ THEMATIC PATTERNS – FAIR YOUTH, DARK LADY & OTHERS

The collection of sonnets begins with the poet/speaker urging the youth to procreate and thereby leave a legacy of his beauty and fine qualities. In fact sonnets 1-17 are often grouped together as the 'Procreation Sonnets' owing to their repeated elaboration of the passage of time, its ravages to be wrought on the young man's physical beauty and the only means of continuation being in the form of children who carry forth their father's beauty and accord him a certain form of immortality and solace. He chides the young man he loves, thus:

"…if thou live remembered not to be,

Die single, and thine image dies with thee."(sonnet 3)

Or

"Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,

Which used, lives th'executor to be." (sonnet 4)

While the sonnets might appear to be repeating the same idea over and over, you might wish to delve into them to understand where their charm really lies. It is in the multiple ways of presenting the same idea that Shakespeare really stands out. Every sonnet in this section uses a different framework, different references and completely different images to persuade the youth to stop wasting his worth and beauty on himself and to procreate for the benefit of the world. He utilises the imagery of time passing by—the flowers wilting, the trees shedding leaves, summer giving way to winter and attempts to make the youth realize that his beauty which he is so proud of, is after all bound to time:

"Then of thy beauty do I question make,

That thou among the wastes of time must go."(sonnet 12)

From sonnet 18 a slight change in mood may be observed in the poet's treatment of impending mortality. In this oft quoted sonnet, the poet places greater hope in his verse as a means of protecting and enshrining his beloved. We shall be reading this sonnet in considerable detail a little later. The theme is continued in new terms in sonnet 19, as the poet challenges 'Time' to devour and destroy everything in nature except his fair friend "O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow" with the usual turn of thought in the last couplet where he declares that even if 'Time' does not

listen to his orders, his verse shall suffice as vessel enough for his love to survive in:

> "Yet do thy worst , old time, despite thy wrong,
>
> My love shall in my verse ever live young."

In sonnet 37 we see the poet describing the young man's love and success and qualities as worthy recompense for all his losses. "..I in thy abundance am sufficed,/ And by a part of all thy glory live :" This too is a theme oft repeated as in sonnet 30 where the poet takes stock of his past losses and failures, finding restoration in his dear friend. It is the memory of his love that soothes the poet in sonnet 29 , uplifting him to better thoughts, a state he would not forsake even to be a king :

> "Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
>
> Like to the lark at break of day arising,
>
> From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven's gate."

Even as the young man wrongs his lover the poet, the latter advocates for the young man in sonnet 35, providing yet another shade to the love and bitter sweet relation that they appear to share or are projected to share by the poet/speaker of these sonnets. However in sonnet 41, we see the poet's pain at being cheated by both his beloved fair youth and his own mistress who appear to have sexual relations with each other breaking their pledge to the poet—she of her constancy and he of his bond of friendship. We see the poet's exercise in self consolation in the next sonnet (sonnet 42), where he tries to persuade himself that his mistress and beloved friend desire each other because they were both in love with him. However as in most of Shakespeare's sonnets the logic is self reflexive as the poet always casts doubt on his own rhetorical exercises of persuasion whether of the youth or himself :

> "Both find each other , and I lose both twain,
>
> And both for my sake lay on me this cross:"

It is interesting to note the poet's proposal that a separation between the two shall enable him to write better verse praising the young man. "That by this separation I may give /That due to thee that thou deserv'st alone" (sonnet 39) Separation also brings forth outstanding poetry as he describes days as nights when he is apart from his dear friend and nights as days when he sees the beloved in his dreams (sonnet 43).

The sonnets reflecting on the young man's wavering interest in his poetry and developing affections for a rival poet are in a cluster 78-86 where he expresses his

deep devotion to his Muse—the young man who is the sole inspiration and content of his verse. He argues for his art;

> "In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
>
> And arts with thy sweet graces graced be;
>
> But thou art all my art…"(sonnet 78)

He even argues for the plainness of his poetry being a virtue since it best represents the qualities of the young man who needs no artificial rhetoric to be described as in the other's verses (sonnet 82). The intense rhetorical strategy Shakespeare employs to make the youth realize his worth in the plainness of his style is quite marvelous in sonnet 79, as he strains logic to assert that every device used by the rival poet to thrill the young man is no virtue of the rival poet, but instead the youth's own abilities and qualities that engender such poetry.

> "Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
>
> Since what he owes thee, thou thyself dost pay."

There has been much speculation regarding the identity of this rival poet. Many critics have suggested Christopher Marlowe or George Chapman or even an amalgamation of several competitors in the figure of the rival. If we note closely these sonnets continue the preoccupations of the previous sonnets regarding the value of the poet's versifying the young man's beauty, albeit in different contexts and using different rhetorical devices.

Right after , in sonnet 87, we see the poet engaging in a self depreciating discussion, relinquishing claims on his beloved, seeing himself as unworthy of his affections and positing that the youth was misplacing his attentions:

> "Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter,
>
> In sleep a king, but waking no such matter."

Another recurring theme in the sonnets is the poet's reflection on the deceptive nature of appearance and expectations aroused by one so fair. In sonnet 94, he asserts that one who has been gifted beauty ought to behave virtuously also, since viciousness from one so fair is more terrible than where one expects it:

> "For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
>
> Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds."

Absence and separation become a common theme in the next few sonnets as the poet explores different ways of describing the pain of separation. The poetry born of this separation is described by the poet as orphan children born in absence of the one that fathered them. Then again he starts berating his poetic Muse for abandoning his true subject of poetry, his love for the young man and his efforts at preserving his beloved in verse, warring against time and decay. "Give my love fame faster than time wastes life" he exhorts his Muse. At the same time there is also much debate on the style of writing required for one so fair as his beloved :"Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?" However, he keeps praising his own style of what he calls plain verse in describing his beloved. It may be noted that in each of these sonnets, the poet manages to describe all possible contours and emotions arising from his relationship with the young man and the verses become really an exercise in rhetoric and linguistic play as he repeats themes in various ways, stretching the possibilities of his art.

The ideal of love described in sonnet 116 seems difficult to attain, as his return to the young man is fraught with uncertainty and a sense of futility and confinement in sonnet 110. "..love is not love/Which alters when it alteration finds" says the poet . However this "ever-fixed mark" of love which is unshaken by tempests and is eternal is elusive and the very subject of desire in his poetry. The poet's relationship with the fair youth never conveys a sense that the love they share is constant. It seems rather the poet's effort to immortalize it and retain its freshness and vigour in the face of the 'tempests' and 'bending sickle's compass' that is constant. It is one of the most memorable sonnets in the collection perhaps for its desperate yet forlorn tone of wishing to believe in the quality of love experienced and shared.

The last sonnet in the section relating to the fair youth (126) ends with two blank lines in parenthesis in place of a couplet. He returns to his predominant theme of time, here personifying nature as holding back her darling youth from death but must ultimately repay her debt to time by handing over the young man no matter his beauty and nature's love for him. "Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,/And her quietus is to render thee." The empty bracketed lines at the end have been analyzed and critiqued in many ways. Some like Graziani see in them the shape of an empty hourglass, signifying that time has run out and thus verse too has ended. Lennard sees them as half moons suggestive of waxing and waning and hence the trajectory of time passing by. It may also be seen as a space of silence, the grave into which the "lovely Boy" of these sonnets must now reside after all his praises have been sung by the poet.

After this begins what is known as the sonnets dedicated to the 'Dark Lady'. She is called so owing to her unconventional appearance and as a contrast to the youth who was so 'fair'. Her dark eyes are the subject of the poet's adoration, as he sees them as 'mourners' for women falsely made up. His mistress's being unpretentious is valuable to him after the deceptive fair appearance of his beloved youth perhaps. The poet's sexual desire for the dark lady is the predominant manner of his relating to her. His sonnets become spaces where he explores the lust that drives him and the effects of this physical craving on his emotions. In sonnet 129, he describes the madness that possesses one desiring the woman "Mad in pursuit, and in possession so," and the fallout of this desire being unhappiness. The anticipation of sexual union is joy, but after the physical act, there appears no fulfillment in the poet's view. "Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream." The frustration of the poet's relationship with the mistress finds expression in the early part of this section of sonnets. However he seems to love her too, as seen in the famous sonnet 130 where he plays advocate for his mistress' appearance, praising her in words of critique. At the same time, there is fondness for her earthiness perhaps. Notice for yourselves how very different (and a shade realistic too perhaps!) Shakespeare's attitude to homosexual love and description of the beloved can be, from those of the earlier sonnet traditions:

> "I grant I never saw a goddess go;
> My mistress when she walks treads on the ground."

He values her despite her reeking breath, unpleasant voice, dun breasts and wire like hair, acknowledging her to be as rare as the women eulogized in love sonnets and described in superlative terms "belied with false compare". Here the poet introduces an important self reflexive discussion on the act of representation in verse, specially the Petrarchan mode of praising the object of love and affection. His comment can be seen as an extended theme throughout his sonnets where he always undercuts the praises he heaps on his beloved or his mistress. Representation is always tinged with an element of doubt in the art of rhetoric which creates fancy images whence none exists. In sonnet 138 he acknowledges the lies which forge his relationship with the dark lady. Despite him knowing her unfaithfulness and she his progressive age, they continue to 'lie' with each other in both senses of the term refusing to lose the companionship they share.

Sonnet 144 however tips the balance in favour of the young man, as he describes the youth as his good angel and the mistress as his bad angel. However, he does declare his love for both "Two loves I have, of comfort and despair," though he seems helpless as the youth and the mistress engage in a relationship with each other which he only suspects but can never know for sure. The sexuality of the mistress

is constantly described as a threat to both the poet's emotional balance and the fidelity of the young man to the poet. In a lot of ways, the poet's relationship with the youth is thus privileged over that with the mistress, both being however deeply embedded in his psyche and finding a place in his verses. The emotions surrounding the dark lady are more complex and steeped in guilt and distress in the absence of the young man but at the same time there is a certain comfort he finds in her that is never found in his relation with the young man described always in terms of pleading for affection and grace. The equality found in the dark lady sonnets is absent in the fair youth sequence. Of course we might read that as the poet's acquired stance as he plays with the Italian sonnet tradition that placed the beloved on a pedestal and then again subversion of that poetic mode as he makes fun of such rhetoric in the dark lady sequence.

After understanding the range of themes and ideas explored in his sonnet collection, let us now venture to read two of Shakespeare's sonnets in detail.

4.15.3 Text of Sonnet 18 'Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day'

i. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

ii. Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

iii. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

iv. And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

v. Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

vi. And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

vii. And every fair from fair sometime declines,

viii. By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;

ix. But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

x. Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,

xi. Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,

xii. When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.

xiii. So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,

xiv. So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

(The line numberings and the spacing have been inserted to help you understand the form – content patterning of the Shakespearean sonnet. The first 3 sections each form a quatrain where you will find parallel ideas being expressed in different words and thought; the last 2 form the couplet that is the most striking feature. The subsequent sections will help you in establishing the vital links between these divisions of the poem.)

4.15.4a Analysis of the Poem

i. The poet searches for an appropriate object or scene of comparison with the loveliness of the young man and wonders if the beauty and joy surrounding the image of a summer's day in England might be the best. Summer is a season of bloom and joy for a cold country when nature comes alive with beauty and freshness.

ii. temperate : well tempered or moderated, steering a middle course between extremes and therefore perfect and more lovable than a summer's day which might still have imperfections in it.

iii. Rough winds....May: the image of spring blossoms destroyed by the ravages of nature hints at early death or young love blighted by circumstances.

iv. summer's lease....date: the season summer has a short tenancy in nature's schema of seasons and has to give way to other seasons of depletion and decay...as autumn and winter. Notice Shakespeare's use of vocabulary. The word 'lease' as you know, is mostly used in legal terminology to imply a contract made over a span of time. Here the idea is that summer as a season has its own predetermined span of time in the annual cycle of seasons.

v. too hot the eye of heaven : the sun. Identify the figure of speech used here!

vi. conceiving of the sun as a beautiful male (Phoebus Apollo) and reflecting on the fact that the sun too is subject to the vagaries of nature-on some days shining brightly and on others dimmed by the weather perhaps.

vii. Every beautiful object or person eventually becomes less beautiful. The first 'fair' refers to the beautiful and the second 'fair' to beauty that is lost by the beautiful. The word 'declines' continues the allusion to the sun which may be pictured as setting.

viii. decay, change and decline may be caused by accident, the cyclical course of nature, deprived of its trimmings and adornment. There might be an allusion

to menstruation in 'nature's changing course' connecting with a double meaning in the previous line—positing women as 'fair' whose variability shall now be contrasted with the constancy of the youth.

ix-x. the beauty of the young man is compared to a summer season that shall not be subject to nature's cycles of change and he shall not lose his 'fairness' or beauty since it shall be enshrined in these lines of verse.

xi. death is personified and placed in conflict with the youth's beauty, however he shall not be able to boast about his victory over the young man's beauty and youth . The darkness of death is pictured as his 'shade' as in the Psalm 23.4 'the valley of the shadow of death'

xii. the young man shall 'grow' through these 'eternal' lines written by the poet in readers' minds as a concept or an ideal of beauty and love. 'lines' has also been associated with the threads of life spun by the Fates. Thus it imprints the importance of these verses in ascertaining the youth's fate.

xiii-xiv. As long as life exists on this earth, the verse shall exist as a living monument to the young man and endow him with life long after his physical body is snuffed out by Death.

this: this sonnet or these sonnets. Thus the movement in the poem is from the beauty of the young man to the effectiveness of poetry as art in preserving such beauty.

Activity for the Learner

This idea of preserving human attributes like beauty (as in this poem) is something that has repeatedly been toyed with in literature. Do you think art as a representation of life can really do this in a perfect manner? With help from your counselor, read John Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', and write on the relationship between Art and Life with these two poems in mind.

4.15.4b. Critical Appreciation of the Poem

In this much loved sonnet by Shakespeare, the poet searches for an apt description for his beloved fair youth. A 'summer's day' might be an ideal comparison for the freshness and beauty of the beloved, particularly in Petrarchan style, but for Shakespeare who is celebrated for his innovative turn of thought, this imagery is not sufficient for the one he loves. In a cold country, a summer's day brings happiness and joy. However, for the poet, his beloved is more beautiful and temperate than such a moderate summer's day. The weather may have imperfections, but not his beloved.

The precious buds of May which are about to bloom are often shaken off the branches by rough winds. The much awaited summer season also arrives with its 'lease' fixed from before. Thus what is a strictly legal terminology becomes used in an extremely poetic sense, in a manner that might almost be considered metaphysical in intent! Here, the poet uses two images suggesting the temporal quality of all beautiful things in nature, wishing to contrast them with his perceived immutable beauty of the youth. However, it is important to note that the poet includes his own critique in his lines. If all precious things in nature are subject to degeneration, how can the poet's beloved be saved from such transformation and change? It prepares the ground for affirming the significance of the poet's words in immortalising the youth.

The poet then continues extending his analogy, describing the variation in the way the sun is perceived and its effect on the weather experienced by us. Sometimes, the sun, described as 'the eye of heaven' shines with great intensity and at other times, its glorious golden hue is concealed by clouds. Hence, its beauty is inconstant and largely dependent on other aspects of the weather in creating the perfectly moderate and temperate summer's day. He concludes thereby that everything that is beautiful declines in its beauty at some time or the other, shorn of its beauty and adornments either by chance or owing to the vagaries of nature. It is often thought that the poet is alluding to menstruation in 'nature's changing course', referring to the double meanings of the word 'fair' used in the previous line, further suggesting the inconstant nature of women's beauty and their love as compared to the constancy of the poet's affections for the young man.

The poet tries to convince his beloved that his 'eternal summer' shall not fade with time as the poet will enshrine the young man's beauty in verse. Note the use of the phrase 'eternal summer' which by itself appears to be an oxymoron, impossible by virtue of the description of summer enunciated by the poet in the previous lines. This impossible ideal is however made possible by the poet's feelings for his beloved and the quality of his poetry.

Death and decay devour all things, but shall not be able to snuff out the fair youth's freshness and beauty. Death is personified as one who brags about his conquests. In this case however, Death's shadow cannot loom over the poet's beloved, as he shall keep living eternally in these verses by the poet.

In the ending couplet that gives this sonnet its own unique flavor, Shakespeare reinforces his vision that his sonnets shall live as long as men live and breathe and

see, playing a role more powerful than Death in being able to grant life to his beloved's beauty and youth forever.

Note how the poet extends the subject of his poetry from describing his beloved's beauty to extolling the virtues of his own poetry. See also that every analogy falls short for describing the fair youth's charm. At the same time, he highlights the ephemeral nature of that charm and contrasts the same with the immortal quality of his love and his ability to capture the young man's beauty in his lines.

4.15.5 Text of Sonnet 73

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

4.15.6a Analysis of The Poem

i-ii. You might see in me the image of seasonal decay and degeneration. The poet's reversal of the order of decay is striking as one expects the diminishing of leaves to be from 'a few' to 'none' but receives the opposite in line ii. It might be a poetic device to focus our attention on both stages of seasonal decay—the leafless trees of midwinter and the partly stripped trees of

autumn. It might also be a visual analogy for the poet William Shakespeare who was nearly bald.

iii. The boughs of the tree shiver in the cold or in anticipation of the cold winter as also the life of the poet which shivers in its dying moments.

iv. evokes visual recollection of abbeys and chancels left desolate after Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries. The branches of the trees, bereft of the birds which sweet songs in summer appear like 'bare ruined choirs' to the poet

v-vi. the speaker/poet represents himself as the 'twilight' or afterglow of the day of summer, as night approaches and the sun sets both visually and metaphorically

vii. the night appears to take away the sunlight as nature and passing time take away the poet's years of beauty and youth

viii. Death's second self: Sleep. Also night; seals up: closes up or sews up ; rest is both desired as also the picture of death, the eternal rest. Sleep is a shadow of death, bringing rest and relief in the night.

ix. fire : life

x. The life coursing through his veins is like the last dying embers of the fire that represents his life force/energy spent in the course of his life time.

xi-xii. human life must be extinguished by the same temporal process which sustains it and brings it to maturity. Time nourishes human life and brings forth its blooms but at the same time also brings death and decay with every passing moment. The analogy of the fire sustained and consumed by its embers is continued here.

xiii. the perception of this process of decay strengthens the love the young man feels for the poet, or so the poet believes. It also suggests a tone of hope that his dying might make the youth love him more or even that the young man's love is strong because he loves the poet despite his decay and decline.

4.15.6b Critical Appreciation of The Poem

In this sonnet, the poet creates an extended analogy to make his beloved aware of the passage of time and its effect on the poet as he approaches death. Thereby, he wishes to secure the fair youth's love and attention for himself, hoping that the

realization of less time left with the poet might bring the young man closer to him. Quite clearly the object of the poem is the same as the previous sonnet, but the treatment is quite different.

He begins by suggesting the similarity between him and the seasons of autumn and winter when the trees are nearly or altogether bereft of leaves. It's interesting to note the sequence in which he describes the quantity of leaves on the boughs. From yellowing, decaying leaves to none on the boughs to a few hanging on still, the poet succeeds in making us, the readers, or his intended reader the young man, pause on the significance of his imagery by introducing the unconventional. The image of the boughs shaking in the cold air also suggest the poet shivering in anticipation of death and attempts to impress the young man with a feeling of imminent loss. True to the way Shakespeare often includes socio-political events and discussions within philosophical musings, the image of bare boughs, bereft of birds appear like 'bare ruined choirs' to the poet, suggesting absence and triggering recollection of chancels and abbeys left empty and desolate after Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries. Of course, the immediate aim is to describe how every scene of fullness and beauty is subject to change and transformation.

In the next four lines, the poet explores another analogy, describing himself in terms of 'twilight', the time of day just before night falls. He personifies night as one who takes away sunlight just as time takes away the poet's life and the youth's beauty. 'Death's second self' refers to sleep, as well as night which seals up or 'sews up' the day. Sleep is pictured as the shadow of death, bringing relief, but not snuffing out life altogether. Thus, the poet alludes to the possibility of impending death but stops short of suggesting complete cessation of life.

Shakespeare moves on to the next connected image of a fire that is rendered ash, and compares himself to the glowing embers of a dying fire, suggesting that just as a fire is consumed by the very substance that nourishes it, his life too is spent and consumed by the passage of time that was essential for its growth. Thus death is implicit in the process of life itself.

The poet hopes that his images shall make the young man realize the fragility of life, beauty and existence and spur him to cherish the temporal but intense love the poet has for him. He hopes that the possibility of death shall make the young man's love for him stronger, knowing that he would be separated from the poet very soon. On the other hand, the poet also hopes that the fair youth shall love him despite his advancing years, alerted to the ephemerality of his own beauty and youth by this sonnet.

4.15.7 Themes of Sonnets 18 & 73

In both the above sonnets we can see the themes discussed in the introduction played out in detail. Both the sonnets feature in the section devoted to the fair youth and describe the poet's concern with the passage of time and the possibility of capturing the essence of the young man in the form of these sonnets dedicated to him. Yet the finality of thought and emotion arrived at in the two poems is entirely different in its effect. Let us see for ourselves why and how this is so.

In sonnet 18, the poet places emphasis on describing the young man's beauty. However the praise for his youth and attractive qualities is tempered by the knowledge that the cycle of nature and the relentless passage of time shall not allow the beloved to remain as he is now, comparable to the most temperate day of summer when the buds bloom in their beauty. The rough winds and the changes apparent even in as constant a marker as the sun in the breadth of a single day threaten the blooms and signal the fears in the speaker's heart. He bewails that unfortunately everything that is beautiful is subject to this process of change and decline whether by chance or the course of time. All the adornments that nature brings are also shorn off by the processes of time and decay.

However, this sonnet becomes a kind of vessel for self praise for the poet as he extols the virtues of his verse which appear to be the only means of survival for the young man and the best way he can achieve immortality. The poet astutely declares that his verse shall, in fact, lead to the image of his beloved growing in beauty perhaps in the form of so many sonnets dedicated to his praise and the process of creation that Shakespeare describes in his sonnets.

Sonnet 73 on the other hand focuses the young man's attention on the poet/ speaker who projects himself as the opposite of the youth he described in sonnet 18. The process of decay and decline which threatens the youth in sonnet 18 is apparent in the figure of the poet in sonnet 73 and may also be construed as a reminder to the young man that time shall wait for none and devour the youth as well one day. It might also be seen as a plea for love and affection before the poet's life is extinguished by nature. He describes himself in images of night closing in and bare boughs of trees where the last yellow leaves perhaps hang to receive the youth's attention. The glowing embers of a fire dying out is a striking image he continues for the span of four lines, standing in for a description both of his life, his passion for the poet and perhaps also his poetic craft. The creative force nourished by life is also destructive as it consumes his energies. There is hope in the poet that the circumstance

shall bring forth the youth's love for him or strengthen the existing love since the youth must leave him before long. Of course as with all of Shakespeare's sonnets, each line and declaration, especially the couplet becomes suspect in its apparent meaning as more meanings emerge with continued reading. There might be a suggestion that the youth would be leaving the poet anyway for other charms as discussed in detail in other sonnets and a sense of loss and decline experienced by the poet as a result of the loss of his beloved. Then again, there is also the incipient suggestion that the youth too shall have to leave owing to his own decay in the hands of nature and time.

4.15.8 Structure and Style

Sonnet 18 is structurally formatted into three quatrains rhymed a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f and a couplet rhymed g-g following the quatrains. As discussed in the Introduction, the Shakespearean sonnet takes its stylistic format from the Earl of Surrey's variations introduced to the Italian form of the sonnet divided into an Octave and a Sestet. It is to be noted that the quatrains and the couplet are not separated spatially. Rather it is the rhyme scheme which divides the sections into units of thought. However these units are connected with each other and not wholly separated. Rather, we might say that each quatrain introduces a fresh manner of re-iterating the central theme of the poem. While the first quatrain introduces imagery of the summer season as a comparison for the poet's beloved, the second elaborates and the third focuses on the youth and passage of Time. The couplet reinforces the argument of the quatrains and extends its scope.

Sonnet 73 employs a similar rhyme scheme and structural device as sonnet 18. Here the second and third quatrains provide more metaphors for the idea introduced in the first quatrain where he describes his decay and degeneration over time correlating it with the season of autumn. The couplet is a turn of argument where he employs the sympathy gathered over the quatrains to persuade the beloved to love him all the more or praise the steadfastness of his existing love for the poet. Both sonnets are written in iambic pentameter.

4.15.9 Summing Up

In the introduction to Shakespeare's sonnets we have discussed his style of writing and themes in great detail. It is interesting to read these two sonnets in view

of the entire corpus and see a microcosm of most of the themes expressed in these selected poems. It is also significant since, by Shakespeare's own admission, the sonnets repeat ideas but present them in new ways, displaying the skill of the sonneteer who claims to be able to defy the passage of time with his art and the flame of his love for the young man. Many shades of love are explored in all their nuances—whether betrayal, separation, reunion. However in all the sonnets we might critically examine the notion if the waves and crests of emotion created by the poet are not ultimately done for the sake of showcasing his art? While Shakespeare's sonnets are read autobiographically, they might also be read as an intelligent sonneteer's use of events moulded for the sake of his art, which ultimately forms the centerpiece of his verses. Through the narration of love, it is his sonnets that become immortalized in the history of verse writing!

4.15.10 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Types

1. How is Shakespeare's idea of love portrayed in his sonnets? Discuss with reference to the sonnets in your syllabus.
2. How does Shakespeare visualise Time in his sonnets and how does it relate to his concept of writing verse?
3. What is your understanding of the relationship between the poet and his beloved as you read Shakespeare's sonnets?
4. Do you think Shakespeare's sonnets may only be read autobiographically? Give reasons in support of your view.

Medium Length Answers

1. Critically discuss the image of seasonal cycles in the sonnets in your syllabus.
2. Critically analyze the closing couplet of sonnet 73 with respect to your understanding of the collection of sonnets as a whole.
3. "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,/So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." Discuss these lines with respect to Shakespeare's valuation of his own art in the sonnets written by him.

Short Answer Types

1. "And every fair from fair sometime declines," —What does the poet mean? Explain with reference to context.
2. "But thy eternal summer shall not fade,"—How can the poet prevent the ravages of time? Explain with reference to context.
3. "Death's second self, that seals up all in rest" —Discuss the poet's description and presentation of the theme of death in the sonnet.

4.15.11 Suggested Reading

Duncan-Jones, Katherine, ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets.* (Arden Shakespeare, Third series, 1997)

Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (United States of America: Harvard University Press, 1999)

Jones, Peter ed. *Shakespeare: The Sonnets.* (New York; Palgrave, 2007)

Unit-16 ☐ Shakespeare's Use of the English Language

Structure

4.16.0 Introduction

4.16.1 Shakespeare's Use of the English Language

4.16.2 Shakespeare's Extraordinary Vocabulary

4.16.3 Shakespeare's Experimentation with Words

4.16.4 The Uniqueness of Shakespeare's Phrases

4.16.5 Use of Language to Individualize Characters

4.16.6 Understanding Shakespeare's Use of Language Today

4.16.7 Summing Up

4.16.8 Comprehension Exercises

4.16.9 Further Activity

4.16.10 Suggested Reading

4.16.0 Introduction

In this unit we are going to look at the English language from a different perspective. You have read in previous Units how three major foreign languages—Scandinavian or Old Norse, French, and Latin influenced the growth and development of the English language in different periods of history. The English language however did not stay static after the foreign invasions stopped or even after major cultural phenomena like the Renaissance introduced far – reaching changes into it. All living languages continue to change. While developments in the spheres of human experience necessitate changes in language, another, equally important, but more subtle agent of change is the creative activity of the writers of the language. As students of literature you should be aware that a major writer always recreates the language he writes in. In this Unit we shall try to see how two the vast corpus of Shakespeare's work has affected the English language.

4.16.1 Shakespeare's use of the English Language

Shakespeare's plays present such a deep philosophical understanding of human life and nature that they are never considered to be irrelevant. Scholars are still reading new meanings into his plays, trying to find out their full implications and with the change of times Shakespeare criticism has also undergone a huge change. Every scholar has interpreted him differently, thus adding to the meaning in the process of finding the meaning of the plays. That is why, Shakespeare is still our contemporary.

In this unit, however, we shall look into another important aspect of Shakespeare, namely, his contribution to the English language. It is said that a writer is considered to be great not only for the literature he has authored but rather for the influence he has exerted on the growth and development of the language. You must remember Chaucer in this connection for he is the first major English poet who restored to English literature and language the prestige that had been lost during the political troubles in the late middle ages. Shakespeare improved upon the standards set by Chaucer for English poetry and added beauty, boldness and panache to it.

In this section you will learn:

- **Shakespeare's extraordinary vocabulary**
- **His experimentation with words**
- **The uniqueness of his phrases**
- **How he employed language to individualize his characters**
- **Difference between Shakespearean usage and Modern Usage**

4.16.2 Shakespeare's Extraordinary Vocabulary

Otto Jespersen tells us that according to a rough calculation in Mrs. Clark's 'Shakespeare Concordance' Shakespeare's vocabulary consisted of approximately 21000 words. According to others, the number is 24000, without counting the inflected forms as distinct words. The numbers may not mean that much to you. Let us take it in this way: Milton's vocabulary has 7000-8000 words, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* taken together have 9000 words, the New Testament has 4800 words. Some scholars have argued that Shakespeare may not have used more than 15000 or 21000 words. What is more important than the volume of the vocabulary is its diversity and variety. Do not think that Milton was less learned than Shakespeare because he has

used a fewer number of words. Shakespeare has written upon a variety of topics, he has included people from every walk of life in his plays, and his characters speak in a wide variety of voices, showing differences in class, profession beliefs etc. Shakespeare needed a large number of words because he touched upon a wide variety of subjects, facts and human relationships. Milton needed fewer words because his poetry covers a narrower field of interest.

4.16.3 Shakespeare's Experimentation With Words

The way of using so many words is through the means of experimentation. He has played with his characters and he has amused his audience and later his readers by the uniqueness of his words. In order to do this he has borrowed words from the provincial dialects, Latin, and everyday life of the common people with equal veracity. We shall look into these components individually:

- In his early life he tried to introduce 'local colour' in *The Taming of the Shrew* by making Christopher Sly use some provincialisms like, *pheeze* ('to drive away'). Touchstone in *As You Like It* and the Fool in *King Lear* also use similar words. In his later years he has used such words to achieve poetic effect. For instance, the word *bolter (to dirty or begrime)* used in the expression *blood-bolter'd Banquo* in *Macbeth* must have been taken from a Warwickshire dialect.
- A special mention must be made of the rustic dialect used by Edgar, dressed as a peasant, in *King Lear*. Shakespeare so modified his speech that it retained the rustic flavour but at the same time did not become too remote to be understood by his London audience. In short, it is a literary or stage dialect and not a real one. We shall once again come across such an achievement when we talk about Shylock the Jew in *The Merchant of Venice*.
- You have already been told in Unit 2 that English was flooded by Latin loan words during the Renaissance. Shakespeare shows a ready acceptance of new words every kind. There were some rhetoricians like Thomas Wilson who criticised the indiscriminate adoption of Latin words and advocated the use of plain English Shakespeare does make fun of the erudite Latin words called 'inkhorn'terms', for example in the speeches of the pedant Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost.* But we find in his plays words like *allurement, antipathy, discountenance, emulate, hereditary, pathetical, prodigious* and so on which were all newly added in the latter half of the 16th. Century. He

has also borrowed words from everyday usage like, *bump*, *gloomy*, *dwindle*, and so on. The word *dwindle* is derived from the Old English word *dwinan* which means 'to pine'. The word was used in the province of Shropshire.

Shakespeare has also made new words and compounds in several ways:

- At times he added the French prefix 'en—'/ 'em—' to make new words like, *enact*, *embattle*, *enlink*, *enmesh*, *enkindle*, *endear* ('increased in value'), *engirt*, and so on. With the prefix 'un—' he has framed words like *unavoided* ('inevitable'), *unless*, *unbody*, *uncharged* (acquit), *unvalued* ('precious beyond valuation') and others.
- He joined one adjective with another to make new effective poetic compounds like *daring-hardy*, *happy-valiant*.
- He used adjectives as verbs, eg., *happy* as 'to make happy' (sonnet 6 :'which happies those that pay the willing loan'), *safe* as 'to make safe'. He also used nouns as verbs like, *spaniel'd* ('to follow like a spaniel'), *childed* and *fathered*.

4.16.4 The Uniqueness of Shakespeare's Phrases

Shakespeare is the creator of many phrases which we use today without being aware of their literary origin, for instance, *past praying for*, *patience on a monument*, *to be or not to be*, *caviar to the general* (where general means 'the common multitude'),*the primrose way* ,*vaulting ambition* and so on. Because of rampant use for different purposes some phrases have acquired different meanings. Some interesting examples will be: *a foregone conclusion* (used in *Othello*, it originally meant 'an experience previously undergone') and *more honoured in the breach than the observance* (used in *Hamlet* it refers to the Danish habit of heavy drinking, on which Hamlet says that the custom would be more honourable if broken than observed).

4.16.5 Use of Language to Individualise Characters

Shakespeare used his language chiefly to individualize his characters. In this he is better than even modern novelists who often use a set of words and phrases to give to their characters a distinctly recognizable individuality. The speech of the gravediggers in *Hamlet* and the artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* show his close knowledge of the life of the common people. Not only that. So subtle is his use of language that the rustic artisans in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* speak one kind

of language when they talk and a different kind when they enact the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play. He has also used euphuistic expressions or inkhorn terms, but mostly to characterize the dramatic personages (I have already referred to Holofernes who uses erudite Latin words like *intimation, explication, replication*)

The most interesting character from the point of view of language is perhaps Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Compare him with Marlowe's Barabbas in *The Jew of Malta* and you would instantly notice Shakespeare's superiority as far as the use of language to distinguish a Jewish character is concerned. There were Jews in Elizabethan England but their number was not sufficient for people to be familiar with a specific Anglo-Jewish dialect that he could put into Shylock's mouth to make him stand out from the Christians in the play. Yet, he was able to make Shylock linguistically different from the Christians. Shylock knows the Old Testament very thoroughly and therefore freely uses references from it. He uses some specific Biblical words which are otherwise not found in Shakespeare like, *synagogue*, *Nazarite*, *publican*. Instead of *interest* he says *advantage* or *thrift*, instead of *usury* he says *usance*. He uses plurals like *moneys*, *equal* for 'exact', *rheum* to mean 'saliva', *estimable* for 'valuable' and other such words which make him sound different from the other characters in the play. He refers to Biblical stories, like the story of Jacob, to justify his taking of interest against loans. Shakespeare has even used different syntactic constructions for Shylock's speeches. For example, Shylock says "I have no mind for feasting forth to-night. Everywhere else Shakespeare writes mind 'to' instead of the 'for' that he uses here. Shylock says "so following" and "rend out" whereas everywhere else Shakespeare writes 'so forth' and 'rend'.

4.16.6 Understanding Shakespeare's use of Language Today

Words acquire different meanings in different ages. Thus, as modern readers we may miss many of the implications which were instantly felt by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Let us see a few examples: A *bonnet* then meant a man's cap, thus Lear walks *unbonneted*, to *charm* always implied application of magical power, especially witchcraft, *notorious* could be used in a good sense as 'well known', *succeed* and *success* were colourless words, so Shakespeare could write 'good success' or 'succeeds unhappily'. *Companion* had a bad implication, like *fellow* now, and *politician* always meant someone intriguing or scheming. There are many such examples.

It would also strike many of the modern readers that Shakespeare's English lacks in grammar as we understand it today. You must bear in mind that Elizabethan and

Jacobean English were characterized by a kind of flexibility and freedom which are usually associated with Renaissance linguistic ideas in general. As the loss of the inflexional endings removed the morphological differences, it became possible to use nouns and adjectives as verbs. Elizabethans often interchanged the functions of different parts of speech in such a way as seemed logical to them. They did not always care much about the grammatical correctness.

Shakespeare has used this flexibility to its fullest extent. Jespersen writes, 'One of the most characteristic features of Shakespeare's use of the English language is his boldness'. You have already read about the boldness of his metaphor in his phrases, but you must also be able to appreciate the boldness of his sentence structure. For instance, he does not always care for grammatical parallelism: *a thought which quartered hath one part wisdom/ And ever three parts coward (Hamlet)*. Here, following the rules of grammar, it should have been 'cowardice', for 'wisdom' is a noun and 'coward' is an adjective; he writes *the whole ear of Denmark* (*Hamlet*) instead of 'the ear of whole Denmark'; he uses the pronoun as a noun as in *Lady, you are the cruellest she alive* (*Twelfth Night*). Here 'she' is a pronoun being used as a noun); he uses double negatives as in *nor never none shall mistress be of it (Twelfth Night)*; he uses double superlatives, like *it was the most unkindest cut of all (Julius Caesar)* and so on.

What you must remember is that Shakespeare's syntax is that of an orator. It is meant for a drama that is to be seen and not to be read. Drama is supposed be more authentic in capturing the various degrees of emotion of the characters rather than the grammatical correctness of their utterances. Thus, his syntax is familiar, conversational and spontaneous, and not studied, formal and bookish. The greatness of Shakespeare lies in his ability to make his language suitable for the characters and in doing so, he created a unique style that has set a standard for the users of the English language.

4.16.7 Summing Up

At the end of this Unit, you have learnt the following:

- Shakespeare's extraordinary vocabulary and the variety of the words he used
- His experiments with words and syntax which at times even challenged the rules of grammar to be more authentic in their dramatic effect
- How effectively he could use his words and phrases to individualise a particular character

4.16.8 Comprehension Exercises

Essay Type Questions:

1. Discuss the particular features of Shakespeare's use of the English Language.
2. Show, with illustrative examples, Shakespeare's boldness in use of words and phrases.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss, with suitable examples how Shakespeare uses language to individualize characters.
2. What conformities in modern English do you find with Shakespeare's use of language?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Show how Shakespeare experimented with words.
2. From the point of their use of language, how would you compare the Jew of Shakespeare with that of Marlowe?

4.16.9 Further Activity

In this Course you have two full length plays by William Shakespeare. Read the texts and with help from your counselor write a project on the variant use of language to suit the moods of the tragic and the comic. Examine how in Shakespeare's use of language, the two genres often coalesce. This can be an interesting exercise of doing language through literature.

4.16.10 Suggested Reading

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Ghosh, Indranee (ed). *History of English Language: A Critical Companion.* Delhi: Worldview, 2004.

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Wrenn, C. L. *The English Language.* Kolkata: Book World, 2008.

Unit-17 □ Influence of the Authorised Version of *The Bible*

Structure

4.17.0 Introduction

4.17.1 History of Bible Translations

4.17.2 Features of the Authorised Version

4.17.3 The Impact of the Phraseology of the Authorised Version

4.17.4 Revival of Archaic Words

4.17.5 Impact on English Grammar

4.17.6 Employment of Scriptural Narratives

4.17.7 Impact on Writing Style

4.17.8 Radical Use of Biblical Ideas

4.17.9 Use of Biblical Allusions

4.17.10 Summing Up

4.17.11 Comprehension Exercises

4.17.12 Suggested Reading

4.17.0 Introduction

In this Unit you are going to learn about the overall impact of the Authorised Version of *The Bible*, and how apart from being a religious text it has become a significant source of enrichment of the English language. In the previous unit you learnt how Shakespeare modified and made a lasting impact on the English language. As a maker of the English language, his contribution is immense. Now you shall learn of the influence of the Authorised Version of *The Bible* which also made a great impact on the English language and the English people.

As students of literature you definitely understand and appreciate the importance of religious traditions in moulding the creative impulses of men and women. Before the advent of modernism, men usually reserved a large part of their talents for doing God's work, according to their interpretation of it . In the past men had made beautiful structures for religious congregations, painted great pictures on religious themes. *The Bible*, a holy book revered by two major religious sects of the world, has also been a source of inspiration for writers, painters, sculptors, and thinkers for generations . The words of wisdom in the two main parts of the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments, have spread far and wide since they first travelled from the Middle East to Rome. The Bible was initially written in Hebrew and Aramic, since both Judaism and Christianity are Semitic religions and began among the Jewish people. After the Romanisation of Christianity, the Bible was naturally translated in Latin and the Catholic priests who did the work of rendering the Bible in Latin did not always translate the Hebrew versions word for word. The rituals of the Catholic church were conducted in Latin and since the Catholic Roman priests took the message of Christianity to the pagan peoples of the rest of Europe, the newly Christianised pagans learnt Latin terms for Christian rites and rituals.

We shall now briefly look at a few source-texts that formed the basis of Bible writing in later years. There are several such old texts written in Hebrew and Greek. They include: (i) Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, the earliest of which dates back to the 8th century; (ii) Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament; the earliest of which dates back to the 4th century; (iii) Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament, known as the **Septuagint**, which were translated from Hebrew around 277 B.C.; (iv) Early translations of the Scriptures or its parts in Syriac, Latin, German and other languages. For the sake of clarity we shall read about a few important translations to form an idea about the history of Bible writing.

➢ ***Septuagint Version***

Produced around 277 B.C. this Greek translation is also popularly known as the Alexandrian version. The Latin word *Septuagint* means seventy. It is believed that seventy scholars of Alexandria were engaged in translating the Old Testament for the sake of the Jews who had been scattered abroad and could no longer read the Hebrew original. Though later day scholars have raised questions against the authenticity of this translation yet this Bible formed the basis for many future translations. The original version of this translation is lost but three best copies—the Vatican, the

Sinaitic and the Alexandrian—have been preserved. The Alexandrian manuscript is now in the British Museum in London.

➢ ***The Vulgate Version***

In the 2nd century of the Christian era Latin superseded Greek, and remained for many years the diplomatic language of Europe. At this time a Latin translation was made in North Africa from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and the original Greek version of the New Testament. This version is known as the Vulgate. The word vulgate is Latin, meaning 'to make common or public'; hence the word 'vulgar'. This Latin version seems to be England's first Bible. It was brought by the Christian missionaries. In the 4th century the Vulgate was revised by Jerome, a saintly scholar, who had access to the ancient Hebrew Manuscripts. This revision has been an important one and has influenced many future translations.

➢ ***English Translations***

The Catholic church of Rome, in order to protect the hegemony of the priests who were well versed in Latin, discouraged vernacular translations of The Bible . The vernacular translations could not be stopped however. Sometimes patronised by enlightened rulers, sometimes daringly carried out by rebel priests disgusted by corruptions in the church, various open or clandestine translations made their appearance in several European countries. In fact, the most potent force behind the protestant Reformation was the vernacular Bible, made accessible to common people after the invention of printing. English translations of the Bile have a rich and complex history. Some people, like **William Tyndale** had to die for translating the Bible. The **King James Bible**, generally known as the **Authorised Version**, was the culmination of a series of translations done in English from the time of Aelfric. It was a monumental achievement; the result of the rigorous craftsmanship of fifty-five scholars. It was largely modelled on the Bishop's and Geneva Bibles. **The Authorised Version attested the emergence of Protestant England and celebrated the nation's freedom from the stranglehold of Rome.** Its influence on the English language and culture is inestimable. However, before going into the influence of the Authorised Bible on English language, we shall briefly look into the history of Bible translations until the emergence of the Authorised Version.

4.17.1 History of Bible Translations

In the 7th century the first attempt was made to translate the scriptures in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. The Venerable Bede says that Caedmon translated parts of the Bible but no definite evidence exists. However, it is evident that many of the poems ascribed to Caedmon were strongly inspired by the Bible, eg. the *Hymn*. The other poems in the Junius MS, — *Genesis, Exodus, Christ and Satan,* once ascribed to Caedmon, are basically attempts at free verse translations of the Bible stories in Anglo-Saxon.

In the 8th century the Venerable Bede is reputed to have translated parts of the Bible. Unfortunately, Bede's translations have not survived.

In the 9th century, Alfred the Great, one of the most renowned kings of England is believed to have patronised translations of the Bible. Passages from the **Ten Commandments** and the **Pentateuch** were certainly in circulation during his reign and he is supposed to have ordered the Book of Psalms to be translated. Around the 10th century, the priest Aelfric translated the Pentateuch.

➢ ***Wycliffe's Bible***

Born around 1320, John Wycliffe was a priest and a theologian who taught in an Oxford seminary . He was a strong critic of the privileges enjoyed by priests and other corruptions of the Catholic Church. He is reputed to have translated the entire Bible into English. It is supposed to have taken him twenty-two years to complete the work and he based his translation on the Latin Vulgate, as well as Greek and Hebrew originals. He also divided the Bible into chapters following the pattern set by Cardinal Hugo in 1250. His version of the Bible was quite popular and it was widely copied. Modern critics however are of the opinion that Wycliffe at best translated several books of the New Testament. The Old Testament was the work of some of his followers.

Wycliffe"s criticism of the church created a lot of furore. He was excommunicated, although only after death was he declared a heretic and his remains removed from consecrated ground. However, his opinions, his Bible translation and its wide popularity mark him as a harbinger of the Reformation and the protestant movement. His idea that the Bible was the only authentic source of Christian belief was the core idea of the protestant Reformation. The Reformers believed that the Bible should be translated so that every man could read the word of God and not have to wait for the priests to explain it to him.

➢ ***Tyndale's Version***

In 1525, William Tyndale (1494-1536), one of the great Protestant reformers, and a contemporary of Luther, made another English translation based on the Greek translation of the New Testament by Erasmus in 1516. Tyndale's translation was done under great difficulties, partly at Cologne and partly at Worms, both cities situated in Germany, a safe place for Protestants in exile, fleeing from Catholic persecution. Several editions were printed; this was the first English New Testament in print. Fifteen thousand copies were issued, which were secretly brought to England in bales of cloth or sacks of flour. The church tried its best to stop this Bible from reaching the common people. Thousands were executed and many copies were burnt.

Tyndale's version is remarkable for its language and accuracy. This was one of the main sources for the Authorised Version. He also translated the Pentateuch and Jonah.

➢ ***Coverdale's Version***

In 1535, the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments, was for the first time printed in English by Miles Coverdale, who made the translation from German and Latin versions. It was printed in the continent like Tyndale's Bibles, but was dedicated to King Henry VIII and was allowed to circulate freely in England. This was also known as the *Great Bible* .

Two other historically notable translations before the Authorised Version were: 1. The Geneva Bible, (1557—1560) produced by a group of protestant scholars, including Coverdale himself, who fled to Geneva, which was a Protestant republic during the reign of Queen Mary I; and 2. The Bishop's Bible (1568). The Anglican clergy were displeased by the radical Protestantism of the Geneva Bible, and to discourage its circulation a group of Anglican bishops, under the guidance of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, produced this version . Later on, the **Authorised Version** would take the 1602 revised edition of the Bishop's Bible as its base text.

➢ ***The Authorised Version***

At the beginning of the 17th century there were thus three main versions of the Bible existing in England: the Great Bible (made from Coverdale's edition in 1539); the Geneva Bible (prepared in 1560 by protestant reformers in Geneva, where they had fled during the persecutions under Queen Mary); and the Bishop's Bible (published in 1568 by a committee of bishops). Apart from the fact that these

translations were by no means perfect, as time went on the meanings of the English words also changed, so the need for a fresh translation rose. Accordingly, under the patronage of King James I, fifty-four translators, including High Churchmen, Puritans and the best scholars of the land undertook the task of translating the Bible, taking as their source all the best editions published up to that time and also the Hebrew and Greek originals. In 1611, after a period of five years of intense scholarship, the Bible was published and it is known as the King James Bible or the Authorised Version. The Bible that you read today may possibly be this one. Since its language, 17th. Century English is old-fashioned; some Protestant sects use modern versions of the Bible.

➢ *Influence of the Authorised Version*

The Authorised Version of the Bible exercised no small influence on the English language. The best judges of English style have greatly admired the style of the Authorised Version. W.V. Moody and R.M. Lovett in their *History of English Literature* have said, "In the King James Bible we possess a monument of English prose of no particular age, but gathering into itself the strength and sweetness of all ages".

4.17.2 Features of the Authorised Version

The Authorised Version of the Bible has many striking features. One of its prominent features is that it is non-partisan and its tone is non-judgmental. The translators were faithful to the original Scripture. They did not take any sides. The committee set up by the King consisted of divergent groups. It included Puritans, High Churchmen and even anti-Papal believers. However, they desisted from endorsing their own ideologies. They always kept in mind that they were working under royal patronage. Their dedication to the project was genuine. This can be evinced by a look at the Authorised Version in detail. For example, whenever they encountered a confusing word, they did not go for translation but for transliteration. Transliteration means the process of transferring a word from the alphabet of one language to another. They kept the original Greek or Hebrew word intact and rendered them into English. This approach to translation approximates Lawrence Venuti's model of 'foreignization' method where the cultural aspects of the source text are kept as foreign as possible to the target culture. It is opposed to 'domestication' that erases the cultural values of the source language. The translators of the Authorised Version kept the proper names intact in all cases. In this connection it

must be admitted that the proper names could have been translated into English. 'Adam' is the Hebrew word and in English it means 'Man'. 'David' is also a Hebrew word and in English it means 'Beloved'. In spite of that, they retained the original word to avoid any confusion. The same is true about controversial topics or words. For example, the Greek word 'baptism' is open to multiple interpretations. It signifies multiple ideas. Many a person took it to mean 'immersion' while others objected to that meaning. To them it meant 'sprinkling of water on a person's forehead.' This controversy rages among believers even today. The translators steered cleared of the controversy by retaining the original Greek word. Thus, the Authorised Version is marked by a sincerity of purpose.

Secondly, the Authorised Version is famous for its remarkable exactitude. The translators used the earlier controversies to great advantage. Difficult topics had already been discussed and different strategies were adapted to tackle those difficulties. The translators ingenuously made use of the earlier versions. They said in the preface: "Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one, but to make a good one better. That hath been our endeavour, that our work." Another factor that contributed to the exactitude is that the translators had more time at their disposal than the earlier translators. They were not under any obligation to finish off the project in a hurry. That is why they were able to make the translation as accurate as possible. They preferred 'sense to sense' translation to 'word by word' (verbatim) translation. The adoption of this strategy contributed a lot in making the Authorised Version an accurate one. Moreover, there are differences between the Greek or Hebrew languages and the English language in terms of syntax. The taxonomy of structure does not always match. It was a hurdle for the translators. The translators devised lots of methods to tackle such problems. Whenever the syntactical structure caused a problem the translators used italicized words to acknowledge that the Greek or the Hebrew words cannot be fitted into the structure of the English in the same way as in the original. They also inserted some marginal notes to show the alternative syntactic and semantic structures. These marginal references bespeak the level of accuracy to which the translators aspired to lift their work. They also tried to achieve accuracy by avoiding uniformity in translating the same word. They had in mind the desire to show the variety of the English language lest it should appear as a static and rigid language to the readers . So, instead of using the same word again and again, they made use of synonymous words so as to provide enjoyment to the reader.

Thirdly, the Authorised Version is notable for its magnificent admixture of elegance and popularity in its language. It avoided both extremes of formality and

colloquialism. The English language was undergoing rapid changes in the early 17th century. To avoid controversy the translators often opted for a more archaic form. For example, they uniformly use 'thou/thee' for second person singular, although by that time 'you' was already in use for the same. Again, they always use '-eth' for the third person singular present tense verb ending, though the modern '-s' ending was fairly common. The translators were greatly influenced by the cadence of the Hebrew language, and often incorporated it in their English translation. The language in general is much less colloquial than that of the Geneva Bible . The translators, mainly churchmen, partly due to their own latinate education, partly because of royal instructions, chose a more latinate syntax and vocabulary.

4.17.3 The Impact of the Phraseology of the Authorised Bible

The English language owes the currency of a large number of phrases to the Authorised Version. No other work has had so much influence on the phraseology of English as the Authorised Version of the Bible. We use some of the phrases in our daily lives without any awareness that they come from the Bible. We use them as household words. Unlike Shakespeare, who is said to have coined about six thousand words, the Authorised Version offers around 257 expressions. Thus, you may see that in terms of new expressions, the impact of the Authorised Version is limited. Such expressions include figurative phrases, metaphors, etc. But we have to remember here that very few of these expressions are absolutely original. Having said that, it is not in the addition of words but in the codification of idioms that one may find the Authorised Version's powerful impact. David Crystal writes(*Begat* , O.U.P. 2010) , 'Either directly, from its own translators, or indirectly, as a glass through which we can see its predecessors- it has contributed far more to English in the way of idiomatic or quasi-proverbial expressions than any other literary source.' The translators wanted to render the idiomatic Hebrew expressions into Vernacular English for the first time. Some of the idiomatic expressions are: 'the powers that be', 'a howling wilderness', 'city of refuge', 'the eleventh hour', 'the lesser lights', 'lick the dust', 'pride goes before a fall', 'a fly in the ointment', 'put words in his mouth' etc. Crystal however points out that the translators seldom coined the idioms. They used those already in use. Unlike Shakespeare, they did not invent, since their purpose was easy readability rather than striking feats of imaginative invention.

Like most other books that have been widely popular, the English Bible has generated some phrases and uses of words through misunderstanding. 'Helpmeet' is the most striking example of word-making through popular misunderstanding. In the Authorised Version of the Bible the Hebrew words of Genesis ii, 18 were literally rendered as 'an help meet for him'. However, readers mistook the two words for a compound with the result that *helpmeet* came into existence as a synonym for 'one's partner in life'.

4.17.4 Revival of Archaic Words

Not only in the usage of phrases but also in the revival of archaic words we can observe the impact of the Authorised Version. Contrary to what reformers like Tyndale did, the translators of the Authorised Version used some archaic language for they felt that the language of faith should be a bit different from the language used daily so as to preserve the mystery of religion. Thus, they changed Tyndale's more colloquial expressions with more dignified parlance. Some obsolete words were given a fresh lease of life. Among them mention may be made of 'damsel' for a young woman, 'raiment' and 'apparel' for dress, 'travail' for labour, 'list' for desire.

4.17.5 Impact on English Grammar

The Bible has also influenced the technical grammar of modern poetry in a considerable measure. It is owing to this influence that the verb forms with 'th' began to be used to a great extent by the poets of the nineteenth century as **hath**, **loveth, hateth, giveth**, in place of **has, loves, hates, gives** in the third person singular. The modern use of 'thou', 'thee', and 'thy' in poetry and religious writings is also due to the Authorised Version of the Bible.

4.17.6 Employment of Scriptural Narratives

Scriptural themes have been incorporated in devotional essays, sermons, versified psalms and poems. This of course cannot be totally ascribed to the influence of the Authorised Version, since in a Christian culture any other Bible would also have been a major source book. But the style and language of this Bible and its almost

universal availability and use over a long period of time made this the major source for later authors. Many writers have employed the scriptural narratives to impart a touch of majesty to their works. Bunyan's "*Pilgrim's* Progress" is an excellent example of this. This didactic work employed Biblical diction and theme exquisitely. About Bunyan, Legouis wrote, 'He seems to have lived with the Scriptures alone, indifferent to every production of the human mind, occupied only with the quest for means of salvation.' Dryden set his political satire *"Absalom and Achitophel"* (1681) against the Biblical backdrop. Drawing on the Old Testament story of King David and his rebellious son Absalom, Dryden allegorised the contemporary political crisis. John Milton was imbued with the spirit of the Bible. His greatest poem "**Paradise Lost"** is modelled on Biblical episodes. Some stories of Oscar Wilde such as '*The Selfish Giant*' allegorise the Biblical principle of charity. Lord Byron in his play *Cain* (1821) dealt with the story of Abel and Cain from Cain's point of view. Browning's poem "Saul" is modelled on one of the incidents mentioned in the Biblical story of Saul and David.

4.17.7 Impact on Writing Style

The translators aimed at fashioning a style that would preach the lesson of the Bible in a simple way. That is why they steered cleared of ostentatious display of learning. Rigidity of Latinism was eschewed. Inkhorn terms were few. The jargon-free manner in which it was written created a lasting impact on the masses. The employment of homely metaphors made it more acceptable to the common people. The translators refused to be dramatic. Huxley called it 'the Magna Carta of the poor and the oppressed.' Coleridge opined, 'intense study of the Bible will keep any writer from being vulgar in point of style.' Ifor Evans rightly estimated that the language of the Authorised Version 'has so embedded itself in our national tradition that if the Bible is forgotten a precious possession will be lost.' Addison beautifully summed up its dignity: "How cold and dead does a prayer appear that is composed in the most elegant and polite forms of speech, which are natural to our tongue, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase which may be drawn from the sacred writings. It has been said by some of the ancients that if the gods were to talk with men, they would certainly speak in Plato's style; but I think we may say, with justice, that when mortals converse with their Creator they cannot do it in so proper a style as in that of the Holy Scriptures." The translators were imbued with a remarkable

sincerity. They avoided trifling expressions or puns. One can find some puns (a play on dual meanings) in the Hebrew but the Authorised version rejected them so as not to mislead the reader. Notwithstanding its simplicity, the Authorised Version has poetical touches too. Extra pleasure accrues to a reader because of its poetical flavour. The following excerpt from the 35th chapter of *Isaiah*, for example, illustrates the musical cadence of the Authorised Version:

> The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

One can set music to these words! However, this musical quality is avoided sometimes purposefully. While narrating an argument or expanding an idea these poetical touches are carefully avoided.

4.17.8 Radical Use of Biblical Ideas

Time and again writers have used quotations from the Bible to elucidate their arguments or to generate a series of signifiers conducive to the author's purpose. Writers in the nineteenth century, more than in any other age, packed their writings with quotations from the Bible. Ruskin, for example, stuffed his writings with Biblical quotations. Some writers even used the Authorised Version radically to disseminate their artistic or political doctrines. P.B. Shelley and William Blake, for example, used the Authorised Version in this way. Jonathan Swift, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy utilized the Scriptures in an ironical way to launch a diatribe against the powers that be. Even Walt Whitman who tried to create a new American Bible in his monumental *Leaves of Grass,* premised his poems upon the Authorised Version as a backdrop. Even Allen Ginsberg, with all his modern radical ideas, made use of the Bible in his poem "*Howl*"

4.17.9 Use of Biblical Allusions

Biblical allusions are very common in writings. With the advent of the Authorised Version, a cultural shift took place. Earlier writers like Marlowe, Shakespeare or Spenser frequently alluded to the Geneva Bible. But after the emergence of the Authorised Version, major English writers regularly alluded to it. The names of John Milton and John Bunyan must be mentioned in this connection. The fact that even non-conformists or dissenters alluded to it in their writings is illustrative of the Authorised Version's popularity over the others. On the pages of newspapers, one may find frequent Biblical allusions. Some examples are 'The full measure of justice is not meted out to them', 'They sold their birthright for a mess of pottage', 'They have fallen among thieves'. The American poet Anne Bradstreet, for instance, has alluded to lines from the *Song of Solomon* in her poem "To My Dear and Loving Husband":

> "My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
>
> Nor aught but love from thee, give recompense."

In Isaac Watts's hymn, "Crucifixion to the World by the Death of Christ," one can find allusion to the Gospels of Matthew and John. Not only in poems but also in fiction one can trace allusions to the Authorised Version of the Bible. For example, in Charlotte Bronte's ***Jane Eyre*** Biblical allusions occur frequently. In her darkest hour of trouble, when Jane discovers that Rochester is already married to Bertha, the lines from Psalm 69 come to her mind: "the waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire:"

4.17.10 Summing Up

In this Unit you have learnt

- The influence of the Authorised Version of The Bible on the English language. No other book has influenced the English language as much as the Authorised Version has done. It is also an important document about the development of the English language.
- The history of the Bible translations in English until the emergence of the Authorised Version.

- How expressions from the Authorised Version occur, often directly, often remoulded , in everyday speech of Englishmen.
- The characteristics of the Authorised Version. It is an honest and dedicated work notable for the admixture of elegance and simplicity.
- The use of the Bible as a source text for later authors.
- The relationship between the style and grammar of The Authorised Version and The English language in general.

4.17.11 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type:

1. Discuss the history of Bible Translations in English, with special reference to the Authorised Version.
2. Comment on the impact of the Authorised Version of the Bible on English language and literature.
3. Discuss the main characteristics of the Authorised Version of the Bible.

Medium Length Answers:

4. Comment on the Authorised Version's influence on the style of later writers.
5. Comment on the nature of the vocabulary used by the translators of the Authorised version .
6. Show how the Authorised Version of the Bible differed from previous versions.

Short Answer Type:

7. Write a note on the use of Biblical allusions in English language.
8. Write a note on the impact of the Authorised Version on English grammar.
9. Find some examples of the manifold use of Biblical language from the works of the authors you have read.

4.17.12 Suggested Reading

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Unit-18 □ Metaphysical Poetry

Section A - John Donne: 'The Good Morrow'
Section B - George Herbert: 'Virtue'
Andrew Marvell – 'To His Coy Mistress'

Section A - John Donne: 'The Good Morrow'

Structure

4.18A.0 Introduction

4.18A.1 Donne and Metaphysical Poetry

4.18A.2 Text of 'The Good Morrow'

4.18A.3 Glossary and Annotations

4.18A.4 Theme and title

4.18A.5 Critical Understanding of the poem

4.18A.6 Structure and Style

4.18A.7 Summing up

4.18A.8 Comprehension Exercises

4.18A.9 Suggested reading

4.18A.10 Further activity

4.18A.0 Introduction

- In this section we shall critically examine a poem, *The Good Morrow*, by one of the major poets of the English Renaissance; John Donne, who, like his contemporary Shakespeare,worked upon the traditions of love poetry in his age to create a body of verse that has its distinctive style and appeal.
- We shall, in the process, take a brief look at the **Metaphysical school of poetry** that Donne has been associated with.
- We also learn about the **aubade, a** special kind of love poem that is represented by the poem selected for study.

4.18A.1 Donne and Metaphysical Poetry

❖ **John Donne:The Man and hisWorks**

John Donne (1572-1631) is, even today, one of the most widely-read English poets of the seventeenth century. He was a writer of both secular and religious literature. He was originally a Roman Catholic, but subsequently became an Anglican priest. Later he was appointed Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London, and became famous for his sermons, which along with other religious works were published in his lifetime.

However, our focus is on Donne's poetry: particularly his **amatory** verse (or love poetry). Even so, it must be mentioned that his verse covered a variety of forms, styles and subjects: he wrote elegies, satires, epigrams, devotional sonnets and more. Most of his poetry was published after his death, though during his lifetime his contemporaries could read and admire his works in circulation, as was then the practice, in manuscript form.

❖ **Donne and Metaphysical Poetry**

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (i.e. during the English Renaissance), prevailing social and religious conventions were being challenged in an intellectual atmosphere that favoured scientific and rational approaches. Donne's verse may be seen as a striking literary form of such questioning, as he develops poetic subjects such as love and religion in unconventional ways.You will be really surprised, on reading the poetry of Donne and his group, to see how fast the language of love did evolve in English poetry. Your point of comparison will obviously be with the early Elizabethan tradition of writing love poetry.

A term often used to describe Donne's poetry is '**metaphysical**'.As you understand, the term literally means 'relating to things that cannot be conceived within the range of the physical, or the tangible and the material'. First used in this connection by John Dryden to criticize Donne for his excessive use of philosophy in poetry, the term later was used to categorize a certain 'school' or group of mainly seventeenth-century English poets, including Donne as well as George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw and Abraham Cowley.

What such poets had in commonwas verse that typically was **intellectual**, treated love or religious experience psychologically rather than emotionally, unlike the poetry of their (mainly) Elizabethan contemporaries. Even so, there is no lack of **passion** in the poems of the metaphysical school; but passion is combined with

reason or **wit.**If that sounds paradoxical, these poets did have a fondness for **paradox**. Other characteristics would include **variety** and **flexibility** of metre and rhythm; use of direct and **colloquial speech** patterns; and most notably, the use of startling images or **conceits:** elaborate comparisons that bring together very dissimilar objects. Above all, we can credit the Metaphysicals for introducing the element of love in poetry as a composite experience – meaning thereby, the amalgamation of the mind and the body in equal proportions, without either unnecessarily glorifying the one or shying away from the other. As mature readers, you will be expected to understand and appreciate the manifold nuances of heterosexual love as a concrete and composite experience of human life.

John Donne's 'The Good Morrow 'is a good example ofverse exhibiting thefeatures mentioned above, which made the poet's work distinctive. Here is the text of the complete poem, as found in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Third Edition* (1983), p205. The poem was originally published in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* in 1633. The words/phrases in bold are explained in the section that follows.

4.18A.2 Text of the Good Morrow

'The Good Morrow'

I wonder, **by my troth**, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not **weaned** till then?
But **sucked oncountry pleasures**, childishly?
Or **snorted** we in the **Seven Sleepers'** den?
'Twas so; **but** this, all pleasures **fanciesbe**.
If ever any **beauty** I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a **dream** of thee.

And now **good-morrow** to our **waking souls**,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes **one little room an everywhere**.
Let **sea-discoverers** to new worlds have gone,
Let **maps** to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, **each hath one, and is one**.

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

4.18A.3 Glossary and Annotations

Stanza 1

by my troth: literally, "in faith" or "to tell the truth". This example of colloquialEnglish, with which the poem begins, is a deliberately "unpoetic" technique, which canstartle readers.

weaned: taken away from (something, here a state of childhood). A growing child is weaned when it no longer needs mother's milk as nourishment.

sucked on :tasted, or experienced

country pleasures: inferior delights or enjoyment

snorted: snored or slept

Seven Sleepers' den: an **allusion** to a Christian legend about a cave in Ephesus where seven young Christians, during oppression under Roman emperor Decius in the third century, lay asleep for almost two centuries. The idea is that the poem's lovers, before finding each other, were just as deeply unaware of the world as the young sleepers in the legend.

but: except for

fancies: notions imaginary, rather than real

beauty: beautiful woman.

dream: a foreshadowing or early indicator

Stanza 2

good morrow: a salutation or greeting, seesection on poem's title

waking souls: a clear indication that people are properly awake or alive only

when then find true love. The lovers here are "waking" or rising to a new and higher consciousness.

one little room an everywhere: the room where the lovers find themselves is as good as an "everywhere" or an entire world having all they need: i.e.each other.

sea-discoverers...maps:a reference to the different discoveries and scientific theories that were changing the existing ideas about the world during the time of the Renaissance.

each hath one, and is one: the lovers are content in their own, self-contained world. Each of them "is" part of that world, and they both "possess" the world since they have each other.

Stanza 3

hearts...rest: the lovers gaze into each others'eyes with such intensity thateach seems

able to look into the depths of the other's heart.

hemispheres: here the eyes are compared to half-globes, a comparison both apt and far-fetched; hence a conceit.

sharpnorth... the bitingly cold north wind

decliningwest :associated with sunset and fading of light

not mixed equally: an**allusion**to the belief that human illness and death resulted from an imbalance in the elements making up the body.

slacken: weaken

4.18A.4 Theme and Title

The main theme of the poem is that people are awake,awareand properly alive only when they find true and meaningful love; and the title, as well as the poem's leading metaphor, indicates this idea.The power of true love, as the poet goes on to assert, can make the lovers not just alive, but immortal.

Good Morrow, meaning good morning, is a salutation or way of greeting someone. The title indicates that the poem in question concerns an early-morning meeting: between the poet-narrator and his beloved after a night of love, as we go on to learn. The composition, thus, is what might be called an **aubade**, a dawn song (or poem). This indication is strengthened by the mention of waking lovers as the first stanza continues, and then clinched by the beginning of the second stanza.

4.18A.5 Critical Understanding of 'The Good Morrow'

The lover wakes up beside his lady in this poem, and marvels about their love. He wonders what they did all these years of their lives, until they were in love and had seen through its consummation! Were they obsessed with some trivial pleasures of life, rather childishly? Now that they are in mature love, the completeness of the experience makes them realize that any prior fooling around was simply an overture to this, a feebler version of the tangible life that they are living now.All these years they were like the prisoners in the "Seven Sleepers' den", where their souls were imprisoned in a long slumber.If ever the lover had come across any beautiful woman, it was just the dream of his lady with whom he is waking up to real life now.

The lover feels that now that they are in love, they are awake and alive to the true sense of the term. So they should wish good morning to their awakened souls. Now they are waking and rising to a higher consciousness.The small room where the lovers find themselves locked, represents the entire world. The lovers are satisfied in theirautonomous world. Each one of them "is" a chunk of this world, and they "possess" this domain since they possess each other. By talking about the sea-discoverers and maps, perhaps the lover is referring to the newer discoveries of the Renaissance period.But the lover and the lady are content with the autonomous and erotocentric space that they have created for themselves. As such they have nothing to do with the discoveries and new worlds.The composite nature of their soulful love makes itself-sufficient; and the lovebirds no longer need the rest of the world.

If we put it another way, the lover and the beloved are each one a hemi-sphere and when united in true love, they shape the world as an organic whole; the sphere being the symbol of perfection. Just as the two hemispheres are twins or mirror-images of each other,the lovers are complementary to each other, and their love is so composed and stable that it would never perish.Through their eyes, they are able to peep into the hearts of each other.The lovers' eyes are paralleled to half-globes, an evaluation which is rather far-fetched. This metaphysical conceit adds charm to the entire expression. Donne borrows from the medieval science of alchemy and uses the allusion to the acceptance that mortaldiseases and death resultfrom adiscrepancy in the elements creating the human body. But since the lover and the lady are united in their soul and body, nothing can weaken them anymore. Love has made them immortal.

Donne's poem speaks of the alternation of his moods, the range of his experiences, his technical originality and of course about his poetic methods. All this makes 'The Good Morrow' an immortal love poem indeed.

4.18A.6 Structure and Style

The poem is written as an **aubade** or morning poem, typically concerning lovers about to part; a convention that Donne uses elsewhere (as in *TheSunRising*) and plays with here. Donne also gives a strikingly individualistic treatmentto a conventional idea, that lovers sharing genuine love realize the truevalue of life. Individualism is noticeable also in the robust intimacy of the poet's language, where words like "sucked" and "snorted" can startle; in the way the poet makes free use of religious legends, popular beliefs and scientific theories in his declarations of love; and above all, in his use of the metaphysical conceit; as when he likens ignorant lovers to unweaned babies, or eyeballs to geographical globes.

Donne creates a distinctive stanzaic structure as well: three seven-line stanzas using three rhymes; where the first six lines are generally in iambic pentameter, while the seventh is a foot longer, bringing each sectional movement to an emphatic and logical close.

4.18A.7 Summing Up

Here are a few points concerning what thissection has covered. Included is one observation that is NOT true. Strike out the incorrect one, and you will be left with a concise summing-up. (Check your choice against the key provided.)

- John Donne has been linked with the Metaphysical school of poetry.
- Donne, no less than Shakespeare, experimented with the traditions of love poetry prevalent in his time.
- Donne's poem *The Good Morrow* is remarkable for its striking and individualistic treatment of theme and structure.
- *The Good Morrow*is a good example of what may be called a conventional love sonnet.
- *The Good Morrow*may be related to the aubade, or early-morning love poem/ song.

4.18A.8 Comprehension Exercises

1. Essay type :

a) Attempt a critical analysis of John Donne's 'The Good Morrow'.

b) Examine the qualities that let 'The Good Morrow'be categorized as a metaphysical poem.

c) Consider 'The Good Morrow' as a poem that differs from the conventional love poetry of Donne's time.

2. Middle-length :

a) Examine a few references by Donne to new discoveries/ideas of his time.

b) Write a note on Donne's use of the metaphysical conceit.

c) How does the title of Donne's poem indicate its theme?

3. Short-answer type :

a) Explain with reference to the context:

Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;

If our two loves be one, or, thou and I

Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

b) Write a short note on the aubade

c) Identify and define 2 different rhetorical figures in the poem, and explain them.

4.18A.9 Suggested Reading

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Helen Gardner (ed). *The Metaphysical Poets.* New York: Penguin, 1960.

BarrySpurr,*Studying Poetry.* Melbourne: Macmillan, 1997. 100-108

Helen CWhite,*The Metaphysical Poets: A Study in Religious Experience*. New York: Collier Books, 1966. 73-94

Additionally, here is an internet link to a discussion of Donne's verse and the conventions of love poetry popular in his time:

http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/169175/John-Donne/1885/Poetry

4.18A.10 Further Activity

The speaker in Donne's poem is evidently a man. Identify the lines that, in your opinion, establish that the speaker is male. Now ask yourself, what if the speaker, or poet, were a woman? Would the sentiments in the poem have been differently stated, and if so, what might have been the differences?

From there you might consider looking for love poems written by women, or featuring a speaker who is a woman. Two women writers whose love poems feature female speakers are Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Make a list of a few such poems by them, and add more names to this list of women writing love poetry.

*Odd one out in the Summing Up Section:

"*The Good Morrow* is a good example of what may be called a **conventional** love **sonnet**." Donne's poem is not a sonnet, and is hardly conventional.

Section B - George Herbert: 'Virtue'

Structure

4.18B.0 Introduction

4.18B.1 George Herbert, the Religious Metaphysical

4.18B. Text of 'Virtue'

4.18B. Glossary and Annotations

4.18B. Theme and title

4.18B.5 Critical Understanding of 'Virtue'

4.18B.6 Structure and Style

4.18B. Summing up

4.18B.8 Comprehension Exercises

4.18B. Suggested reading

4.18B.10 Further activity

4.18B.0 Introduction

This section seeks

- to provide an idea about the life and works of the seventeenth-century devotional poet George Herbert;
- to relate him to what has been called the Metaphysical School of Poetry, and to examine his celebrated poem '**Virtue**'
- to acquire an understanding of the religious strand of Metaphysical poetry

4.18B.1 George Herbert, The Religious Metaphysical

George Herbert (1593-1633) was a Christian priest and poet; not surprisingly, perhaps, almost all his verse is what may be called **devotional** or **religious** in nature. Despite that, he remains one of the most widely-read poets of the seventeenth century, along with his contemporary John Donne, whose poetry has been discussed

in the earlier sub-section. The two poets even share certain stylistic characteristics, though Donne, unlike Herbert, contributed significantly to secular as well as religious verse.

❖ **Herbert's Works**

Herbert's fame as a poet rests chiefly on the 1633 anthology ***The Temple***, published shortly after his death and containing all the verses that were to become popular. These include *Easter Wings*, *The Windows*, *The Collar*, *The Pulley* and *Virtue*, which is the poem that you will be studying in detail here.

Herbert's writing, as well as that of the other poets linked to the **Metaphysical school**, has much in common with the verse of John Donne. Sudden beginnings, a conversational tone and a direct form of address in a Herbert poem may remind a reader of Donne, as may the use of a logical building up of argument. Other qualities are distinctively Herbert's; his use of more commonplace, concrete images taken from nature; his frequent engaging of dialogue with God, his putting together of sayings that sound almost proverbial; and his distinctive, sometimes startling, poetic experiments. Herbert constantly used unusual stanzaic structures, such as found in *Easter Wings*, where the lines on the page take the shape of the wings discussed in the poem. Sometimes, however, the same qualities that distinguish Herbert also come in the way of a reader's understanding: as when almost every idea is expressed by means of images, which might threaten to blur the focus on the original idea.

To help you gain a better understanding of the above-mentioned qualities of Herbert's verse, a close reading of his poem ***Virtue*** is provided. The texthas been taken from *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Third Edition* (1983), p 260. The words/ phrases in bold are explained in the section that follows the poem.

4.18B.2 Text of 'Virtue'

'Virtue'

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,

The **bridal** of the earth and sky:

The dew shall weep thy **fall** to-night;

For thou **must die.**

Sweet rose, whose **hue, angry and brave**,
Bids the rash gazer **wipe his eye**:
Thy root is ever **in its grave**,
        And thou **must die.**

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where **sweets compacted** lie;
My music shows ye have your **closes**,
        And all **must die.**

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like **seasoned** timber, never **gives**;
But though the whole **world turn to coal**,
        Then chiefly lives.

4.18B.3 Glossary and Annotations

Stanza 1

Sweet: This adjective is used in each stanza, but the sense of this word changes with every use. To generalize, it may be said that in the first three stanzas, the sweetness of the day, rose and spring, respectively, is a quality related to the senses, and one that must fade or pass; whereas the sweetness in the last stanza is a spiritual quality, which will last. Incidentally, while addressing the first three "sweet" objects, the poet uses a figure of speech called **apostrophe**.

bridal: the word here is used as a noun, meaning union or marriage. The new day's brightness makes visible everything on earth and in heaven, and in that sense brings the two together, as a marriage does. This is an example of a **metaphysical conceit**.

fall: the passing or dying of the day.

... must die: these words are repeated at the end of the first three stanzas, and act as a refrain linking the first three stanzas, and balancing them against the last, whose concluding words suggest a contrasting action; "chiefly lives".

Stanza 2

hue: colour or shade

angry: suggests redness of blood as well as fury

brave; fearless; here, perhaps, also fearsome

wipe his eye: the response here is a sign of weakness or retreat. The red of the rose is such a fiery shade that it seems to dazzle the rash or careless gazer, bringing tears that need to be wiped.

in its grave: a root grows underground, and in that sense lies buried, or in its grave

Stanza 3

sweets compacted: perfumes concentrated; an **inversion** or figure of speech where the normal order of words is reversed.

closes: Plural of the noun 'close'. In musical terms, a close is a concluding section of music, and this **analogy** or comparison leads to the realization that even spring must end or "die".

Stanza 4

seasoned timber: wood that has been dried to make it harder and stronger. The phrase is part of a **simile** comparing the soul to timber.

gives: yields or surrenders.

turn to coal: a clear reference to the Christian religious belief that on the day of God's Last Judgement, He will cause destruction by fire as a punishment for evil.

4.18B.4 Theme and Title

Herbert's poetry communicates his deeply religious view of the world. He typically uses Christian themes and places a Christian world-view against the background of the world at large. In the process, his poems sometimes emphasise the contrast between the religious and the secular sets of values, with his own preference clearly being for the religious.

Virtue may be seen as a poem concerning, in a sense, the futility of life's attractions when compared to the bliss of life after death. More specifically, it is a Christian believer's exploration of the beautiful but impermanent attractions of the

world, and of the more satisfying and permanent pleasures of a Christian afterlife. This idea is communicated through a series of images.

The noun 'virtue' (in Herbert's time the word was spelt 'vertue', which is a variant spelling you might find in some editions of the poem) is a quality of moral excellence. Related to the word **virtu** that has been mentioned in an earlier discussion on the Renaissance, 'virtue' originally indicated a combination of supposedly 'manly' qualities, such as courage and goodness. Herbert here uses the word in a more theological or religious sense, to refer to spiritual goodness.

Interestingly, the title does not seem to be applicable to much of the poem, till we realize that Herbert is actually attempting to define virtue by first explaining what it is not. This is a technique used to build up many arguments, and exhibited in a lot of Metaphysical poetry.

4.18B.5 Critical Understanding of 'Virtue'

As you have already read and understood, John Donne had major and permanent influence on this younger Metaphysical poet, George Herbert. Herbert's imagery, like Donne's, works through the mind rather than the senses and his poems are logically structured.

George Herbert articulated his spiritual views and persuasions through poetry. In his poem *Virtue* he uses poetic diction, dominant images, and startling allegories for instituting the leitmotif - life is petite, transitory, but our souls will persist forever. This poem, 'Virtue', speaks of the beauty and virtue of creation which often overpowers us with wonder and admiration because it is an echo of the supremacy of the Creator. George Herbert underlines the mysticalreality that life is beautiful. However, notwithstanding its beauty, the creation will come to a flamingtermination which will prompt us to look at the infinity of the universe.

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright," is a line that takes us silently to do a self-introspection and compare our lives to a perfect spring afternoon where everything is noble. The poet creates the magnificentassociation between a bright day and the virtuous soul. The day is something tranquil and brilliant; thus the poet associates it with the marriage between a man and a woman - "The bridal of the earth and sky". Then our attention is shifted to the spiritual truth that even this all will go away with time. Herbert uses personification to guide us towards a more passionatesituation by saying, "The dew shall weep thy fall to-night", since the day must convert to night,

which again is a metaphor for death. Then there is the appraisal of a lovely rose and a virtuous soul, the comparisons aptly made. The rose is "angry and brave", and a noble bystander must rub his eyes in admiration and bewilderment. Anyway, Herbert pens that the root of the flower is in its grave and it will have to perish someday.

Lastly, Herbert carries us to the spell of spring which comprises both bountiful days and beautiful roses. Spring embodies time and everything comes in between. It is likened to "A box where sweets compacted lie". The whole world might come to an end, but only a "sweet and virtuous soul, like a seasoned timber" is immortal.

Diction, Imagery, and Figurative Language are powerfully used in Herbert's "Virtue".

4.18B.6 Structure and Style

In '**Virtue'** Herbert creates a taut and balanced lyrical poem of four quatrains, or four-line stanzaic units, with lines that rhyme alternately, ABAB. For each stanza, the first three lines are generally in iambic tetrameter, while the last line is in iambic dimeter. Each of the first three stanzas begins with an image of something "sweet" in nature, and develops it till the last line, which operates like a refrain or chorus that balances the sweetness against the unpleasant fact that it must fade or die. The first and last lines of each stanza, then, create a contrast and a tension. There is also another kind of tension within each image: life cannot ignore the threat of death. This is perhaps best seen in the image of the rose, whose "root is ever in its grave".

This pattern of point and counterpoint within each stanza occurs on a larger scale when the entire fourth stanza is placed in contrast to the earlier three; by presenting the image of something differently "sweet": the immortal, virtuous human soul. The difference is indicated by the way the fourth stanza begins: the word "only" is a signifier of difference, apart from the fact that it breaks the earlier pattern of stanzas starting with "sweet". There is something "sweet" here as well – the soul, but its position within the line suggests that its nature is different from those of the other three. Then again, the last word of the fourth stanza is "lives"; in contrast to the "die" that ends previous stanzas.

These and other contrasts characterize this poem and create an almost breathlessly poised sense of balance. There are some arrestingly rich images used here, created with apparent simplicity of language and an abundance of rhetorical figures (some of which are discussed in the glossary). These too, contribute to the tension in the poem:

between the seemingly simple words and the not-so-simple concepts that they embody. It is not easy, for example, to explain the comparison between a day and a "bridal", or between spring and a box filled with intense aromas.

4.18B.7 Summing Up

Here are a few points concerning what thissection has covered. Included is one observation that is NOT true. Strike out the incorrect one, and you will be left with a concise summing-up. (Check your choice against the key provided.)

You have learnt...

- that like his contemporary Donne, Herbert wrote a great deal of secular as well as religious poetry
- that Herbert's poetry has Metaphysical characteristics, to which he adds some distinctive personal qualities
- that much of Herbert's verse appears to exhibit a simplicity which is actually deceptive
- that ***Virtue*** is an intricately patterned lyric which contrasts "sweet" but impermanent natural phenomena with the immortal and "virtuous" soul.
- that this basic contrast is sustained by a number of other contrasts in the poem.

4.18B.8 Comprehension Exercises

***1. Essay type*:**

a) Attempt a critical analysis of George Herbert's *Virtue*.

b) Examine George Herbert's *Virtue* as a specimen of devotional poetry.

c) What elements in *Virtue* can, in your opinion, be called 'metaphysical'?

2. Middle-length

a) Write a note on the title of Herbert's *Virtue* and explain how it contributes to a greater understanding of the poem.

b) Identify the rhythm and metre of the poem, and show how Herbert uses structure to indicate/reinforce his theme.

c) Consider how any two of the natural phenomena mentioned earlier in the poem are balanced against the moral quality of "virtue" in the last stanza.

3. Short-answer type

a) Explain, with reference to the context:

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,

Like **seasoned** timber, never **gives**;

b) Identify three different figures of speech in the poem, and explain any two of them.

c) Explain how Herbert has used the word "sweet" in different senses in the course of his poem.

4.18B.9 Suggested Reading

The texts shall remain the same as in 2.3A.9. in addition, should you want to look up the internet for material on the poem/poet in question, here is a link you might try out:

http://www.ccel.org/ccel/herbert/temple/Vertue.html

4.18B.10 Further Activity

One of the noteworthy features of Herbert's *Virtue* is that the structure so brilliantly serves to convey the sense. Herbert, in fact, has written a few poems which provide even better examples of this. You have been told about *Easter Wings* earlier. Herbert's *The Altar* may also be mentioned here. In that poem the words are arranged in the very shape of an altar. Such works are examples of **concrete poetry**, which creates an impact upon the reader that is primarily visual, depending greatly on the arrangement of the words on the page. You might search the internet or literary dictionaries for other examples of concrete poetry in English. The Welsh poet Dylan Thomas is only one of many authors who have experimented with such poetry, using geometrical shapes and patterns.

*Odd one out in the Summing Up Section:

- "that like his contemporary Donne, Herbert wrote a great deal of secular as well as religious poetry." Actually Herbert wrote almost exclusively religious poetry.

Section C - Andrew Marvell – 'To His Coy Mistress'

Structure:

4.18C.0 Introduction

4.18C.1 Andrew Marvell and Metaphysical Poetry

4.18C.2 Text of 'To his Coy Mistress'

4.18C.3 Glossary and Annotations

4.18C.4 Critical Understanding of Themes

4.18C.5 Structure and Style

4.18C.6 Comprehension Exercises

4.18C.7 Suggested Reading

4.18C.0 Introduction

In this section we shall critically examine 'To his Coy Mistress', by Andrew Marvell, a major poet of the late Renaissance, who, like his predecessor John Donne, reworked the conventions and traditions of earlier love poetry, and is therefore also considered to belong to the **Metaphysical School** of poetry.The term 'metaphysical' was first used by John Dryden with reference to the poetry of John Donne. Later, Dr Johnson used the term to talk about a loosely connected group of poets, like Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Marvell and others. It was a term of disparagement, since both Dryden and Johnson could find little to admire in a poetry written in a vein that was very different from the neo classical tradition. They disliked the strong rhythm of spoken speech, the syllogistic argument of the structures, the intellection, the varied range of learned imagery in the poetry of Donne and his followers. You will find these salient features of Metaphysical poetry in Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress'.

4.18C.1 Andrew Marvell and Metaphysical Poetry

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) was less known in his time as a poet and more as a prominent politician, civil servant and satirist. He was born the son of an Anglican priest. After graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge, he embraced a political career. He was elected an M. P. from Hull and served for quite a long period in the

House of Commons. He lived through the English Civil Wars, the Interregnum (1649—1660, the period between the execution of Charles I and the restoration of monarchy under Charles II), and much of the Restoration. He wrote poems in Latin and English, and even controversial tracts like *An Account of Popery and Arbitrary Government,* 1678.

During the late Renaissance, the belief that man was at the centre of the universe and God's greatest creation was slowly fading. Political upheavals like the death of Queen Elizabeth, the Civil War and the regicide of King Charles I worked to shake man's belief in the self, and voyages to the new world brought in unknown references. The Cartesian philosophy gave equal importance to the subjective and objective worlds. All this started an era of self-analysis. Man tried to explain his emotions in terms of the material world. This gave rise to the **metaphysical wit**, a constant interaction between emotion and intellect, so that the emotion is conveyed in terms of the intellect, which found expression in the **metaphysical conceit**, a comparison of seemingly dissimilar things. There is a syllogistic structure at work in much of Metaphysical poetry, which introduces a rationale, an empirical line of enquiry to establish the nature of feeling.

'a conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness' – Helen Gardner, *The Metaphysical Poets*

4.18C.2 Text of 'To His Coy Mistress'

'To His Coy Mistress'

HAD we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the **IndianGanges'** side 5
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of **Humber** would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the **Flood**,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the **conversion of the Jews**. 10

My **vegetable love** should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An**hundred** years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast, 15
But **thirty thousand** to the rest;
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate. 20
But at my back I always hear
Time's **wingèd chariot** hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found, 25
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then **worms** shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your **quaint honour**turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust: 30
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul **transpires** 35
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his **slow-chapt** power 40

Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into **one ball**,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we **cannot make our sun** **45**
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

4.18C.3 Glossary and Annotations

Stanza 1

Had we – By using the subjunctive form of verb the poet is putting the whole situation in an uncertain position, that which may or may not take place. If the lover and beloved had a lot of time at their disposal, the lover could wait indefinitely for the lady to shade her shyness or hesitation to agree to his proposal of love.

coyness - shyness

sit down and think which way/ To walk and pass our long love's day – The poet is creating a sense of prolongation of time, spending it in finding and complaining, so that he is able to then urge the beloved to seize the time.

Indian Ganges; Humber – Rivers in India and England, of the eastern and western world, showing the extent of space between the lovers. The estuary of the Humber is actually close by Marvell's birthplace Hull. So the references also suggest that the poet is stuck to his familiar locality while the lady wanders by the far off Ganges. Notice also how, already in Marvell's time, India is associated with fabulous riches; the lady would find 'rubies'.

Flood – In the *Book of Genesis,* when God unleashed the waters to destroy all humans of the corrupt earth, except the righteous Noah, God instructed Noah to build an ark in which he, his sons, and their wives, together with male and female of all living creatures, would be saved from the waters.

Conversion of the Jews - The widespread conversion of the Jews to Christianity is a future event predicted by many Christians, often as an end of time event. By referring to the Flood as the beginning of time, and the conversion of the Jews as the end of time, the narrator is bringing the whole of time into purview.

vegetable love should grow/ vaster than empires and more slow - This brilliant conceit states that his love will grow slowly and imperceptibly but steadily like plants. A finer intellectualanalysis refers to Aristotle's doctrine of the three souls: rational, sensitive and vegetative. His love is of the lowest level, associated with the principle of generation and corruption. The bantering tone reaches a climax when it implies that his love will thereby increase in generation and corruption.

hundred; two hundred; thirty thousand – A numerical assessment of an emotional reaction, i.e. praise for the beloved. In this process, the praise is further broken down, as each part of the beloved's body is praised. This is like an objectification of a subjective self.

Stanza 2

But – introduction of the second portion of the argument.

at my back I always hear – the narrator is haunted by a sense of time passing too quickly.

Winged chariot - Time's winged chariot is the traditional metaphor for the vehicle in which the sun, moon, night and time are represented as pursuing their course.Phaeton took the place of his father, the Sun, in a winged chariot and had a wild ride across the sky culminating in his death.

Notice how, Marvell's poem undercuts earlier presumptions about the immortality of love, beauty or poetry. The lady's beauty is transient. Her chastity or his desire for her are but evanescent. Marvell's lines contradict the assurance in many of the end couplets of Shakespearean sonnets, eg :

And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand(*Sonnet 60*)

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see

So long lives this and this gives life to thee (*sonnet 18*)

At this point, the speaker is still in a humorous vein. The humour however grows increasingly sardonic and the images in the second stanza become macabre. The ultimate destiny for the lady whether she yields to seduction or not, is slow decay. The reference to 'ashes' is from the English Burial service ; "ashes to ashes. The reference to 'dust' is derived fromthe Book of Genesis :" Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return "The stanza ends with a devastating sardonic couplet and moves to the final step of argument in stanza 3.

Stanza 3

The allusions in the final stanza do not suggest playfulness or a cavalier's attitude at all. The stanza begins on a note of playful humour. The lady's reticence 'coyness' is only a pretence, for in reality she too is as eager for sexual fulfillment as her lover. Yet, it may be presumed that social and cultural mores hold her back, and it is this externality that Metaphysical Poetry challenges. Her willingness is evident from her looks and attitude. The imagery is striking. The comparison of the lovers to 'am'rous birds of prey' reminds us of Donne's comparison of the lovers to the eagle and the dove in 'The Canonisation'.Time's "slow chapped power" is possibly a submerged reference to the Greek myth of the titans. Cronus, the son of Uranus, devoured all his children because he had been warned that his son would dethrone him. But his wife Rhea hid Zeus in an island and thus saved him. Zeus later seized power and defeated his father.

Deserts of vast eternity – life as a wasteland

marble vault – the place where the dead body will be stored; coffin

echoing song – the song of love willnot resound in the death chamber

Worms – insects destroying the corpse in the coffin

quaint honour – cherished pride and vanity that one is still a virgin

The grave's a fine and private place,/ But none, I think, do there embrace. – The narrator is mocking the beloved's desire to while away time. It is an example of irony.

Stanza 3

Now therefore – beginning of the third part of the argument

transpires - erupts, breaks out, emits, gives off

one ball - Some think the poet is using the symbols of alchemy to express the deep lying sexual chemistry implied in the second unusual image, that of a ball of sweetness to signify the union of male and female.

slow-chapt - Chewing or eating slowly.

Cannot make our sun/ Stand still -The last couplet suggests several sources, Biblical and classical. In '*The Book of Joshua*'in the Hebrew Bible, Joshua prayed to God to bid the sun and moon stand still so that he could win a battle against the Amorites. God, who fought for the Israelites, acceded to Joshua's request and the

sun stood still. In classical mythology Zeus bade the Sun stand still to lengthen his night of love with Alcmene. In this last reference, we see the appropriateness of the rhetorical figures of the poem. Marvell's speaker is saying to his mistress that they are human, mortal. They do not have the power of God or Joshua, to intervene and stop time. Nor do they possess the power of the old pagan deities. Instead, they must cause the time to pass quickly by doing what is pleasurable and so create the illusion that they are in control of time. The lines may also contain an ironic allusion to Donne's poem 'The Anniversary' where Donne claims that the sun which makes time may grow older but their love

" ...no tomorrow hath nor yesterday

Running, it never runs from us away"

4.18C.4 Critical Understanding of Themes

The title informs us that the poem is an address to a reluctant, shy, bashful lady. The speaker importunes her to cease being coy. At first reading it may seem to be a poem of courtship, or more precisely of seduction . In three syllogistic steps the lover endeavours to persuade the lady to consent to an act of sexual union.

But as we read we realise that the poem is not only about **love** but also about **time**. Certain key words stand out in this context:

1. "time", 2. "long love's day", 3. the "slow" growth of "vast" empires, 4. "an hundred years", 5. "an age", 6. "Time's winged chariot", 7. "deserts of vast eternity", 8. "now", 9. "at once", 10. "our time"

The above references suggest the speaker's preoccupation with the passing of time, and the consequent brevity of life and youth, and the importance of experiencing the delights of young love in the proper season.

The desire to seize the day is the theme of **'carpe diem'**. The delicacy and fineness of tone in the classical idea of 'carpe diem' as in Ben Jonson's -

"Come my Celia, let us prove
While we may, the sports of love"

- has been inverted by Marvell when he moves from a light-hearted tone, to a serious, sombre tone, concentrating on death. The hedonism in the treatment of 'carpe diem' is yoked together grotesquely and bitingly with hyperbole. The speaker's love would extend from before the flood to the end of time. His love is compared

to a vast vegetable which would grow as large and as slowly as empires, he would spent thousands years celebrating her beauty and "an age at least" should be devoted to the celebration of each physical part, the last of which should reveal her heart. This section is summed up by the concluding compliment "you deserve this state/ Nor would I love at lower rate". Since these 20 lines postulate a series of extravagantly impossible situations, all grammatically connected to the opening lines, we can see that the speaker is no romantic dreamer. He is instead a realist who accepts the **brevity of life** and who points out the folly of unrealistic coyness through his extravagant conditional situations.

The inescapable fact of the pace of time comes with an acknowledgement of **death and decay**as in Browne's *Hydrotaphia*.The speaker's honesty and directness make the lady's coyness appearfoolish and illogical.His impatience is held in check by the outward politeness and understatement of "The grave's a fine and private place/ But none I think do there embrace".

The poem is more than a witty attack on the lady's coyness. There is a kind ofmelancholyawareness of the brevity of youth and life. In this sense, much of what the speaker says takes on a new dimension: something more than physical gratification is involved. As the poem moves forward it becomes plain that the speaker is stressing the importance of living fully each moment in a kind of heroic defiance of time's power. And the apparently playful approach to love may be seen as a kind of witty or ironic defence in the face of human limitation. There is thus a second theme at work – the defianceofmortality.

The courtly love traditionis invoked in the opening part of the poem in the hyperboles .The lover is extravagant in his allotment of time to the praise of the lady—hundreds and thousands of years . he would , if he could , woo her from the beginning to the end of time. But by the time he has arrived at his conclusion, he has stripped the woman of all pretence of divinity and modesty. Her willing soul exudes ("transpires") urgent ("instant") passion. There is a direct allusion to kinaesthetic(involving multiple sensory perceptions) ecstasy:"sport us", "roll all our strength", "tear our pleasures with rough strife/ through the iron gates of life" (the virginal body).

The influences of **erotic literature** and *vers de société* (verse dealing with topics provided by polite society in a light, witty style) may also be discerned. Erotic poetry is sensual love poetry. The sensual emphasis is evident in the speaker's references to the mistress' breasts and the "rest" of her charms, and the image of the lovers rolled up into one ball. The relation to **vers de société** is evident more in the tone

than in the subject of the poem – the wit, gaiety, charm, polish, sophistication and ease of expression. This type of poetry exhibits certain fundamental attitudes towards sex, which reflect an essentially pagan view. Sexual intercourse is strictly dalliance ("sport") and solely a means of deriving physical sensations. Marvell here expresses an attitude towards love which appears to be similar to the light hearted celebration of sensuality found in Cavalier poetry. (The Cavalier poets of mid seventeenth century were mainly men of noble birth, supporters of the Royalist cause andstrongly influenced by the classical regularity and clarity of Ben Jonson's poetry . They chose themes of sensual love, social life, honouretc and eschewed both the strong rhythm and irregularities of the Metaphysicals , writing verse which had a smooth finish and simpler meaning structure.) Marvell's celebration of sensuality however, has multi –layered significations, which earmark it as very much a metaphysical poem.

The poem is metaphysical in its similarities to other seventeenth century poems that deal with the psychology of love and religion and employ grotesque, shocking and often obscurefigures of speech to enforce their meaning. Such lines as "my vegetable love", or the warning that worms shall violate her virginity and that, corpses do not make love, and the allusion to Time devouring his offspring, identify the poem as a seventeenth century revolt against the romantic and saccharine conventions of Petrarchan love poetry. The bold images and conceits, the varying tones and fluctuating moods, the use of logic and argument developed with subtlety and complexity are all typical metaphysical traits. So are theenergy, the tempo, the humour and the erudition, seen in the use of classical and Biblical references, which impregnate the language with association and overtone.

4.18C.5 Structure and style

The poem is a love lyric in the form of syllogistic structure . In a syllogistic structure two propositions combine to lead to a final conclusion. Here the first proposition is presented in the first 20 lines with a series of conditionsoflove ("had we but world…"; "if you please…") and the conditional verb forms of "should" and "would". The emphasis is placed on the qualification: 'if things were somehow or other different' or 'if we were not trapped in the fleeting time'. The second proposition cancels out the first. The poet asserts that no one has infinite time at his disposal. Time flies, youth ends, and death comes. The poem contains nothing of the crudity implied in the word "proposition". On the contrary, though impassioned, it is graceful, sophisticated, and even philosophical. The lover has urged anunsuccessful

suit; finding his beloved reluctant, he makes use of an eloquent means of wooing that shows him to be no common lover. His wooing is couched in the form of an argument in three parts:

i. if they had time he would not mind an indefinite postponement of her acceptance of his suit

ii. but they do not, and once life is gone all their chances of love are gone

iii. Therefore, they should love now when they are young and seize what pleasures they can in a world where time is fleeting. After all, they know nothing about future life and have only the grimmest observations of the effects of death. The last 14 lines are the conclusion, as the words 'therefore 'and 'thus' show. The last couplet beginning 'thus' is the conclusion , the final point of the argument.

The **form of logical argument or syllogism** that Marvell adopts and the learned allusions and tone that pervade the poem can be explained by his background. He was a Cambridge graduate with a scholastic education and thus steeped in classical literature and modes of thought. There is however nothing pedantic in his technique. Rather it is playful and urbane as are the allusions to Greek myth, courtly love and the Bible.

The poem is in iambic tetrameter couplets. The 4 stress lines suggest precision by a lecturing speaker, a precision in which key words get the emphasis of stress. Often each thought unit or syntactical pattern is completed within the two lines of a couplet. Thus, the succession of thoughts is kept simple and straightforward as the speaker concentrates on the simplicity and directness of his argument. The seeming flippancy of the speaker's approach and his accompanying seriousness are effectively merged in the last couplet: "Thus though...make him run". The adverb "thus" emphasises that this is to be the conclusion of the argument. The whole burden of the previous steps in the argument (living fully and vitally in the face of inevitable death) is telescoped wittily into the figure of the busy lovers forcing the sun (an image of time) into a brisk trot. Thus if they really cannot control time they can at least, with their brisk pace, make it race by and so seem to be controlled.

The poem uses a wide variety of rhetorical figures. It begins with and is in its entirety, an address to the lady, using the apostrophe. The poet's exaggeration of the time he would take to woo and of the distance between them is a hyperbole. There are several allusions, for example. to the Bible, to classical myths and such others. 'My vegetable love' is a metaphor, while '...the youthful hue ..like morning dew" is

a simile . " ..nor in the marble vault..' is metonymy, as marble vault stands for the graveyard. Personification is used for both Time (his slow-chaptpow'r) and sun (we will make him run). The figures of speech are not just ornaments. They are integral to the thought structure of the poem.

In a style resembling that of Donne, Marvell finds new ways of saying old things, and new perspectives on traditional situations. He presents a chain of propositions and deductions in a rigidly syllogistic form in what is only a love poem. Poetry and logic synthesize. Reason and sensibility fuse. Marvell also resembles Donne in the use of dramatic tone and speech and in the modulation of mood. In turn, he is expostulatory, passionate, and playful. He is always direct and conversational. The unexpected, whether in mood, tone, image or wit always startles us into a vivid realisation of the point he is trying to make. It is this dramatic forthrightness, this masculine way of using language, the sharp witty play of intellect and the cold-blooded rational wooing, that characterise the poem as a product of the metaphysical school of poetry.

4.18C.6 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-Type

1. Attempt a critical analysis of Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress'.
2. Discuss 'To his Coy Mistress' as a metaphysical poem.
3. 'To his Coy Mistress' is an unconventional love poem. Substantiate.

Mid-length questions

1. What are the references to the theme of time in 'To his Coy Mistress'?
2. How does Marvell use the syllogistic structure in 'To his Coy Mistress'?
3. What is a metaphysical conceit? Discuss two examples of metaphysical conceit from *To His Coy Mistress*

Short questions

1. Explain with reference to the context:

   A) Thus, though we cannot make our sun

   Stand still, yet we will make him run.

B) My vegetable love should grow

Vaster than Empires, and more slow.

C) ....I would

Love you ten years before the Flood:

And you should if you please refuse

Till the conversion of the Jews.

2. What does 'Carpe Diem' mean? Can you find lines in the poem which directly refer to the idea?
3. In the last couplet what does Marvell offer as the logical conclusion to the arguments in the first two stanzas?
4. Comment on the significance of the image of "worms" in the poem.
5. Find out examples of i) simile ii) metaphor iii) alliteration iv) hyperbole from*To HisCoy Mistress*

4.18C.7 Suggested Reading

Carey, John. Ed. *Andrew Marvell: a critical anthology* (Penguin critical anthologies). Penguin, 1969.

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NOTES

NOTES

Module - Five

Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature - 2

Unit-19 □ Christopher Marlowe : *Edward II*

Structure

5.19.0 Introduction

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5.19.9 Summing Up

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5.19.11 Suggested Reading List

5.19.0 Introduction

You have already read about Christopher Marlowe, a 'University Wit', and the evolution of drama during the Renaissance and Reformation. Please refer to that section again while reading this unit as and where required. This unit will introduce you to a play written by Christopher Marlowe, in fact one of the most powerful of the Renaissance plays; and after reading this unit you should be able to:

a) Note the development of the history play from the Chronicle play.

b) Understand how the dramatist used his source materials to mould a play that is relevant to the present time while trying to portray Renaissance England. The protagonists historically belong to the Middle Ages.

c) Observe how blank verse develops in the hands of Marlowe and appreciate his mature portrayal of credible characters.

5.19.1 Christopher Marlowe: A Short Biography

"Now is he born, his parents base of stock" (*Doctor Faustus*, Chorus, 11)

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93), son of a 'shoemaker' and 'clerk of St. Mary', was baptized in Canterbury on 26 February 1564. He was born in the same year as William Shakespeare. Marlowe attended the King's School in Canterbury and then joined Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He received both his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the latter. In 1587 he moved to London, achieving instant success with *Tamburlaine* and writing its sequel almost immediately. Marlowe's association with the playacting company of the Admiral's Men, their leading actor Edward Alleyn and the theatrical manager Philip Henslowe also began at this time. Later he was patronised by Lord Strange whose actors Lord Strange's Men performed his plays. Marlowe led a mysterious life. He was accused of atheism; homosexuality; associated with secret government business, and may have been a 'spy'. In 1593 when the playwright Thomas Kyd was arrested in possession of heretical documents, Kyd claimed the papers belonged to Marlowe with whom he shared his lodgings. Marlowe met a brutal death in a house at Deptford. He was meeting Ingram Frizer, Nicholas Skeres and Robert Poley. Frizer stabbed him fatally, claiming 'self-defence'. Marlowe was buried in an unmarked grave in Deptford while Frizer was officially pardoned of his deed. Marlowe's death is shrouded in intrigue but his plays have immortalised him.

- **Read** Harry Levin's *Chistopher Marlowe: The Overreacher* (1952)

  Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (1992)

  Anthony Burgess's novel *A Dead Man in Deptford* (1993)

5.19.2 Christopher Marlowe and Drama

As one of the 'University Wits', Christopher Marlowe belonged to a group of dramatists who had attended either Oxford or Cambridge and turned their educational skills and intellect or 'wit' to producing plays. Among other members of the group were George Peele, John Lyly and Robert Greene. The University Wits indicate the shift in English drama, moving from the guild-based Mystery cycles, through the maturing growth of the touring troupes of players to playwriting as a professional occupation for well-educated gentlemen. They were "secular professional playwrights" (David Daiches) who combined elements of Classical drama with their native tradition to cater to the rising demand for popular entertainment. They were helped by the growth of playing companies and 'public, purpose-built' playhouses.

Marlowe's literary ambitions began while at Cambridge. He wrote *Dido Queen of Carthage* (which was later completed by Thomas Nash and published with both authors' names). He translated the sequence of poems *Amores* written by the Roman poet Ovid, shocking for its frank sexual content; he also translated the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* which operated as a warning of the horrors of civil war and had contemporary relevance to the Elizabethan age. He tasted success with *Tamburlaine the Great, Parts 1 and 2*. During 1588-92 Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus*, three acts of the tragedy *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*. His famous lyric "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" cannot be dated precisely. In early 1593 Marlowe wrote an unfinished poem *Hero and Leander*. Most of his plays were published after his death and *The Jew of Malta* had a dedication by Thomas Heywood praising Marlowe in the prologue as "the best of Poets in that age".

Marlowe excelled in the sphere of tragdy. His *Dido* is a tale of unrequited love; *Tamburlaine the Great* recounted the tragedy that arose from boundless aspiration. Tamburlaine represented the Renaissance 'virtu', the belief that man can achieve any goal through his requisite will and potential. 'Virtu' is derived from a Latin word *virtus*; it describes the qualities desirable for a man and might not be the same as conventionally defined virtue. 'Virtu', as opposed to the Christian virtues, includes pride, bravery, strength and a certain amount of ruthlessness. Machiavelli, who was concerned about state, and the achievement of great things, extended the study of classical virtue to the sense of skill, valour and leadership, to encompass the individual prince or war-leader as well. Aristotle and the philosopher Thomas Aquinas both had observed that a good citizen need not necessarily be a morally good or virtuous man.

Marlowe's heroes are 'overreachers' (the term refers to Harry Levin's book who chose the Icarus myth as representing someone whose excess ambition was often a fatal flaw in character and proved to be a reason for their downfall). An overreacher is someone who, according to Aristotle also, contains the seeds of tragedy in his own character. The Marlovian hero was usually a man of humble birth who achieved great heights before his downfall e.g. Tamburlaine and Faustus. His other heroes Barabas (*The Jew of Malta*)and Edward II are considerably weaker in comparison. Marlowe's style was noteworthy. He contributed what Ben Jonson called 'Marlowe's mighty line' infusing his plays with powerful declamatory speeches. He made the existing blank verse more flexible by varying the metrical rhythm and giving his speeches passion. However, there were not many well-defined women characters in his plays before Queen Isabella in *Edward II*, perhaps because in those days all characters were played either by men or by boys.

5.19.3 *EDWARD II* – The Play

➢ **Sources and Background**

According to Tancock, Marlowe's play is "history well dramatized". He borrows material from Holinshed's Chronicles published between 1577 and 1586-7 and Fabyan's Chronicle or *Concordance of Histories* (a chronicle history from the beginning of the world to the reign of King Henry VIII) and the Chronicle of John Stow (Marlowe took the story of King Edward II being shaved with ditchwater). Marlowe compresses 23 years of history, from 1307 to 1330. While this style is commendable it often resulted in some unexpected or sudden changes in character and action that give the play a rather uneven shape. The Plantagenet dynasty kings depicted in the play include Edward I 'Longshanks' (ruled. 1272-1307), Edward II (ruled. 1307-1327), and Edward III (ruled. 1327-1377).

→ **Find out more** about these kings on Wikipedia and the website – http://www.royal.gov.uk/historyofthemonarchy/kingsandqueensofengland/theplantagenets/edwardilongshanks.aspx

During Marlowe's life many historical plays were acted and written. Two that are well known are *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* and *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*. Peele's *Famous Chronicle of Edward I, sirnamed Edward Longshanks, with his returne from the Holy Land* had been already acted as had the *First Part of the contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke*. However, as the critic Harry Levin reminds us, "Marlowe is concerned not with the state but as always, with the individual".

➢ **Edition**

The play was entered in the Stationers' Registers on July 6, 1593 and *Edward II* was published in a quarto edition in 1594. Its title was "The Troublesome reigne and lamentable death of Edward the Second, King of England; with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer." The title page includes Marlowe's name and the acting company for which it was written Lord Pembroke's Men. The quarto text is a good one and does not contain major problems for the editor. There was a second edition of *Edward II* published in 1598 which had the slightly expanded title "The Troublesome reigne and lamentable death of Edward the Second, King of England; with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer: And also the life and death of Piers Gaveston, the great Earle of Cornewall, and mighty favourite of King Edward the Second, as it was publiquely acted by the Right Honorable

the Earle of Pembroke his servauntes". Other editions followed in 1612 and 1622 but the 1594 edition is the authoritative one.

5.19.4 Structure of The Play

Edward II is the greatest structural triumph of Marlowe, as it is well-planned and well-constructed. The plot is well-knit and it has dramatic conflict. He chooses important incidents and events, eliminating those that are not essential to his purpose. He creates characters or does away with some of them. The scenes succeed each other with a rapidity that compresses 23 years of rule and tension. The final catastrophe of the play arouses deep pathos. King Edward II is weak and unable to control his barons or rule his land judiciously. He alienates his nobles and queen, taking his country to civil war. Ultimately his death restores order and his successor King Edward III brings new hope. An Elizabethan ruler, more so a medieval one, was sanctioned with divine authority. The murder of such a person would have moral, political and symbolic associations. Charles Lamb says "the death scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern with which I am acquainted." The passages in the play contain allusions, poetic passion and display Marlowe's classical learning.

→ Textual critics draw **comparisons** with Shakespeare's *Henry VI* parts 2 and 3, *Richard II*

5.19.5 Themes and Issues

Critics like Bradbrook and Maxwell do not find any particular unifying theme or tone in Marlowe's *Edward II*. Critics like L.J. Mills see its theme as "friendship". The friendship between Edward II and his favourites is continuously focused on in the play. Edward often places his friendship with Gaveston and later Younger Spenser and Baldock above his royal responsibilities. This creates several of the crises in the play. Shakespeare's Richard II was another king who favoured friendship above duty to the kingdom. The intense friendship between Gaveston and Edward has been considered to be Marlowe's aesthetic depiction (following classical authors) of a homosexual relationship between the two. Marlowe implies but never clearly depicts the homosexuality in the play. Edward's brutal death involving a red-hot spit (a historical fact) was considered proof of a homosexual relation. Other probable themes in the play may be the irony of kingship and the interaction between power and individual weaknesses. When we consider the irony of kingship we assess Edward II's character

and his actions throughout the play. Edward inherits his kingdom from a father who was a strong ruler, King Edward I. As a king Edward is weak-willed, easily manipulated, impulsive and lacking in the necessary diplomatic and ruthless qualities of a good administrator. His son, the future Edward III, shows better instincts. Marlowe is showing us what may result when an unsuitable king is placed on the throne. The play is concerned with power and its dynamics. Edward II and Younger Mortimer are the two principal representatives of the power struggle that happens in the play. The other nobles and Queen Isabella feature importantly in various shifting power equations. Secular authority and religious authority also clash in this Marlowe play. The issues of power and authority, including the question of divine authority, were important for contemporary playgoers. Machiavelli is an important influence on the play. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) author of *The Prince* was an important influence during the Renaissance. The Renaissance realized the power of the individual and Machiavelli sought to free the individual from his subordination to the church as seen in the Middle Ages. Machiavelli's ideal Prince is a political actor performing the role of a sincere and virtuous ruler. Although Machiavelli's manifesto was not translated into English before 1640, his ideas concerning the justification of power, political ruthlessness and treachery were legendary.

5.19.6 The Story Covered in The Play

The play begins with the accession of King Edward II to the throne after the death of his father Edward I. Edward II instantly recalls his favourite Piers Gaveston to England (historically the son of a Gascon Knight but in the play a 'base' foreigner who had been banished by Edward I). The king's foolish infatuation, his cruelty towards his queen, alienates his noble lords who are angered by his behaviour. When the King and Gaveston misbehave with the Bishop of Coventry then the Church joins hands with the noblemen and Gaveston is banished. He is recalled on the insistence of the Queen. However, once again the King and Gaveston anger the noble peers. A civil war ensues. The King captures Mortimer (his main antagonist) and sends him to the Tower of London. Kent, the King's brother is exiled from the King's presence and joins the Barons. Gaveston is captured and beheaded. The King adopts new favourites in the Earl of Spenser and Baldock (a scholar). The Queen leaves for France with her son where she is joined by Mortimer and Kent. They decide to challenge Edward II in the name of the young prince. Another battle takes place in England. The King is defeated and he flees to Wales, where he is betrayed and captured. His new favourites are put to death. Mortimer and Isabella, who have become lovers, decide to rule England keeping the young prince as a front. The King

is a threat and Mortimer orders Edward's assassination with the queen's approval. The story concludes with the discovery of the murder. The young King is a decisive ruler and he takes revenge. Mortimer is beheaded and his mother sent to the Tower. He attends his father's funeral as a strong King Edward III.

5.19.7 Characterisation

King Edward II was the son of King Edward I and Eleanor of Castile. He was born in April 1284 and came to the throne in July 1307. He was deposed in January 1327 and murdered in Berkeley Castle in September 1327. The King's character is in accordance with the views of the historians of the time.

→ Edward II is shown as a weak king, a poor administrator, easily swayed by his favourites, fond of pleasure and shockingly indifferent to the fate of his kingdom. He angers his barons whom he should have kept as advisors by his side and wastes his kingdom's money. He defies religious authority too. Initially a poor soldier he becomes an admirable victor when avenging Gaveston's death. Edward hurts and insults his Queen who betrays him. His fortunes alternate with Younger Mortimer's. A good friend, he is extremely loyal and withstands great suffering for his favourites Gaveston, Younger Spenser and Baldock. Edward is ironically forced to abdicate and then murdered brutally. He seems pathetic rather than a great tragic hero as he never realises his weaknesses. His son whom he truly loves proves a better ruler.

Prince Edward was the son of Edward II and Isabella of France. He was born in November 1312 and became King Edward III in January 1327. He was made "Guardian" of the realm in October 1326. He died in 1377.

Edmund Earl of Kent was the half-brother of Edward II. He was the son of King Edward I and his second wife Margaret of France. He was born in 1301 and put to death by Mortimer in March 1330. Marlowe does not keep to history when he introduces him as a fully grown man in Act I of the play. '!Kent is a choric character in the play. He points out the views of the audience in his reactions to events and characters.

Piers Gaveston was the son of a Gascon Knight, Sir Arnold Gaveston who had served Edward I in Gascony. He was brought up as the foster-brother and playfellow of Edward II and banished from the court and kingdom in 1307 by King Edward I for his harmful influence over Prince Edward. He returned after Edward I's death and

was made Earl of Cornwall in August 1307. He married Margaret de Clare, daughter of the Earl of Gloucester and niece of King Edward II. He was banished in May 1308, returned in July 1309, was again banished in 1311 and recalled in January 1312; taken by the Barons in May at Scarborough and beheaded without a trial on Blakclow Hill in June 1312.

→ Although Gaveston is shown to be of base birth in the play, he is not a Marlovian hero. He falls from power and dies because his ambition is not supported by any strength of character. He manipulates the King for his personal ends, had been intimate with Younger Spenser but chooses the King for the benefits Edward can offer him. He is a foreigner who dislikes England and English people. He angers the Queen, insults a religious man, mocks three poor men who seek his help and misbehaves with the loyal nobles of the king. His treatment of the Bishop of Coventry is like a curse that backfires on him. His death acts as a catalyst for the King's courage and is a turning point in the play. Gaveston is ultimately a bad friend to the King and instigates his ruin.

Archbishop of Canterbury was Robert Winchelsey. He was Archbishop from 1294 to 1313. He was always a stout supporter of the rights of the Church and of the people. He took the side of the Ordainers in 1311. He died in May 1313.

Bishop of Coventry was Walter Langton and appointed in 1295. As soon as Edward II began his reign, Bishop Langton was imprisoned but he was reconciled to the King in 1311, and became minister again and Treasurer in March 1312. He was removed from office in March 1315.

Bishop of Winchester from June 1323 was John Stratford. He joined the Queen in her attempt to overthrow the Despensers. He was Treasurer from November 1326 till January 1327, Chancellor from 1330-1334, 1335-1337 and April to June 1340. He was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1333 to 1348.

Warwick. Guy Earl of Warwick was the son of William Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. He was a vigorous opponent of Edward II and did not consent to the recall of Gaveston in 1309. He was one of the Ordainers in 1311 and had a chief hand in putting Gaveston to death. He was included in the general pardon in October 1313 and died in 1315.

Lancaster. Thomas Earl of Lancaster was the son of Edmund, the second son of King Henry III of Sicily and Blanche of Artois, queen dowager of Navarre. He was the most powerful subject in the realm and always in opposition to the King. He was

one of the Ordainers and enemy to Gaveston. He opposed the King's Scottish policy and led the attack on the Despensers in 1321. He was defeated and taken at Boroughbridge in March 1322, tried by his peers and beheaded.

Pembroke. Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke was grandson of Isabella, widow of King John and her second husband the Count of la Marche. In the early years of Edward II he was on the side of the Barons and one of the Ordainers. After Gaveston was taken from his custody by Warwick, he supported the King (Marlowe does not show this, choosing to portray him as a rebellious Baron throughout the play). He died while acting as envoy for the King in France in 1324.

Arundel. Edmund Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, was one of the Ordainers and in the beginning opposed the King. Like Pembroke he sided with the King against Lancaster in 1318. He was one of the few supporters of the King in 1326 and beheaded at Hereford in November 1326 on the orders of Mortimer.

Leicester. Henry Earl of Leicester and Lancaster was the younger brother of Thomas Earl of Lancaster Like most of the nobles he joined the Queen in her attempt to overthrow the Despensers. After the accession of Edward III he became head of the Council and Guardian of the King. He became leader of that constitutional party which opposed Mortimer. After his brother's death he succeeded to his rights in 1324 and he died in 1345.

Berkeley. Sir Thomas Berkeley was the son of Sir Maurice Berkeley. He had been dispossessed of his inheritance of Berkeley Castle by the younger Despenser. The Queen's troops restored the castle to its rightful owner on her march to Bristol.

Earl or Elder Mortimer was Roger Mortimer of Chirk, second son of the Roger Mortimer who fought on the side of King Henry III during the Barons' war. He was not an Earl but a powerful Baron on the Welsh border and Justiciar of Wales. He opposed the King in the early part of his reign, rose in arms in 1321 and surrendered to the King in January 1322. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London and died there. '!In the play he is a temperate statesman who is a soldier by temperament.

Younger Mortimer was Roger Mortimer of Wigmore, also a powerful Baron of the Welsh march. He was the nephew of Roger Mortimer of Chirk and a powerful opponent of the King. He yielded to the King in 1322 along with his uncle but escaped from the Tower of London in August 1324. He joined the Queen in France and carried out the invasion that overthrew the Despensers. He was created Ist Earl of March in 1327 and was the real ruler of England till October 1330.

→ In the play he is Edward II's main opponent. He provides a contrast to the King's character. He is a man of action, arrogant, aware of his heredity as a Baron and determined to get due recognition and respect. He is resentful of Gaveston who is wasting the wealth of the treasury while the army gets no pay. He is angry at the weak king who misbehaves with his noble peers and loyal Queen. Initially a patriot and brave man, Mortimer is swayed by the love for power. He has an illicit affair with the Queen and towards the end of the play controls her and the future King. Renaissance in soul, Mortimer falls because of his pride and ambition. We admire his courage as he is taken away to be killed despite his transformation into a Machiavellian villain.

Old Spenser or Hugh le Despenser had fought in the Scottish wars of Edward I and became a strong supporter of Edward II against the Earl of Lancaster. He was banished in 1321 but recalled by the King soon. After Lancaster's death, he and his son guided the King entirely. He was taken and hanged at Bristol in October 1326.

Younger Spenser or Hugh le Despenser the Younger had power and influence over the King from 1322-1326. He was made Chamberlain and was quite similar to Gaveston. He married Eleanor, eldest of the three daughters of the Earl of Gloucester and niece of Edward II and was made Earl of Gloucester. He was beheaded in Hereford in November 1326.

Baldock was Robert of Baldock was Keeper of the King's Privy Seal and became a prominent member of the King's government while the Despensers were in power. He was made Chancellor in August 1323 and was intensely unpopular. He fled with the King and was taken prisoner in November 1326. He died in 1327.

Beaumont. Henry de Beaumont was grandson of John de Brienne, King of Jerusalem and Emperor of Constantinople. He was expelled by the Ordainers in 1311 from the Council as a foreigner. Later he stopped supporting the King and was arrested in 1323.he joined the Queen in her attempt to overthrow the despensers.

Trussel. Sir William Trussel was procter of the parliament of Westminster in 1327 and in the name of parliament renounced the homage and fealties made to the King Edward II.

Sir John of Hainault was the brother of William, Count of Hainault and uncle of Philippa, whom King Edward III married.

Gurney. Thomas Gurney was one of the murderers of Edward II. He fled from the country, was captured at Marseilles and murdered on the way home.

Matrevis. Sir John Maltravers or Mauntreveres was made custodian of the King on the orders of Mortimer after Berkeley treated Edward II too kindly. After the murder he fled from the country.

Queen Isabella was daughter of Philip the Fair, King of France and married Edward II at Boulogne in January 1308. She was sent to France in 1325 to negotiate with her brother King Charles IV. There she became the centre of a plot to overthrow the Despensers. She landed with a force at Orwell in September 1326 and with Mortimer ruled England till 1330. After the fall of Mortimer she was sent to live at Castle Rising in Norfolk and received an allowance of £3000 a year. She died in 1357.

→ The Queen is Marlowe's most successful attempt at creating a realistic female protagonist in all of his plays. Critics find the change in her character abrupt and unconvincing. We must remember that Marlowe has condensed history and she was the Queen, so he has chosen to imply rather than specify the change. Initially the Queen is a patient, virtuous, suffering wife and loving mother who adores her husband and son. She is called a "saint". It is only after repeated rejection and provocation that she turns into a she-Machiavel, determined to safeguard the interests of herself and her son. Since she has an influence over Younger Mortimer who is most sympathetic and chivalrous towards her, she allows herself to be unfaithful to her husband. She tolerates Gaveston but when the King continues to humiliate her she takes revenge by betraying Gaveston and the King. The Queen is made responsible for Edward II's murder as she gets involved in the political power play.

Niece to Edward II was Margaret de Clare, daughter of the Elder Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Johanna of Acre, daughter of King Edward I. She was married to Gaveston in 1307. It is only after her brother's death in 1314 that she and her sisters became the co-heiresses of Gloucester. She afterwards married Hugh of Audley. '!She is the only other woman character depicted and is responsible for reminding the King of the courtesy due to his wife.

5.19.8: Act-Wise Summary of The Scenes

The text referred to is *Marlowe's Edward the Second* edited by O.W.Tancock, Radha Publishing House, 1988, rpt. 1997.

→ **Two other definitive editions** of the text are *Edward II* edited by R.G.Lunt, New Delhi, Bookland, 2010 and *Edward II* edited by Roma Gill, New Delhi, OUP, 2005.

❖ **Act I**

Scene 1: opens with Piers Gaveston reading a letter. He has returned to England because Edward I, who banished him, is dead and the new king is Edward II, his intimate friend. Gaveston is a foreigner who does not care about England but at the present moment he views London 'as Elysium' or paradise because his beloved Edward lives here. Three poor men enter, seeking an audience from Gaveston but he is very rude to them, thinking that they cannot help him in his ambitions. Instead he plans to keep the king diverted with pleasure and amusement while he can carry out his plans.

→ Gaveston's soliloquy and actions are important as they reveal his character and his plans. They also show us why the Barons do not like him.

Soon the King enters followed by his nobles—Lancaster, the Elder Mortimer, the Younger Mortimer, Kent, Warwick, Pembroke and attendants. These nobles try to persuade the King to banish Gaveston. Younger Mortimer is the most vehement in his protests because he had sworn an oath to Edward I to never allow Gaveston to enter England. Kent is astonished at the defiance of the nobles and asks the King to punish them. The nobles leave, failing to change the mind of Edward II.

→ Note the speeches of the nobles, especially those uttered by Younger Mortimer.

Gaveston now comes forward and is warmly welcomed by the King. The King showers Gaveston with honours and titles like Lord High-Chamberlain, Chief Secretary to the state and the King, Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man. Kent is displeased at the reckless behaviour of his brother. The King offers Gaveston a guard, gold and even his personal seal thus erasing the difference between himself and Gaveston.

→ Remember the theme of friendship. How does the king rate as a friend?

The Bishop of Coventry, who is on his way to the funeral of Edward I, is surprised to see Gaveston. Edward and Gaveston insult the Bishop of Coventry, tear his clothes and want to "in the channel ('gutter or drain') christen him anew". (p.7) They mock Christianity and its religious representative. The Bishop is arrested, sent to the Tower of London and his lands and revenue given to Gaveston.

→ In a tragedy how important is such arrogant behaviour? Does it lead to downfall?

Scene2 is set in London, near the King's Palace. The nobles are very angry at what Gaveston has done to the Bishop of Coventry. They are also resentful that the King rewards 'base' Gaveston with titles and honours. The Archbishop of Canterbury

(highest religious authority in England) decides to join the barons in their opposition to the King and Gaveston. He also sends a messenger to inform the Pope in Rome about the Bishop of Coventry. We meet Queen Isabella who is sad and wondering if she should leave the palace and live in a forest since her King "dotes upon the love of Gaveston" (p.9) The Barons and the Archbishop decide to legally banish Gaveston from England and if necessary mutiny against the king. The Queen is alarmed and requests the nobles (in particular "sweet Mortimer") to spare the King from war.

→ How do you think the audience would have reacted in such a situation? Do you think the Archbishop and Barons have made the right decision?

Scene 3 shows Gaveston telling Kent how his enemies, Lancaster, Warwick and the two Mortimers have gone to Lambeth, the Archbishop's residence, to decide on his banishment. Gaveston enjoys the King's support and is fearless.

Scene 4 is a long and important scene. The scene is set at the New Temple in London. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the nobles sign the paper ordering Gaveston's exile. Again the Barons and the King begin to quarrel over Gaveston. The King is angry at the insolence of the nobles but is helpless when the Archbishop of Canterbury tells him that he can sanction the King's deposition and excommunication. The King requests his nobles to divide and rule his kingdom but leave "some nook or corner" to "frolic with my dearest Gaveston". (p.13) The nobles are adamant and the King has to sign Gaveston's exile orders.

Left alone the king speaks lines that are anachronistic (the context does not fit the time it is being uttered at, a historical inaccuracy). The King is angry that he must obey what a priest tells him to do. He curses the Roman Church and threatens to slaughter the priests and destroy "antichristian" churches (p.14). The King's soliloquy is more apt for the Renaissance and Reformation rather than the obedient and devout Middle Ages.

→ Note the contexts of Papacy and Puritanism.

The King and Gaveston are forced to part. He appoints Gaveston the Governor of Ireland. They exchange words of affection and pictures on their lockets. The King is unwilling to let Gaveston go as "I from myself am banished." (p.14). When the Queen enters on this scene of sorrow she is called a "French strumpet (prostitute)" (p.15) and accused of having an affair with Younger Mortimer. The Queen is humiliated by Gaveston but the King asks Isabella to convince the Barons to repeal Gaveston's exile.

→ Notice the intimacy of the King and Gaveston, is it a suggestion of homosexuality? The Queen is humiliated, is it a reason for wanting to take revenge?

Queen Isabella convinces the Barons to repeal Gaveston. She does this with Younger Mortimer's help and it marks a turning point in the Queen's character. Mortimer asks the Barons to recall Gaveston and have him assassinated because he is a "night-grown mushroom" (p.19, ref Lyly's *Euphues*, meaning an upstart). The King is overjoyed to learn that Gaveston has been recalled. He kisses the Queen and promises to hang a golden tongue around her neck for her skills in persuasion. Edward II then announces a tilt and tournament in honour of Gaveston where he will marry the king's niece.

Younger Mortimer and Elder Mortimer have a private conversation at the end before Elder Mortimer goes to participate in the war in Scotland. He advises Younger Mortimer to be more tolerant of the King's infatuation. He cites many famous rulers and wise men who had intimate relations with men. Younger Mortimer has been made Lord Marshal of England but he is jealous and resentful of Gaveston. The scene ends ominously "But whiles I have a sword, a hand, a heart/ I will not yield to any such upstart." (p.23)

→ Act I introduces us to the important characters and issues in the play. Who do you think is prominent among the nobles? What is your impression of Edward II so far?

❖ Act II

Scene1 opens in the Earl of Gloucester's Castle. We are introduced to Younger Spenser and Baldock. The Earl of Gloucester is dead and these two men need to attach themselves to a new patron. They decide to seek the favour of Gaveston, who is the Earl of Cornwall, to enter the King's court. We also learn that Gaveston has been recalled and Edward's niece, the Earl's daughter will be married to him soon. Spenser advises Baldock to change his appearance and pose of a Puritan scholar if he wants to be accepted at court. The scene concludes with Edward's niece preparing to go to the King's court.

→ These men are the future favourites of the King. Note how their behaviour is similar to or different from that of Gaveston.

In Scene 2 the action shifts to Tynmouth Castle. Edward II is anxiously awaiting the arrival of Gaveston. Younger Mortimer informs Edward of his responsibility; the King of France has occupied English territory in Normandy. Edward is unconcerned and wonders about the devices on the shields of the Barons for the tournament.

→ Note these devices.

The devices on Mortimer and Lancaster's shields describe Gaveston as "a canker" (worm) and a "flying-fish" (Pliny/ Tancock p.29) hated by all. The King is determined to welcome and protect Gaveston. Gaveston returns and insults the Barons again, "Base, leaden, earls, that glory in your birth" (p.29) Younger Mortimer wounds Gaveston. The King decides to fight with the Barons.

A letter arrives from Scotland informing the barons about the capture of Elder Mortimer and his ransom reckoned at 5000 pounds. Younger Mortimer and Lancaster give the news to the King. Edward II refuses to pay the ransom directly and both the nobles leave the King threatening him with civil war. They are disgusted that the King has allowed internal and external rebellion to destroy his kingdom. When he participated in the war against the Scots, they mocked his appearance with a jig (Fabyan's Chronicle, Tancock, p.32) Kent tries to caution Edward II about Gaveston but the King banishes Kent instead.

The Queen enters with the King's niece and other ladies. The King is rude to her. He is pleased to meet Spenser who is "well allied" and Baldock whose "gentry/ I fetch from Oxford" (like Marlowe, Tancock p.34). The scene concludes with the King deciding to meet the Barons in battle after Gaveston's marriage.

Scene 3 depicts the Barons' Camp before Tynmouth Castle. Kent joins the Barons who trust him because he belongs to the Plantagenet dynasty. Mortimer speaks proudly of his ancestors who were Crusaders. Lancaster asks the Barons to spare the King but destroy Gaveston and his company.'! Note the importance of heredity.

In Scene 4 set inside Tynmouth Castle the King requests Gaveston to escape by sea to Scarborough while he and Spenser will escape via land. The Queen is left behind. In a sad soliloquy the Queen admits how hopeless her love for the King is. The nobles find the Queen who betrays the King and Gaveston. This marks another turning point in her character, as also in the action. When she acknowledges "So well hast thou deserved, sweet Mortimer, / As Isabel could live with thee for ever" (p.38) we realize how the Queen has changed. She decides to go to France with her son and complain about Gaveston to "the king my brother" (p.38)

Scene 5 is set in the country near Scarborough Castle. Gaveston is fleeing the Barons who are chasing him. At the moment he thinks he has escaped, they capture him. He is insulted as "proud disturber of thy country's peace, /Corrupter of thy king, cause of these broils" and like the "Greekish strumpet" (Helen of Troy) has caused the death of several brave men (p38-9). Warwick asks his soldiers to hang Gaveston

from the branch of a tree like a common thief. Lord Arundel comes to the Barons with a request that the King be allowed to meet Gaveston one last time. Lord Pembroke supports Lord Arundel and agrees to transport Gaveston to the King and bring him back. Warwick's aside to the audience is Machiavellian and ominous "Yet not perhaps, / If Warwick's wit and policy prevail." (p.41) Pembroke leaves Gaveston under the care of James and takes Lord Arundel to his "house".

→ Act II has shown continuing action and further complications. The King's obstinacy and Gaveston's arrogance have caused war. The Queen breaks free of the King's influence as does Kent.

❖ **Act III**

Scene 1 marks an important turning point of the play. Set in the country near Deddington, Gaveston is travelling with James when he is ambushed by Warwick and his soldiers. He is taken away to be executed.

→ What changes do Gaveston's death bring about?

Scene 2 is set in the King's camp near Boroughbridge, Yorkshire. Edward is waiting for Gaveston to arrive with Spenser, Baldock, other nobles and soldiers. He comments on the Barons "I know the malice of the younger Mortimer; / Warwick I know is rough, and Lancaster/ Inexorable," (p.43) Younger Spenser and Baldock instigate him to punish the rebellious nobles. Spenser's father, Elder Spenser, comes to fight for the King in battle with 400 soldiers. The King creates Younger Spenser the Earl of Wiltshire and gives him money to outbid and buy the land which the Mortimers are trying to buy from Lord Bruse. The Queen arrives with Prince Edward and Levune bearing bad news. The King of France has seized Normandy. The Queen is sent with the Young Prince to "parley" or negotiate with the King of France. Lord Arundel arrives and gives the news of Gaveston's death. The King vows to take revenge. He creates Younger Spenser Earl of Gloucester and Lord Chamberlain. A messenger "Herald" arrives from the Barons. They demand that the King banish Younger Spenser. Edward II refuses and a fight begins.

→ Is revenge a sufficient reason for war?

Scene 3: Marlowe has condensed the story of the rising of the Barons over a few years into one battle, the Battle of Boroughbridge fought on March 16, 1322. In this battle, where the King participates personally, the Barons are defeated. Kent is banished, Warwick and Lancaster receive orders to be beheaded and Younger

Mortimer is sent to the Tower of London as a political prisoner. Mortimer's speech is true of the Renaissance spirit "can ragged stony walls/ Immure ('imprison') thy virtue ('his virtu') that aspires to heaven?" (p.51) Younger Spenser and Baldock convince Levune to bribe the French Lords to deny help to Queen Isabella who is trying to raise an army and depose Edward II in favour of her son.

→ Note how Edward II is at the height of power and prestige at the end of this act.

❖ **Act IV**

(The scenes alternate in this act between London and France)

In Scene 1 Kent meets the disguised Mortimer in a street near the Tower of London. Mortimer has escaped by putting the guards to sleep and now both of them will sail to France.

Scene 2: In Paris the Queen is frustrated by the hostile behaviour of her brother and the French Lords. The Prince asks her to return to his father but she refuses as their relation is destroyed. Sir John of Hainault offers them shelter and help. Kent and Younger Mortimer meet the Queen and together they decide to go to Hainault before their war with the King.

→ How does the Prince feel about his father?

Scene 3 is set in a room in the King's palace in London. He asks Arundel to read the names of all the rebellious Lords who were executed in the Tower of London. A messenger arrives with letters. They learn from Levune's letter that Mortimer has escaped to France with Kent and they have joined the Queen. They are staying in Flanders (modern Belgium) with Sir John of Hainault and his brother. The King sets out for Bristol to meet the "traitors in the field." (p.56)

In Scene 4 the Queen returns to England and sets camp near Orwell in Suffolk. Prince Edward, Kent, Mortimer and Sir John of Hainault are preparing to fight Edward II. The Queen accuses Edward II (p.57) but Mortimer prevents Isabel from making an impolitic speech. He claims that they are fighting for Prince Edward, for "our country's cause" (p.57), to remove "flatterers" from the King and to restore the Queen's honour.

Scene 5 takes place near Bristol. Baldock and Younger Spenser are in the process of escaping the Queen's victorious forces. The King shows "princely resolution "in wanting to stay and fight "And in this bed of honour die with fame" (p.58).

Kent expresses how Mortimer has become a traitor. "Mortimer/ and Isabel do kiss, while they conspire". (p.58) Kent fears for his life. The Queen declares the young Prince Lord Warden of the realm and thanks all their supporters. Kent asks what will happen to Edward II and Younger Mortimer sternly replies that the King will be dealt with by "the realm and parliament" (p.59) thus hiding his intentions with hypocrisy. Rice Ap Howel and the Mayor of Bristow (Bristol) enter with Elder Spenser as captive. The King, Younger Spenser and Baldock are trying to sail to Ireland. Elder Spenser is executed as a "rebel". He denies the charge claiming "Rebel is he that fights against the prince." (p.60)

→ Who is a rebel at this point and who is a traitor?

Scene 6 is set in Wales. The King is hidden within the Abbey of Neath. He is in disguise. The king requests the monks of the Abbey not to betray them. He wishes to spend his life contemplating the philosophy they learned from the Universities. Younger Spenser fears a mower may betray them. Rice Ap Howel, the mower, Lord Leicester and Welsh soldiers enter the Abbey and arrest Edward II, Spenser and Baldock. Leicester quotes some Latin lines from Seneca's *Thyestes* to indicate how the power of the King has gone and he is a tragic figure. By the order of Mortimer and the Queen the King is taken to Killingworth or Kenilworth Castle in a litter (a humiliating mode of transport). Spenser and Baldock will be executed. The lesson conveyed is "all live to die and rise to fall' (p.64) an epigram.

→ At the end of Act IV we see how the fortunes of the King have fallen and Mortimer's risen.

❖ Act V

Scene 1 is known as the Abdication Scene. This is where King Edward II is forced to give up his crown and lose his identity as King of England. The scene takes place in Kenilworth Castle. The King, Lord Leicester, the Bishop of Winchester and Trussel are present. Their presence is symbolical. The Bishop represents religious authority and Trussel represents legal or Parliamentary authority. The King is impatient with his confinement and Leicester tries to comfort him. The King laments that he is a royal lion who tears himself in sorrow when he is wounded, unlike a forest deer who would try to repair its wounds with a herb. He is angry at "ambitious

Mortimer" and "that unnatural queen, false Isabel" (p.65) who have imprisoned him. He complains to the gods but he is now a king in name only:

But what are kings, when regiment is gone, [regiment-army]

But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?

My nobles rule; I bear the name of king;

I wear the crown but am controll'd by them,

By Mortimer and my unconstant queen [unconstant-unfaithful]

Who spots my nuptial bed with infamy; [nuptial-marriage, infamy-shame]

Whilst I am lodg'd within this cave of care, [cave of care- dungeon or prison]

....

But tell me, must I now resign my crown,

To make usurping Mortimer a king? (lines 26-37)

The Bishop tells Edward II that the crown will make his son King. But the King responds by calling his son a lamb surrounded by wolves. He curses Mortimer that if Mortimer wears his crown it will burn him with fire (reference to Creusa's crown gifted by Medea) or bite him like a snake (reference to the Fury Tisiphon's head which has snakes instead of hair). He finally removes his crown in a powerful, yet pathetic scene. The lines are similar to the lines of Doctor Faustus before he gives up his soul.

Ah, Leicester, weigh how hardly I can brook [brook- tolerate]

To lose my crown and kingdom without cause;

To give ambitious Mortimer my right,

That like a mountain overwhelms my bliss;

In which extreme my mind here murder'd is!

But that, the heavens appoint, I must obey—

Here, take my crown; the life of Edward too; (takes off his crown)

Two kings in England cannot reign at once.

But stay a while: let me be king till night,

That I may gaze upon this glittering crown;

....

Stand still, you watches of the element;

All times and seasons, rest you at a stay,

That Edward may be still fair England's king!

But day's bright beam doth vanish fast away,

And needs I must resign my wished crown.

Inhuman creatures, nursed with tiger's milk,

Why gape you for your sovereign's overthrow?

My diadem, I mean, and guiltless life. [diadem-crown] (Lines 51-73)

The King tries to keep his crown but is forced to give it up. He is ready to welcome death at this point. He sends a handkerchief wet with his tears and dried with his sighs for Queen Isabella. His sentimental actions are futile and a letter arrives from the Queen and Mortimer instructing Leicester who is sympathetic towards Edward II to let go of his charge. Lord Berkeley is the new keeper of the King and Edward II is to go to Berkeley castle.

→ Compare with the abdication scene in Shakespeare's *Richard II*

Scene 2 is set in a room in the palace in Westminster. The Queen and Mortimer are discussing their dreams and desires. The king is in prison and Younger Mortimer feels he should be made Lord Protector of the new King. He and Isabella will rule over England "Be rul'd by me, and we will rule the realm." (p.69) Isabella who now considers "Sweet Mortimer" her "life" and "loves" him suggests that they put Edward II to death.

The Bishop of Winchester is Mortimer's spy. He tells them Edward II has given up his crown; Lord Berkeley is sympathetic to Edward II and, that Kent has laid a plot to free his brother.

Mortimer summons Matrevis and Gurney and asks them to take the King under their guard and torture him. He should be moved from castle to castle in secret to prevent Kent from finding him. Mortimer arrogantly claims that he "makes Fortune's wheel turn as he please" (p.71) The Queen pretends to be sorrowful and sends a ring for Edward II.

Kent and the Young Prince enter. The Prince does not want to be King of England. Kent wonders if Edward II is still alive. Mortimer and the Queen decide to get rid of Kent who has a strong influence over his nephew. The Prince does not like

Lord Mortimer. Kent decides to rescue the King from Kenilworth. (According to Holinshed the king was murdered on Sep 21, 1327 but Kent thought he was still alive in 1329-30)

→ How far has the Queen's character changed from the beginning of the play?

Scene 3 is set near Kenilworth castle. Matrevis and Gurney are moving Edward II from place to place, and they treat him cruelly.

"Within a dungeon England's king is kept,

Where I am starved for want of sustenance;

My daily diet is heart-breaking sobs," (p.74)

When Edward requests some water to clean the filth from his body, he is shaved in "channel water" or "puddle water". (p.74) This detail is taken from Stow. His beard is shaved off and they move in darkness to Killingworth. The Earl of Kent comes to rescue Edward but is captured and taken to Lord Mortimer.

Scene 4 is a room in the Palace in Westminster. Mortimer is afraid that the people have begun to pity Edward II "The king must die, or Mortimer goes down" (p.75) Younger Mortimer is now an absolute Machiavel who will plot murder to preserve himself. He writes a letter of instruction in Latin to Matrevis and leaves it unpunctuated so that it is open to interpretation. He has secretly hired Lightborn who will murder Edward II. Lightborn is an Italian assassin (an anachronism). He has many techniques of murder and reminds us of the devil himself. Mortimer boasts of his power:

"The prince I rule, the queen do I command,

And with a lowly conge to the ground, [conge-bow]

The proudest lords salute me as I pass:

I seal, I cancel, I do what I will.

Fear'd am I more than lov'd; (lines 47-51)

He pretends like a "bashful puritan" that he cannot bear the burden of Lord Protector and yet he must accept this duty to state. He resembles Gaveston in his misuse of power. Prince Edward is crowned King Edward III. Kent is a prisoner. Mortimer orders Kent to be beheaded despite Edward III pleading for the life of his uncle. The Queen supports Mortimer in his decision and calls Kent a "traitor".

Scene 5 is the famous murder scene. Set in Berkeley Castle, Matrevis and Gurney are discussing how Edward is surviving the tortures of the dungeon and starvation.

"Gurney, I wonder the king dies not,
Being in a vault up to the knees in water,
To which the channels of the castle run, [channels-sewers]
From whence a damp continually ariseth,
That were enough to poison any man,
Much more a king brought up so tenderly. (lines 1-6)

Lightborn comes with the message and token sent by Mortimer. He needs a red-hot spit, a feather bed and a table to kill the king. Lightborn enters the king's dungeon and Edward II is instantly suspicious of him, "I see my tragedy written in thy brows" (p.81). The king narrates his misery of staying ten days in filth, unable to eat or sleep (someone plays continually on a drum) and his clothes are tattered. He asks Lightborn to remind Isabella that in his better days he had defeated the Duke of Cleremont in a tournament and won her hand in marriage. Edward gives a jewel to bribe Lightborn. Lightborn asks him to sleep instead and when he repeats fearfully "tell me, wherefore art thou come?" Lightborn replies "To rid thee of thy life". Edward II is murdered savagely. Gurney (on Mortimer's secret instructions) stabs Lightborn, whose corpse is thrown in the moat. They take the King's body to Mortimer.

Scene 6 is the concluding scene. Gurney betrays Mortimer to Edward III. Matrevis reports to Mortimer and flees England. Mortimer thinks he is safe but the Queen enters with news that Edward III is devastated by his father's death and wants revenge. The play's resolution is then effected. Edward III accuses Mortimer of killing his father. He has a letter as proof. Mortimer will be dragged, hanged and quartered as a fitting punishment for traitors. The Queen pleads for Mortimer's life but Mortimer accepts his fate. He has touched the peak of success and can accept his death—"as a traveller,/ goes to discover countries yet unknown" (p.85) Edward III finds it difficult to believe that his mother is guilty but punishes her and sends her to the Tower of London. Edward III prepares for his father's funeral. Mortimer's head is placed on the funeral hearse, "Sweet father, here unto thy murder'd ghost/ I offer up this wicked traitor's head;" (p.86)

→ In Act V note how Marlowe has condensed history to show revenge being taken swiftly. What sort of a king does Edward III promise to be?

5.19.9 Summing Up

We should by now have an idea of the play, its main characters, Marlowe's literary style and note the relevance of the historical play in its own time and our own.

Marlowe's success lies in his use of history, portrayal of characters well-sketched, creation of a dialogue in blank verse that nears the human voice, makes a plot that is complex, an organic whole and gives classical allusions (cf. Danae daughter of King Acrisius, who was locked up in a brass tower which Zeus entered as a shower of gold and Actaeon, a hunter who was transformed into a dog and killed by the goddess Diana for spying on her while bathing) while blending poetry and drama to interest us with a Renaissance play on King Edward II.

5.19.10 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Types

1. How does *Edward II* show Marlowe's success as a dramatist?
2. *Edward II* blends history and tragedy. Discuss.
3. Discuss the importance of the Abdication Scene or the Murder Scene.
4. Describe the character of King Edward II.

Medium Length Answers

1. Sketch the character of Queen Isabella
2. Show how Mortimer develops into a Machiavellian villain at the end of the play.
3. What is the importance of the character of Kent in the play?
4. Give a short sketch of the character of Piers Gaveston.
5. Marlowe uses many classical allusions in the play. Describe any **two**.
6. Could you suggest **two** examples **(anachronisms)** from the play where Marlowe refers to his contemporary age rather than to the reign of Edward II?
7. Write a note on the literary style of Marlowe.
8. What are the sources of Marlowe's *Edward II*?

Short Answer Types

1. Describe two features of a typical Marlovian hero.
2. Name any four works of Marlowe.
3. Why is Marlowe called a "University Wit"?
4. Which religious man did Gaveston physically attack in the beginning of the play? How?
5. Where does Edward II hide in disguise after his defeat by the nobles? Who betrays him to Rice AP Howel?
6. Who captured and killed Gaveston in an ambush? Why?
7. Name the two men who come to remove the King's crown.
8. Where was King Edward II murdered and by whom?
9. How does King Edward III punish Queen Isabella and Younger Mortimer?

5.19.11 Suggested Reading List

Emily C. Bartels. *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993

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J.B. Steane. *Marlowe: A Critical Study*. Cambridge University Press, 1964.

Unit-20 □ Doctor Faustus

Structure

5.20.0 Introduction

5.20.1 Christopher Marlowe: A Bio-Brief

5.20.2 English Tragedy and Marlowe

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5.20.8 Structure: A Play without a Middle

5.20.9 The Main Themes

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5.20.11 Some Important Passages Analysed

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5.20.0 Introduction

This Unit once again introduces you to another tragedy written by Christopher Marlowe, one of the **'University Wits'.** By reading this Unit you will be able to:

(a) trace the growth of tragedy in English literature;

(b) understand how a legend is moulded into a dramatic work to be a representative of the Renaissance in English;

(c) know how blank verse matures to be the fit vehicle for dramatic expression.

5.20.1 Christopher Marlowe : A Bio-Brief

Christopher Marlowe was the greatest of the University wits, a group of seven dramatists from Oxford and Cambridge. The University Wits were a group of young writers who did not desire to join the church, and were also badly in want of patrons. They were graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. They quickly took advantage of the growing popularity of the drama and produced a new literary phenomenon—"the secular professional playwrights", as David Daiches calls them. The other six were John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Kyd, George Peele, Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nashe. English drama owes a great deal to these playwrights, specially the first five, who freely combined elements of classical Greek and Roman drama with the native English dramatic tradition to create a powerful medium of popular entertainment.Marlowe was a predominantly tragic playwright. His immense contribution to English tragedy can be realised by looking at the condition of the genre before him. English tragedy before Marlowe was often deficient in dramatic action, and was usually written in verse that was stilted and artificial.It is now almost universally accepted that his plays made enormous technical advances. His verse is dramatic in every sense of the word, having qualities of drive, intensity, melody and effective stage rhetoric, clearly demonstrating that the dramatist was a deliberate and conscious craftsman.

5.20.2 English Tragedy and Marlowe

Marlowe's first play was ***Dido, Queen of Carthage,*** an indifferent tragedy of unhappy love. It is ***Tamburlaine the Great,*** written for The Rose, which marked his emergence as a great dramatist writing for the professional theatre. It is a tragedy of boundless aspiration, which was to be Marlowe's special dramatic province. The play overwhelmed its first audience with a kind of subject which had never before been witnessed on the stage. Marlowe also introduced in the two parts of the play a new type of tragic hero. Tamburlaine is a shepherd who attains a dozen thrones, all won by superhuman courage and self confidence. This was to be the distinctive quality of the Marlovian hero—a man of humble birth who rises to a great height by his own merits. Faustus too is "born, of parents base of stock" (Prologue, l.11). But though Tamburlaine and Faustus are supermen, Marlowe's other heroes, like Barabas and Edward II are men of much lower stature. It has therefore been argued by some critics that the evolution of the Marlovian hero reveals his progressive disillusionment with the optimism in certain strains of Renaissance thought or his simultaneous recognition of the potentialities of man and of man's essential powerlessness.

The creation of a new kind of tragic hero was not Marlowe's only contribution to English tragedy. Most of his contemporaries were enthralled by Marlowe's poetic greatness. Ben Jonson characterised Marlowe' splendid poetry by an immortal phrase. "Marlowe's mighty line". Blank verse had been written before Marlowe, by dramatists like Sackville and Norton (in ***Gorboduc***),and Peele in ***The Arraignment of Paris***.But it was Marlowe who made it a flexible and supple dramatic medium by doing away with end -stopped lines which only produced an impression of monotony, by varying the pauses, by making the sentence rather than the verse line the unit of composition, by introducing enjambment or overflow, by incorporating speech rhythms into the metrical scheme and by giving his verse passion as well as dramatic urgency, (for examaple the famous last speech of Faustus). Marlowe was the first English dramatic poet who wrote truly dramatic poetry.

5.20.3 Marlowe's Life and Personality

Marlowe was born in the same year as Shakespeare (1564). He went up to Corpus Christie College, Cambridge, in 1580 and studied there until 1587. His life compared to Shakespeare's, was much shorter and stormier, and, his personality much more controversial; more dramatic still was the manner of his death. He was killed during a tavern brawl by a man called Ingram Frizer. The reasons for the brawl may have had something to do with complications arising out of Marlowe's alleged homosexuality, or his role as a government spy.

Marlowe was widely read in literature, theology and scientific writings. Thomas Kyd, who once shared a room with him, alleged that Marlowe often attacked Christianity. The Privy Council issued a warrant for Marlowe's arrest on 18 May, 1593, for his unorthodox opinions.

5.20.4 Doctor Faustus

Doctor Faustusis about a man who at first renounces Christianity but later repents and pleads passionately for God's mercy. Many critics, however, interpret the play as a powerfully moving Christian document and T.S. Eliot has argued that far from being an atheist, Marlowe was probably "the most thoughtful, the most blasphemous (and therefore the most Christian) of his contemporaries." Such a belief lies behind anumberof influential twentieth century interpretations of ***Doctor Faustus***, which see the play as one of the most obvious Christian documents in all Elizabethan

drama. On the other hand, Marlowe's reputation for atheism has prompted many other critics to read the play as a sympathetic endorsement of Faustus' defiance of divine authority.

5.20.5 Sources and Background

A. W. Ward in his edition of ***Marlowe'sDoctor Faustus, Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*** has said that the idea of magic as a black or evil art came with Christianity, for the Greeks regarded magical powers as the gift of the gods. Church authorities however spread stories of an unholy league between the evil powers and the men of knowledge who challenged orthodox doctrines.Whenever scientific pursuits appeared capable of challenging orthodox theology, especially in the Middle Ages, Church authorities spread suspicions of black magic. The Renaissance gave a tremendous boost to the pursuit of new knowledge and brought with it a new questioning spirit, thereby sharpening the conflict between orthodox Christianity and the tribe of freethinkers. Marlowe was one of the first writers in Renaissance England to perceive the potentialities of this conflict and his Faustus can, to an extent, be seen as an attemptto defy the limits imposed by orthodox Christianity on the pursuit of knowledge.

But the figure of Faustus was not entirely fictitious. There was a historical character named Georgius or Johannes Faustus, who was a travelling scholar and magician and whose public career extended from about 1510 to about 1541. In 1587 a German writer whose name we do not know compiled these stories in the book, ***Historia von D. Iohann Faustus***. An English writer, who is identified only by the initials PF, prepared an English version with the long and didactic title, ***The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus***, and this was the main source of Marlowe's play.

5.20.6 The Textual Problems

Doctor Faustus is one of the most problematic of Elizabethan play texts. It exists in two versions: the 1604 edition, referred to by editors as the A Text, and the 1616 version, known as the B Text. It used to be assumed earlier that the A Text (1517 lines), much shorter than the B(2121 lines), represents the play as Marlowe wrote it and that the 1616 edition contains some additions by William Birde and Samuel Rowley who were paid to do so in 1692 by theatre manager Philip Henslowe, whose

Diary is a source of much invaluable information about Elizabethan drama. Most nineteenth century editors of ***Doctor Faustus*** considered the A Text more authentic. But some twentieth century scholars, notably W.W. Greg, have demonstrated that the B Text, despite its later publication date, represents the play, as it was originally conceived, and that Marlowe had a collaborator whose contribution was substantial and accounts for the length of the play. Greg concluded that the additions mentioned by Henslowe were best. But in subsequent Marlowe criticism the prestige of the A Text was somewhat restored, though most modern editions of the play are based on a careful study and comparison of both texts (see Christopher Marlowe, ***Doctor Faustus***, ed Kitty Datta, pp 2 5, for an extended discussion).

5.20.7 The Form

Doctor Faustus is too complex a work to be conveniently classified in respect of its form. The Elizabethan popular theatre assimilated many conventions from both the native English popular culture and ancient classical drama. The popular theatre of England in Marlowe's time and in the-not-so distant past absorbed a variety of forms such as dramatised folk tales, romances, Biblical stories, political satires, and allegorical plays concerned with the Christian doctrine. The last type of theatrical entertainment, known as the morality play, played an important role in the development of sixteenth century English drama. Indeed, literary historians believe that the morality play is an element of great importance in many Elizabethan plays. ***Doctor Faustus*** is generally regarded both as one of the finest fruits of the English morality tradition and as the first great English tragedy.

The Prologue and Epilogue of ***Doctor Faustus*** assert an obviously moralistic reading of Faustus' career, although traces of an ambiguous treatment of Christian doctrine have been found by some critics in Marlowe's play. Nicholas Brooke in an interesting essay ('The Moral Tragedy of *Doctor Faustus*') has argued that ***Doctor Faustus*** is an inverted morality play', since Marlowe has here deliberately inverted the normal morality pattern. Instead of heaven, his protagonist deliberately seeks hell and Satan. Whether Marlowe conceived of the tragedy as an endorsement of Faustus; rebellion against tyrannical divine authority, or whether he wanted his 'hellish fall' to be a warning example of the danger of practising 'more than heavenly power, permits'(Epilogue, ll.4 8), is still a debated question in Marlovian criticism. The very fact that such a controversy exists, coupled with the recognition of Marlowe's ambiguous treatment of his theme, in a way proves that ***Doctor Faustus*** is a genuine tragedy, for great tragedy always evokes a divided response.

Nevertheless, it is easy to detect in ***Doctor Faustus*** several features of the morality play. Faustus is visited periodically by a Good Angel and a Bad Angel who offer him suggestions true to their nature. Another typical morality feature is the appearance in Act V scene i of a character who is simply called the Old Man, in keeping with the morality practice of using generalised names, and whose function is, like that of a common morality figure, Good Counsel, to warn the central character of the dangers faced by his soul. The magicians, Valdes and Cornelius, who in Act I scene i paint magic and magicians in attractive colours to an already tempted Faustus may be regarded (Epilogue, ll.4-8) as typical morality tempters. In Act II scene ii the devils arrange for Faustus a show of the Seven Deadly Sins—Pride, Covetousness. Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Sloth, Lechery—which are personified abstractions in the morality tradition. Again, just as the dedactic themes of many morality plays are enlivened by broadly comic, sometime is bawdy, matter, ***Doctor Faustus*** contains a number of comic, even farcical, scenes which often parody the serious theme of the play.

But ***Doctor Faustus*** is also a great tragedy. It is possible to discern in ***Doctor Faustus*** elements of classical Greek tragedy which, like Marlowe's play, is concerned with human pride as well as human accomplishment. In Greek tragedies generally human presumption or ***hubris*** invites the wrath of the gods. Faustus too is punished for his ' self conceit' (Prologue, l.20) which leads him to aspire to divine power. The pride which gives him a heroic stature despite his humble birth leads to his downfall. Finally, Marlowe makes Faustus the embodiment of the Renaissance thirst for knowledge infinite. Both extremes of Renaissance humanism— pride in the potentialities of man and despair at mankind's inherent limitations are dramatised through Faustus's career. Basically, Marlowe owed his allegiance to the Renaissance ideal of the tragic form and the Middle Ages' pattern of morality.

5.20.8 Structure: A Play Without a Middle

The play is devoid of traditional act and scene division, but it consists of a series of scenes. Modern critics, however, choose to suppose that the play has a five-act structure in keeping with the usual concept and practice of other University Wits.

No discussion of the form of ***Doctor Faustus*** is complete without taking into account the dramatic function of the comic scenes. Many of these scenes were excluded from most nineteenth century editions of the play and as a result ***Doctor Faustus*** was left with a huge gap in the middle. This in turn gave rise to the critical

opinion that it was a play without a middle. It was also believed that Marlowe was not responsible for these comic scenes. Most modern accounts of the plays however, insist that the comic scenes an intergral part of the tragedy and that though Marlowe himself may not have written a few of these scenes, his collaborator was no doubt in tune with his overall plan.

We are, however, more concerned with the contribution of these scenes to the total effect of the work. It may be admitted that several of these scenes are written in pedestrian blank verse or uninspired prose and that the quality of the humour dished out by them is generally coarse and crude. But their dramatic importance is undeniable. These scenes solve the technical problem of filling the twenty four years which pass between Faustus's signing of the bond with Mephistophilis and his terrifying last night on earth. But if these scenes were merely time filling they could not have much dramatic importance. The fact is that Marlowe traces through the scenes a continuous theme which is at once intimately related to the main theme and supplies the middle of the play. In his source Marlowe found a number of incidents in the magician's life, incidents which were of an assorted nature and had little evidence of a main design. From them Marlowe selected those incidents which would keep up the suspense, which would exhibit character development and also hold a comic, occasionally distorting, mirror to the main tragic theme. In other words, he had to provide an appropriate dramatic middle.

From a structural point of view, the scenes in question provide a relief from the momentous nature of Faustus' choice of magic and his self assertion, his quest for knowledge and power, his dramatically gripping encounters with Mephistophilis and the other devils, as well as from the tragic intensity of his moments of conflict and repentance. The relief may even be seen as dramatic passage from the catastrophic confines of Faustus study, where much of the main action takes place, into the wide world of papal politics and that of the German Emperor's court as well as into the world of common people. What Faustus actually achieves in these scenes is woefully small, but the glaring contrast between Faustus' aspirations and his actual achievements is an important part of Marlowe's theme. When towards the end of his life Faustus looks back on his career and reaches self knowledge, what Aristotle would have called ***anagnorisis*** or recognition, he admits " For the vain pleasure of four and twenty years' hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity" (Act V, Scens ii, ll.66 7). Instead of supposing that we are being presented with two Faustuses—the serious scholar and the ordinary magician—we should see here a decisive and inevitable change in Faustus' character brought on by the corruptions of power. In as much as

the comic scenes progressively reveal change and development in the character of Faustus, they may be said to constitute a dramatic middle.

But there are other points of dramatic interest about the comic scenes. First of all, there is an element of ironic parody in some of these scenes, as when Faustus's servant Wagner adopts his master's academic jargon in his conversation with the scholars who want to know the where abouts of Faustus in Act I, Scene II, or when Wagner persuades Robin to sell his soul to the devil " for a shoulder of mutton" in Act I, Scene iv. The echo of the main tragic theme is obvious in the comic scene, though it may be felt that, Faustus makes 'a much more impressive bargain with the devil, selling his soul for infinite power". The comic scenes in the tragedies of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, including Shakespeare, do not simply provide comic relief, but also throw an oblique light on the tragedy. The scholars' comments on Faustus's choice of magic in Act I, Scene ii, (ll.29 37) represent the point of view of the university community by highlighting the unusual nature of his choice. There are other scenes in which Faustus himself seems to indulge in gross parody of his earlier aspirations. All the mighty things he wanted to do with the help of magic (read carefully ll.52 60 and ll.78 96 in Act I, Scene i) seem totally forgotten as Faustus performs cheap magicians' tricks, as in Act IV; Scene I. In this scene he punishes Benvolio, who makes jokes about Faustus's magical power by making horns grow on his head. Here the titanic hero is an ironic shadow of his former heroic self.

Enough has been said to show that the comic scenes are not excrescences but an important part of the play's design. It is true that the idea of comic relief is never so artistic as it is in Shakespeare and sometimes it verges on crude horse-play and buffoonery. Of the fourteen scenes that we have in ***Doctor Faustus***, there are five scenes in which burlesque, buffoonery and boisterous comedy are introduced. The main figures in the scenes are the coarse and uncultured people who are sharply projected against the intellectual world of Doctor Faustus. They frequently try to step into Doctor Faustus' shoes and are befooled in the end. But most of this is an echo of the source material—***The English Faust Book.*** These scenes restore our moral perspective by throwing critical light on a character for whom we might otherwise have felt too much sympathy. The comic scenes can also be linked to the dramatic tradition of the sub plot by seeing them as a parody of the main plot, a parody which has the effect of providing an ironic counterpoint to the main plot and this flaw thereby brings out clearly Faustus's fully. The comic scenes, which make up most of the middle of the play, are thus an integral part of the design of ***Doctor Faustus.***

5.20.9 The Main Themes

As we have already seen, ***Doctor Faustus*** accommodates different and divided insights. Orthodox critics, whom William Empson characterised as neo-Christians, interpret the play in didactic and religious terms, as depicting the damnable life and inevitable downfall of a sinfully proud man who defies the Christian God. There is enough textual evidence to support this interpretation. The chorus presents Faustus as a man "swol'n with cunning, of a self conceit", who falls to "a devilish exercise" and "Surfeits upon cursed necromancy" (Prologue, ll . 20 25). In these lines the chorus implicitly compares Faustus with two figures of classical Greek myth, Daedalus and Icarus, father and son. The father made wings for his son and attached them with wax, but Icarus flew too near the sun so that the wax melted and he fell into the sea. Christians interpreted this myth as a prefiguration of the fall of Satan from excessive pride and as an allegory of the terrible price man must pay for challenging the power of god.

Those who interpret the play as a Christian document also point out other instances of Faustus's folly and sinfulness. Faustus's rejection of medicine on the ground that it does not enable the practitioner to raise the dead (Act I, Scene I, l.25) reveals his blasphemous desire to be the equal of Christ. Faustus's rejection of other traditional disciplines in his opening soliloquy reveals his pride, for in each case his dissatisfaction is the result of his own self centred demands. M.M. Mahood maintains that Faustus is not only a bad Christian but a bad humanist as well, because he commits the "humanistic fallacy" of creating false barriers between God and mortals, barriers which will lead to the ruin of mankind ***(Poetry and Humanism)***. Others have pointed out instances of Faustus's cowardice, delusion, egocentricity and emotional and intellectual instability. All this would suggest that Marlowe presents Faustus as a self deluded fool. Other Christian and didactic themes have been discovered in the play. Thus, ***Doctor Faustus*** is seen as an inversion of the homilitic tradition of the saint's life, as seen in Faustus's career, the high points of which are conversion to evil, adherence to the devil rather than to God, performance of miraculous stunts and union after death with his great master Lucifer.

Doctor Faustus has also been seen as dramatising a problem of conscience which was topical and powerfully delineated in Nathaniel Woodes'morality play ***The Conflict of Conscience*** (1581)based on the spiritual biography of a sixteenth century figure, Francesco Spira. The Spira story highlights a typically Protestant problem—the inability to believe in the mercy of a god of anger—and this is often felt to be

Faustus' problem too, In fact, there are a number of striking verbal parallels between ***Doctor Faustus*** and Woodes' play. The main theme in the latter work is that there is still hope for the soul of a man who is capable of fear, because fear is one of the means by which conscience operates, the other means being omens, premonitions and other inexplicable phenomena. The man who disregards and dismisses fear gradually experiences a hardening of his heart, such as Faustus does when he says, "My heart is hardened, I cannot repent" (Act I, Scene II, I.18). His condition can be compared with that of Shakespeare's Macbeth, another case of conscience, whose courage perversely manifests itself in his battle against moral terror. In the end , Macbeth resolves to make " the firstlings of his heart" the "firstlings of his hand". Similarly Faustus claims to be "resolute" in his pursuit of black magic and goaded and bullied by Lucifer and his crew, dismisses his convulsions of conscience as signs of weakness. He also ignores omens and premonitions which are in his case as in Macbeth's, signs of the workings of conscience. Just as Macbeth sees a phantom dagger before him on his way to Duncan's sleeping chamber, Faustus has the hallucination that the words ***Homo fuge*** (Fly O man) are inscribed on his arm. Macbeth's dagger and the inscription on Faustus's arm keep coming and going according to the states of their conscience.

Marlowe presents Faustus not simply as a self deluded fool and a case of conscience, but also as an aspiring titan. According to orthodox interpretations of the play, Marlowe not only presents Faustus's career and conflicts and moral dilemmas in Christian terms but also conceives his tragedy as a devout Christian world. This view fails to take note of Marlowe's ambivalent attitude to his protagonist and ignores the many powerful suggestions in the text of an opposite point of view. Marlowe also presents Faustus as a promethean figure whose tragedy lies in his self deluded courage and his doomed but heroic endeavour to master the secrets of the universe. The Epilogue speaks not only of Faustus' "hellish fall" but also of "the branch" that might have grown full straight in this man and of "Apollo's laurel bough" that is now burnt ; both metaphors suggest great intellectual potential as well as its wanton destruction. Faustus's "longing for" a world of profit and delight, /Of power, of honour, of omnipotence" (Act I, Scene I, ll.52 53) may be sinful from a Christian point of view but his aspirations are also those of the Renaissance man of ambition.

Clearly, it will be simplitic to regard ***Doctor Faustus*** only as a Christian morality play. It is true that there is a whole range of Christian allusions in the play, and suggestions of a Christian religious universe are pervasive, but it is also possible to see the Christian moral order as a system which offers no natural outlet for human

aspirations, especially if those aspirations are of an unconventional kind.. It is true that Faustus's aspirations are shown by Marlowe as inevitably leading to his damnation, but we need not see this merely as a just punishment for sinful ideas. Marlowe has also incorporated in his play the theme of rebellion and its suppression. The power which Faustus seeks and which is denied to him by a Christian dispensation may make him a subversive figure, but the language of subversion and control through which Marlowe presents the tragedy of Faustus implies that the dramatist's sympathies are not all for the Christian order. Faustus' visions of power and glory are universal and timeless, but they can also be linked specifically to the Renaissance mind. Faustus, humbly born like Marlowe's first hero Tamburlaine, not only achieves greatness but becomes the epitome of Renaissance aspirations. As Roma Gill has pointed out in her edition of the play, Faustus has all the divine discontent, the tireless striving after knowledge and power which marked the Renaissance mind. The adventurers of the Renaissance age of explorations were not only the sailors who undertook daring sea voyages and discovered new lands which would then be colonised but also the scientists and scholars who were constantly courting the spirit of scepticism. Another characteristic of the Renaissance mind was a conflict between orthodox Christianity and the intoxicating possibilities of new knowledge that were experienced by 'forward minds'. As a man of the Renaissance, Faustus expriences this conflict of ideas: his mind is half free and half bound, neither wholly medieval nor completely modern and secular. He has mastered the study of medicine and can cure all diseases; the conquest of death in an age marked by an excessively high rate of mortality mainly because of recurrent epidemics, is the only new challenge for him. As a Renaissance humanist his chief concern is to extend the range of human achievement.

Poststructuralist criticism has revealed a contradictory quality in Marlowe's dramatic writing and insists that the real meaning of the play is to be found in contradictions and ambiguities rather than in a simple statement of its theme. Thus Simon Shepherd has shown that Marlowe uses the Brechtian techniques of alienation in such a way as to make the play's message "complex and opaque" rather than "single and normative" (***Marlowe and the Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre***). The contradictory quality of Marlowe's dramatic writing in ***Doctor Faustus*** is in fact especially suited to the dialectical form of tragedy. Faustus' own fondness for debate constantly lays before us contradictory topics. Then there is the alternation of opposites in the structural pattern of the play. The Good Angel's exhortation to Christ to save his soul is promptly answered by the appearance of the evil trinity— This produces an equal and opposite reaction from the Bad Angel and finally Faustus' passionate appeal to Beelzebub and Mephostophilis—(Act II, scene ii, ll.85

87); the tragic action is continually burlesqued by comic scenes. All this shows that neither orthodox nor heterodox interpretations of ***Doctor Faustus*** are wholly valid; the one cannot invalidate the other and both are in important ways accommodated within the play and enrich its total meaning.

Then there is the theme of magic. In the exercise of his magical powers Faustus can be seen as an artist whose magical performances evoke spirits from the past, like those of Alexander the Great and Helen of Troy, and who entertains the audiences within and outside the play with spectacles. ***Doctor Faustus*** has been seen in this respect as Marlowe's portrait of the artist who is given twentyfour years to see what art can do. The play's ambiguous exploration of the forbidden art of magic may even represent Marlowe's view of his own art.

5.20.10 Summing Up (In Brief)

Summing Up: The play is highly complex, intertwining various themes. The majorthemes can be said to be

i) The Christian belief of punishment for the sins of pride and overweening ambition;

ii) The crisis of conscience for a man who hardens his heart against the warnings of conscience;

iii) The boundless aspiration of the Renaissance, which sought to go beyond the limits of orthodoxy in all realms of thought;

iv) Marlowe'sexploration of the magical possibilities of his own creative art.

5.20.11 Some Important Passages Analysed

➢ **Faustus's Opening Soliloquy, Act I, Scene I (ll.1 62)**

The opening soliloquy shows Faustus debating with himself about the course of study he should follow. For him the all important question is what every branch of study has to offer him. He takes up Logic at first and describes the end of Logic. Since he already knows how to dispute well, he declares that his extraordinary intellect demands a greater subject. Faustus then examines Medicine, remembering Aristotle's saying that where the philosopher leaves off, there the physician begins. At first the study of Medicine seems an attractive prospect, because it suits Faustus's self aggrandising spirit: "Heap up gold,/And be eternized for some wondrous cure" (ll.14 15). But a moments

reflection tells Faustus that he has already acquired great proficiency in the subject, curing numerous different diseases and even preventing the outbreak of epidemics. Despite all his great achievements Faustus cannot escape the melancholy recognition that he is still a man and nowhere near achieving god like power. The line, "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man" (l.23), expresses despair at the limitations of human power. If only he could make men immortal and bring the dead back to life, says Faustus, he would have continued to practise medicine. Faustus's wish is blasphemous, for only Christ brought a dead man (Lazarus) back to life.

Faustus then takes up an examination of law. After quoting Justinian, the Roman Emperorwho codified Roman law, Faustus declares that the study of law, though suitable for one who is willing to do an uninteresting job for the sake of money is too illiberal (i.e. ungentlemanly) for a man like him who is inspired by the ideal of the liberal arts. Finally, Faustus takes up Divinity (or theology) a subject in which he has specialised. He quotes from the Bible but his quotations are grossly unfair to Christianity. By omitting significant words from his Biblical quotations Faustus is able to prove to his own satisfaction that Christianity insists on the sinfulness and inevitable damnation of man. He therefore begins to consider what magic has to offer him. He is fascinated by magical rituals but he is more fascinated by the power and delight which magic seems to promise. The way Faustus speaks of the power and wealth which magic will bring for him shows that he is motivated not simply by a thirst for knowledge but also by a desire for more materialistic benefits. He wants omnipotence, limitless power. The chorus and the scholar in Act I, scene ii (ll.29 31) tell us that Faustus has for sometime been engrossed in necromancy.

➢ Faustus's First Encounter with the Devil, Act I, Scene III

As a result of Faustus's first performance of magical rites a devil makes his appearance and Faustus immediately asks him to go back and change his shape, for he is too ugly. Faustus even jokes that the shape of a Franciscan friar will suit the devil best and when the devil obeys his command Faustus congratulates himself for wielding such extraordinary power. The joke at the expense of friars comes at one of the most serious moments of the play and reveals a flippancy which often comes to the surface in Faustus's utterances. But the devil, Mephistophilis, is indifferent to Faustus's joke and soon tells him that Faustus's conjuring words did not bring him running from hell. The power of magic is essentially negative : it provides evidence that the magician's soul is ripe for damnation. Mephistophilis tells Faustus that he came of his own accord in order to obtain Faustus's 'glorious soul'.

Mephistophilis does not turn out to be a tempter on his first appearance. When Faustus wants to know more about Lucifer Mephostophilis tells him that though Lucifer was once " most dearly loved of God," he fell from heaven by "aspiring pride and insolence"-—and that the other angels who were thrown out of heaven along with Lucifer are all " unhappy spirits". Those who find in ***Doctor Faustus*** traces of the Christian myth of Satanic pride find in this account of the fall of Lucifer an outline of the fall that Faustus is about to re enact. In answer to Faustus'question about the exact location of hell, Mephistophilis tells him that hell is not a place but a mental condition and that it is so frightening because it symbolises negation and deprivation. But Faustus is so convinced of the positive delights of hell that he refuses to accept even this testimony to the real horror of hell from an impeccable source. Mephistophilis'powerful speech (ll.78 84) presents the idea of a hell marked by a complete lack of joy and hope. This idea of hell at once enriches the intellectual content of the play and nothing like this is to be found in Marlowe's source.

But the idea did not originate with Marlowe. St. Augustine saw hell as both mental and physical torment and Marlowe follows that tradition. In this speech as well as a later speech of Mephistophilis (Act II, scene i, ll.120--130) ideas of the immanence and subjectivity of hell, of its utter joylessness and despair are so forcefully expressed that they remain long in the memory. At the same time, in keeping with the play's structural pattern of opposing one idea with another, there is Faustus's utter indifference to the idea expressed by Mephistophilis. Ignoring the suffering of Mephistophilis and the devil's description of the terror of hell, Faustus tells him that he is ready to sell his soul to Lucifer. He even rebukes Mephistophilis for his weakness .When Mephistophilis leaves, Faustus retains his earlier enthusiasm for the idea of selling his soul, indeed his enthusiasm has increased manifold, for he says that even if he had "as many souls as there be stars", he would give them all to Lucifer. He ends his soliloquy by elaborating upon his earlier fantasies of power, this time speaking of his wish to build bridges in the air, to cross the ocean with a band of men, to join the hills of Africa and link that continent with Spain and to have complete hegemony over Germany.

- **Faustus' Address to Helen, Act V, Scene I (ll. 99 118)**

The appearance of Helen, in response to Faustus's request to Mephistophilis to have her as his paramour in order to "... glut the longing of my heart's desire," calls forth the most famous lines of verse in ***Doctor Faustus.*** Helen appeared before, in the same scene, to the amazement of the scholars. who wanted Faustus to conjure up

"that peerless dame of Greece" (ll. 11 36). On that occasion Faustus himself did not say a word, though the scholars were effusive in praising this paragon of beauty. Her re appearance prompts Faustus to immortalise her beauty in lines which have become some of the most immortal lines of poetry. The speech is an example of dramatic poetry at its most expressive and the main themes of the play are discernible in Faustus' passionate address. Several scholars have pointed out that this Helen is an evil spirit and that in making her his mistress Faustus is committing the sin of demoniality, that is, physical contact with a devil's agent. The romantic lover's cry therefore gains a dreadful irony when Faustus says, "Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies". Faustus is literally losing his soul through this last and most damnable pleasure of his magical career. That this is his most damnable pleasure is indicated by the dramatic patterning of the episode, which is framed on each side by the Old Man. Before the appearance of Helen, the Old Man was holding out to Faustus a hope of salvation, but after Faustus's declaration "And none but thou shalt be my paramour," the Old Man concludes that Faustus is 'accursed' and there is no hope left for him.

- **Faustus's Last speech, Act V, Scene II (ll. 135 193)**

Faustus's last speech is one of the greatest last speeches in all drama; it is also Marlowe's most mature passage of dramatic verse. As John Jump has shown, it provides a sharp contrast to Faustus' speech to Helen. The earlier speech is a passage of more or less formal eloquence, while this speech develops flexibly and unpredictably. It is dramatic in the fullest sense because it vividly conveys the quickly changing moods and emotions of a man who knows that this hour is his last. Such is the power of Marlowe's dramatic poetry that the passage of an hour is indicated by 58 lines of verse which may at the most take ten minutes of speech but we hardly notice the discrepancy between stage time and actual time.

Faustus's last speech is structurally similar to his first soliloquy. As in the opening soliloquy, Faustus is contemplating a number of alternatives, and after considering each, rejecting them all. But there is a crucial difference, for Faustus is no longer thinking of a career for life, but looking for ways to escape a frightening death. Moreover, in the first soliloquy Faustus was carrying on an internal debate in an apparently logical progression; but here he is in the throes of utter despair. The similarity between the two soliloquies reminds us of the first decisive step taken by Faustus towords damnation. In Faustus's last soliloquy also we feel the same presence of contradictory levels of significance that has characterised the play throughout. At one level, we feel more intensely than ever before the horror of

Faustus's situation; at another level, we perceive the operation of an irony which has the effect of distancing us from the speaker.

The maturity of Marlowe's handling of dramatic verse is evident throughout and we may now look at a few examples of this. First of all, there is the masterly use of broken lines which, occurring throughout the speech, mark dramatic pauses. Secondly, there are the repetitions of single words which indicate emotional pressure. Thirdly, the use of monosyllables often has the effect of intensifying a sense of doom. In fact, most of the telling sentences in the speech are monosyllabic. A total of eleven monosyllables in the second and third lines of the speech, echo the eleven strokes of the clock after which the emphasis falls heavily on the polysyllabic word, 'perpetually,' which reinforces the horror of Faustus's situation. As for Marlowe's ability to make his verse enact physical movement, there is the famous line : "One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!" (l.149). This line enacts the physical movement of the speaker as he gropes for the blood that might redeem him. Further examples of Marlowe's versatility in Faustus's quotation of a line from Ovid's **Amores,** which Marlowe himself translated thus in his **Ovid's Elegies,** "Then wouldst thou cry, stay night, and run not thus" has always been recognised for its telling irony. In Ovid the lover wishes to prolong the night he is spending with his beloved, but here it is the doomed Faustus desperately trying to postpone time's inexorable movement towards midnight. A more poignant irony occurs towards the end of the speech when Faustus, after recognising the futility of his earlier attempts to escape the inevitable, begs to be transformed into an animal and even into inanimate things like 'little water drops'. The proud humanist who wanted to become a demi god, to assert the supremacy of man, now wants to forfeit his humanity. Again, Faustus wants his last hour to be extended to "A year, a month, a week, a natural day" but even as he asks for time to be extended, the verse movement and the words convey the impression of time contracting from a year through a month and a week, to a natural day. That he asks for the impossible is subtly indicated by the very language of his appeal: "Stand still, you ever moving spheres of heaven, / That time may cease and midnight never come." (ll.138 139). The ever moving spheres cannot by definition, stand still, nor can time ever have a stop. There are times when Faustus himself seems to recognise the impossibility of his prayers and then he movingly reduces his demands as in these lines : "Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,/A hundred thousand and at last be saved./O, no end is limited to damned souls" (ll.172 4). Faustus himself realises the futility of his prayer to set limits to time, for in the last of three lines time is extended to infinity.

5.20.12 Comprehension Exercises

A. Essay Type Questions

1. How does ***Doctor Faustus*** dramatise the conflict between religious orthodoxy and new knowledge?
2. In what sense is ***Doctor Faustus*** both a moralityplayand a tragedy?
3. How are magic and power related in ***Doctor Faustus***?
4. In what ways does Faustus reveal his antipathy to Christianity? Can ***Doctor Faustus*** be called an anti Christian play?
5. Can ***Doctor Faustus*** be interpreted as the tragedy of a man who wants to master the secrets of the universe for the sake of mankind?
6. Comment on the theme of Humanist aspiration as presented by Marlowe in ***Doctor Faustus***. Is Marlowe's attitude to his protagonist ambivalent ?
7. Do you agree with the view that the real meaning of ***Doctor Faustus*** is to be found in contradictions and ambiguities rather than in a simple statement of its theme? Give reasons for your answer.

B. Mid- length Questions

1. What innovations did Marlowe introduce to Elizabethan drama?
2. What are the distinctive features of the Marlovian tragic hero?
3. Give your views on the comic scenes in ***Doctor Faustus.***
4. Compare and contrast the first and the last speeches of Faustus.
5. Analyse and comment on the morality play elements in ***Doctor Faustus***.

C. Short Answer Type Questions

1. Comment briefly on the textual problems of ***Doctor Faustus***.
2. What concept of hell do we find in Doctor Faustus? Is it a traditional concept?
3. What are the terms of the agreement between Faustus and the Devil?
4. Which dead characters does Faustus conjure up and for whom?
5. From which source did Marlowe get the idea of his plot?

5.20.13 Suggested Reading List

Editions

1. Marlowe, Christopher. ***Doctor Faustus.*** Ed. Kitty Datta. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1991. All textual references in the unit are to this edition.

2. .... ***Doctor Faustus.*** Ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmnssen. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1993.

3. .... ***Doctor Faustus***. Ed. John D. Jump. London: Methuen, 1970.

Criticism

1. Sanders, W. ***The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare.*** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

2. Steane, J.B. ***Marlowe: ACritical Study.*** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.

3. Farnham,Willard. Ed. ***Twentieth Century Interpretations of Doctor Faustus : A Collection of Critical Essays.*** Eaglewood Chiffs : Prentice Hall, 1969.

4. Morris, B. Ed. ***Christopher Marlowe.*** Mermaid Critical Commentary, London: Ernest Benn, 1968.

Unit-21 □ William Shakespeare : *Macbeth*

Structure

5.21.0 Introduction

5.21.1 A Brief Note on Shakespeare's Life

5.21.2 The Date and Text of the play

5.12.3 Sources

5.12.4 The Play

5.21.5 Themes in the Play

5.21.6 Structure and Style

5.21.7 Characters

5.21.8 Selected Approaches

i) The Porter Scene in *Macbeth*

ii) The Presentation of the 'Witches' in *Macbeth*

iii) The Banquet Scene

5.21.9 Summing Up

5.21.10 Comprehension Exercises

5.21.11 Suggested Reading List

5.21.0 Introduction

In the earlier Units of this Module, you have read about the ironies and politics associated with kingship in the plays of Christopher Marlowe. You are also aware you're your reading of the contemporary History of Literature how the plays of Marlowe and other University Wits paved the way for the mature genius of Shakespeare the playwright to flourish. In this Unit, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* introduces you to an entirely different set of complications arising out of heedless ambition for royal power, the conflagration it causes in the land, and of course the nemesis (retributive justice) of it all. The objectives of this unit are to introduce you to William

Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* placing it in its historical and canonical context, and explaining in a lucid manner the themes, the structure and style, the characters and some of the important scenes of the play. You should look out for Shakespeare's use of imagery, the deployment of the supernatural, and of course the intense psychological probe to which he subjects the characters. As you supplement your reading of the complete text with this Unit, you should be aware of the universal parallels embedded in this play.

5.21.1 A Brief Note on Shakespeare's Life

Provided here are some facts regarding Shakespeare's life to add to the ones which you must have found in Module 1, Unit 3. Baptized on 26th April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, about a hundred miles northwest of London, William Shakespeare is perhaps the most admired and best known playwright in the world. His birth date like many of the facts of his early life, not being confirmed is surmised to be the 23rd April which is also the date of his death. William was the third child among eight siblings and the eldest surviving son of John and Mary Shakespeare.

It is again a matter of surmise that the young Shakespeare attended the Stratford Grammar School acquiring, according to the curriculum of the day, knowledge of Latin grammar and the classics. At the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway who was twenty-six at the time. Their daughter Susanna was born on 26th May 1583. This birth was followed by the birth of twins – son Hamnet and daughter Judith – two years later. Hamnet died at the age of eleven of unknown causes.

There is no proven record of Shakespeare's life from the year 1585 to 1592. It is believed that during this time he found his way to London where he performed various menial chores including holding horses at the stage door. Shakespeare's name next appears as that of a rising actor in the tumultuous literary and theatrical scene of Elizabethan London. The 1592 reference to Shakespeare in Robert Greene's *A Groatswoth of Wit* as "an upstart crow...in his own conceit the only Shakescene in the country" points to the growing status of the dramatist who had become important enough to rile his colleagues, and inspire acrimonious criticism.

Shakespeare's name which is officially entered in 1595 in the payroll of the Lord Chamberlain's company of actors testifies to his active participation in it where he was the principal actor and manager. With the accession of King James to the English throne and his subsequent award of a royal patent to this company its name was changed to the Kings' Men. In 1599 some of the members of the company built

their own theatre on the south bank of the Thames which they called the Globe theatre. Shakespeare was closely associated with the Globe theatre of which he was part owner.

Shakespeare was the literary genius who, according to John Dryden, "of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul". Not unexpectedly he left behind him a prolific canon comprising comedies, tragedies, history plays of the English Tudor dynasties as well as of the Roman traditions, the so-called 'problem plays' and the last plays with their typical blend of light and shade making it difficult to classify them in a particular genre. Shakespeare wrote 38 plays in all, 154 sonnets, and three narrative poems, 'A Lover's Complaint', 'Venus and Adonis' and 'The Rape of Lucrece'.

The great tragedies *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth* and *King Lear* represent the very peak of Shakespeare's achievement in the sphere of tragedy. Displaying a subtle insight in the workings of the human psyche, and expressing a range of emotions through characters powerfully wrought these plays articulate the most profound philosophy in sublime phraseology.

Shakespeare, for the most part, divided his time between Stratford and London. In London he changed addresses a number of times moving from Bishopsgate to Southwark and thence to an area north of St. Paul's Cathedral. Around 1597 he bought a large house –New Place- in Stratford. Shakespeare retired to Stratford in 1610 and it is likely that he wrote his last plays there. However, he continued to visit London from time to time. His connection with his company of actors suffered somewhat when the Globe theatre was burned down in a fire in 1613. Shakespeare died on 23rd April 1616 and was buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church two days after his death.

5.21.2 The Date and Text of The Play The Date

The manuscripts of all the plays by Shakespeare have perished and he himself did not print any of his plays. The quarto editions of sixteen of his plays were not authoritative texts. The thirty-six plays in the First Folio edition of 1623 have been generally accepted as Shakespeare's plays. Given the circumstances it is difficult to pinpoint a specific date for the composition of the play *Macbeth*. The extant text is poorly preserved and bears evidence of several revisions. Most critics, however, agree that the play was written between 1603 and 1606. There is a general reluctance to place it earlier as it is widely perceived to be a royal compliment to the Stuart James who ascended the English throne in 1603.

The predominance of Banquo in the plot of the play (an ancestor of King James), the show of eight kings supposedly the descendants of Banquo afforded to Macbeth in a vision by the witches among other such details have been strong arguments for locating the play within the mentioned span. Though some editors have sought to assign a more specific date to the play, such as 1605-1606 mainly because of the references to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and the subsequent trials their theory has not been able to win wide acceptance.

Based on Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* of 1577 (the revised edition of 1587-88 being the version that the dramatist probably consulted) William Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* was first published under the title *The Tragedie of Macbeth* in the First Folio of 1623. It was registered in the books of the Stationers' Company on the 8th of November 1623, by Blount and Jaggard, the publishers of the folio, as one of the plays "not formerly entered to other men".

Certain references in the play suggest that either the play was written after 1603 or that those portions or lines were incorporated later. The allusions to the king's Evil (iv: iii) and to the two-fold balls and sceptres of Banquo's descendants (v: i) whether as flattering images of the new monarch or as simply topical references must surely have been written after James I's accession to the English throne. In the same way the allusions to equivocation in ii:iii and to the hanging of the traitors in iv:ii must have been inspired by the controversies generated by the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. These lines were probably written after the trial and hanging of father Henry Garnet, Superior of the Order of the Jesuits for his role in the Gunpowder Plot. He was tried on 28th March 1606 and hanged in May the same year. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that these references were incorporated in the latter half of 1606. However, there appears to be a clear consensus that the play could not have been composed later than 1607 as there are unambiguous allusions to it from 1607 onwards.

The two performances of the play, one in 1606 and the other at the Globe Theatre in 1611 were both different from the published text of 1623 which contains passages which could not have existed in the prompt books for the early performances. J.G. McManaway contends that the play was performed on 7 August 1611 at Hampton Court for King Christian of Denmark and James I of England. The performance of the play in 1611 in the Globe Theatre is the first one of which there is written record one Simon Forman having witnessed the same and written of it in his manuscript The Bocke of Plaies and Notes thereof per Formans for Common Pollicie.

5.21.3 Sources

It appears that Shakespeare drew on two main sources for his play *Macbeth*. The most extensive debt is to Raphael Holinshed whose *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* of 1577 (revised in 1587) was an important source for Shakespeare. Also useful for the playwright's purpose was George Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* which traces the history of Scotland from the time of the mythical Fergus.

Shakespeare's free handling of the historical materials in Holinshed's *Chronicles* in composing *Macbeth* provides an idea not only of the forces at work around and upon him at the time but also the cultural and aesthetic concerns that must have governed the selection, compaction and modification of his source materials. Shakespeare's two main sources in Holinshed are the murder of King Duff by Donwald and his wife in 967 AD and Macbeth's usurpation of the Scottish throne by murdering King Duncan around 1040AD. Not only are the two events separated by seventy years each covers a number of years. The two chronologically distant episodes, with their respective complication of action have been merged into a single intense and swift event by the dramatist, and the protagonists of the two separate developments have been given the composite character of the person we know as Shakespeare's Macbeth.

In Holinshed King Duff is an ailing insomniac who sends his trusted servant Donwald on a search for the cause of his malady. A number of rebels, several among them being the kinsmen of Donwald had been conspiring against King Duff even to the extent of seeking supernatural help and indulging in practices such as having his effigy burnt. Upon destruction of this waxen image King Duff regains his health and celebrates his return to the same by making a spectacle of the hanged rebels. However, Donwald whose pleas for clemency for his relatives in the treasonous plot had gone unheeded by Duff began to go against the king and, incited by his wife to take the life of the king had his servants murder him and remove his body when the latter came to stay at his castle.

Jonathan Goldberg in his essay 'Speculations: Macbeth and Source' observes, "Both Duff and Donwald are versions of Macbeth". Such dispersal of identity is accentuated if you consider that King Kenneth who succeeded King Duff by killing the latter's heir to the throne suffered from a troubled conscience and sleeplessness and was prone to hearing 'voices', calling up inevitable comparisons with Macbeth who had murdered sleep. Further, like Macbeth, Kenneth is prophetically informed that his nominated heir will not succeed to the throne. Thus, Shakespeare's Macbeth

who is already a complication of two distinct persons/personae – namely, King Duff and the historical Macbeth – acquires further shades in his identity in the glancing similarities with Donwald and King Kenneth.

In the historical account you will find that Macbeth was personally afraid of Banquo's moral stature despite the latter's complicity in the murder of Duncan just as he sensed a challenge to his authority in Macduff whom he consequently began to hound. In Holinshed's ***Chronicles*** Macbeth has a genuine grievance against Duncan in that he had been overlooked by the king who named his eldest son as his heir and successor when in point of fact he, Macbeth had been nominated monarch by the thanes. Also, Macbeth could apparently lay claim to the throne through his wife and her son by an earlier marriage. Moreover, both Duncan and Macbeth were the grandsons of Malcolm II, the former being the son of his daughter Beatrice and the latter being the son of his other daughter Doada both of whom had married into the Scottish nobility. Thus, Duncan and Macbeth were, in effect, cousins. The familial relationship is invoked early in the play when Duncan refers to Macbeth as "Valiant cousin" (I ii) and "peerless kinsman" (I iv).

Holinshed's Macbeth invites Banquo and his son Fleance to a dinner having instructed hired assassins to kill them as they returned to their lodgings. Not only was the order of events inverted in Shakespeare's play, the scale of the social gathering was much larger, it being a well attended banquet. In the ***Chronicles*** Macbeth murdered Banquo after a considerable lapse of time since his murder of Duncan. With the contraction of time, in Shakespeare's play, and the subsequent omission of any references to Macbeth's long rule as an efficient king, the stability and authority of the ruler are suspect and the vulnerabilities of the king and queen in the banquet scene are only too evident. The appearance of the ghost of Banquo in the banquet scene was Shakespeare's invention.

Shakespeare's play conforms to its main source in a number of ways. In Holinshed the king was a sacred guest at Donwald's castle whom he had lately showered with gifts. Thus, in both texts one sees the triple transgression of the code of honour when Donwald/Macbeth turns upon his fellow human being, his hallowed guest and revered king. Just as Donwald had killed King Duff at the instance of his ambitious wife ("being the more kindled in wrath by the words of his wife") so also Macbeth had been goaded to commit the evil deed by his wife, "chastised" as he had been by "the valour of her tongue". However, while in Holinshed's narrative the murder of the

king is carried out by Donwald's servants in Shakespeare's play it is the host and subject himself who steels himself to commit the act.

What was recorded as an open conspiracy in Holinshed is transformed by Shakespeare into a secret regicide. Significantly while Banquo was an accomplice in the historical record in Shakespeare's play he has been absolved of any explicit role in the murder. Understandably in a play that has been largely seen as a royal compliment Shakespeare could not have risked an unfavourable depiction of Banquo who was an ancestor of James I. Shakespeare has significantly altered the character of Duncan from that of a young and weak ruler to that of an old and saintly one thereby compounding the onus of guilt on Macbeth, and making the regicide (at any time most heinous) seem all the more unjustified and sacrilegious.

The sleep-walking scene, so moving in its emotional effects, is Shakespeare's invention. The reference to Lady Macbeth's presumed suicide belongs to the same category as there is no mention of the fate of either Donwald or Macbeth's wife in the *Chronicles*. In Holinshed Lady Macbeth is mentioned only once as the dominating wife who abets her husband to murder the king that she may become queen. Thereafter there is no mention of her.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* betrays signs of indebtedness in the situation and development of its title character to Richard III as the protagonists of both plays commit heinous crimes to usurp and retain their thrones. It is not surprising that both these plays are regarded as the most Senecan of all the plays by Shakespeare. It is fairly clear that Shakespeare had read *Tenne Tragedies* that had been translated by Heywood and others and had been influenced by some of the actions, themes and speeches in that work. The escalating violence and bloodshed in *Macbeth* bear testimony to the characteristic traits of the Senecan tradition. Lady Macbeth particularly has echoes of Clytemnestra and Medea. In the scene in which she invokes the evil spirits to attend upon her, and again when she cries out with apparent nonchalance that she could dash out the brains of her infant one sees in her the unmistakable imprint of Seneca's Medea.

The constant subversion of the moral and political order and its reflection in the cosmic and natural worlds shown in the play link it to the medieval tradition with its belief in the divine right of kings. While some critics have tended to establish *Macbeth's* affinities with the mystery play and 'the harrowing of hell' through the Porter's speeches others, notably Howard Felperin locate its kinship with the 'tyrant plays' within the medieval liturgical drama.

5.21.4. The Play

Macbeth is the last of Shakespeare's four great tragedies the others being *Hamlet, King Lear* and *Othello*. Often assessed as one of Shakespeare's darkest plays, *Macbeth* explores the pathology of evil tracing the consequences of unbridled political and worldly ambition on the part of its protagonist. The degeneration of the eponymous protagonist from "Bellona's bridegroom" to "dead butcher" is one of the most powerful trajectories of moral decline in all Shakespeare allowing no scope whatsoever for deceleration of the fall. Nor is there any hope of redemption for the protagonist who changes radically and violently in the course of the developing action. Whereas the other great heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies have had their humanity, to some extent reclaimed and reaffirmed by characters dwelling on some aspect of their nobility or the other, in Macbeth's case the stark epitaph delivered by Malcolm, "This dead butcher and his Fiend-like queen" sums up the intensity of moral negation that the former had come to represent and inspire in the turbulent terrain of medieval Scotland as also the absolute rejection that is meted out to him.

Yet, it is also true that countering the forces of evil in the play are the positive energies that are repeatedly emphasized in the interest of a moral balance without which it would have been difficult to preserve the integrity of Shakespeare's larger political, social and moral vision. The "saintly" Duncan whose absolute trust in his subject, kinsman and host was so brutally betrayed; the young heir to the throne Malcolm possessed of the ideal virtues of a king who eventually returns to his realm to claim his birthright; the morally upright Banquo who refused to succumb to temptation; the brave and honest Macduff who served the nation with the utmost fidelity (to the point of sacrificing his family); and the stripling Siward who went down fighting for his country are without exception examples of goodness and valour that consistently try to resist the evil epitomized and unleashed by Macbeth instigated by his wife and the three Weird Sisters. Thus, though the play is titled after the protagonist, as learners, you will have to carefully study the other characters too in course of your perusal of the text of *Macbeth*.

As has been pointed out by Kenneth Muir in his Introduction to the Arden edition of *Macbeth*, nowhere is the good more evident than in the primary natures of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth who have both consciously and unconsciously suppressed it and have deliberately opted for its opposite only to fall prey to the fears and pangs of conscience that frequently attend the perpetration of evil. The following lines will give you a brief outline of the plot of the play – that is to say, the linear progression of the tragedy.

The story as it unfolds shows Macbeth and Banquo, generals in King Duncan's army returning from the battlefront after subduing a rebellion when they are confronted by three ambivalent figures roughly identifiable as witches. Their greeting of Macbeth as the Thane of Cawdor (which he is not at present) and Macbeth's subsequent discovery that the title had indeed been conferred on him set in motion a train of events that leads Macbeth to murder his king Duncan, usurp the throne, and lead the realm of Scotland on a series of misfortunes. All the while, notice how the mayhem in Scotland finds a parallel to the degenerating fortunes of Macbeth. While reading the text you should also be able to mark a contrast between Macbeth and Banquo, both of whom the witches addressed simultaneously. Logically, while both should have been driven by the same ambition for supreme power; Banquo (as long as Macbeth allows him to stay alive) follows a course that is distinctly different from Macbeth's.

Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain flee the country, the former to England and the latter to Ireland in order to escape an attempt on their lives. Though this first crime is committed by Macbeth after an anguished struggle with his conscience, the ones which follow are perpetrated by him without any apparent evidence of scruples on his part. Spurred on by ambition and haunted by mounting insecurity he becomes a tyrant reducing Scotland to a realm echoing with injustice and horror.

Obsessed with retaining the crown for himself and his descendants, Macbeth hires assassins to murder Banquo and his son Fleance. Fleance manages to escape while Banquo is killed by the murderers. In conspiring thus Macbeth indeed stoops very low and betrays the rapid pace of his moral degeneration. He who had once been described by his wife as being "too full of the milk of human kindness/To catch the nearest way", succumbs to temptation and ambition, and is sucked into a spiraling movement of violence and murder of which he in a sense, is both author and victim.

Macbeth's conscience, so long suppressed by him, surfaces in the Banquet Scene which immediately follows the murder of Banquo and he imagines he sees the latter's ghost. He becomes progressively more disturbed every time he hallucinates this spectral figure and loses all control over himself thereby laying himself open to suspicion. The feast is thrown into disorder and the guests are asked to leave by Lady Macbeth. By the end of this scene the protagonist has degenerated to such an extent as to claim, "For mine own good/All causes shall give way: I am in blood/Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er".

Anxious to wield absolute control over his subjects and also to ensure that the throne is kept within his dynasty or his nominated heirs Macbeth meets the Weird Sisters in an attempt to know the future, and to learn, once and for all the direction of his fate. The equivocating agents of fate play with Macbeth's credulity exploiting his ambitious nature that is so susceptible to temptation. They set him up in hope with false promises while actually prophesying his disaster. When confronted with the vision of the eight kings, the last with a glass in his hand, Banquo following, Macbeth realizes bitterly that he had murdered Duncan in vain and that, if the visionary show is to be believed though Banquo himself could not be crowned king his descendants would be kings.

This show of a line of kings tracing their ancestry to Banquo so unsettles Macbeth that he vows to remove his enemies as soon as he begins to doubt their loyalty. Consequently he announces in Act IV: Sc. ii, "From this moment/The very firstlings of my heart shall be/ The firstlings of my hand", and wastes no time at all in despatching murderers to Macduff's castle in Fife who mercilessly kill Lady Macduff and her children. With this last inhuman violation the tide turns against Macbeth and time begins to run out for the tyrant. Macduff who had gone to England to persuade Malcolm to return to Scotland, to save it from the tyrant receives the devastating news of the murder of his wife and children by Macbeth and, coping with his grief, resolves to return at once to Scotland and militarily confront the "Hell-kite" responsible for such an irreparable loss to him.

Shortly afterwards when in Act V: Sc. v Macbeth is given the news that Lady Macbeth is no more, he merely remarks, "She should have died hereafter:/There would have been a time for such a word" betraying his complete indifference to her who had once been so close to him. Once addressed as "dearest chuck", "dearest partner of my greatness", and "sweet remembrancer" by her husband, Lady Macbeth at the time of her death has ceased to have any meaning at all in Macbeth's life. As Kenneth Muir points out, "Macbeth's first crime is inspired by ambition and carried through by his wife's determination, the remainder, from the murder of the grooms to the slaughter of Macduff's family and the reign of terror of which this is an example are inspired by fear, fear born of guilt". Macbeth's alienation from those around him becomes clear as the forces opposed to his tyranny rally around Malcolm who, reinforced with the soldiers lent by the English king begins to march towards the tyrant's castle at Dunsinane.

In the conflict that ensues Macbeth learns of the witches' equivocation and realizes that he had been betrayed by them thereby losing the remnants of faith and

hope. However, he shows his characteristic martial spirit and mettle when confronted by Macduff and goes down fighting. Macbeth's severed head is carried by Macduff as a trophy calling up comparisons with the head of the traitor Macdonwald that had been triumphantly brandished by Macbeth during the illustrious phase of his career early in the play.

5.21.5 Themes in The Play

Now you will be guided to an overview of critical opinions on *Macbeth* down the years. L, C. Knights speaking of the two main themes in *Macbeth* identifies them in his essay 'How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?' (1933), describing them as the themes of the reversal of values and that of unnatural disorder. The inversion of moral values articulated by the Weird Sisters is adopted by Macbeth who becomes an antithesis of all the features that are associated with an ideal monarch. The scenes of disorder in the play reinforce the twisted moral values that drive its plot.

Alan Sinfield in his 1986 essay '*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals' distinguished between what he calls legitimate state violence and gratuitous evil in the play. The putting down of the traitors by Macbeth in the beginning of the play would qualify, according to Sinfield as legitimate violence sanctioned by political necessities while the later eruptions during the period of ruinous rule under Macbeth would belong to the illegal variety being utterly unjustified by any cause of state or society.

Among other critics on political disorder in *Macbeth*, Barbara Riebling emphasizes the sinister manipulations for power carried out by the protagonist. In her 1991 essay "Virtue's Sacrifice: A Machiavellian Reading of *Macbeth*" she maintains that Shakespeare studies in the mentioned play the consequences of misrule in a Machiavellian context.

Several critics including Janet Adelman and Jarold Ramsey have seen gender roles as one of the organizing themes of *Macbeth*. Ramsey in his essay 'The Perversion of Manliness in Macbeth' argues that the more Macbeth pursues his ideal of manliness the less humane he becomes till at length he completely surrenders his humanity to realize that his very notion of manhood had been a flawed one. According to Ramsey as the play develops Macbeth's "moral degeneration is dramatized as a perversion of a code of manly virtue so that by the end he seems to have forfeited nearly all of his claims on the race itself".

Janet Adelman, a psychoanalytical feminist critic in her essay "'Born of woman': Fantasies of Maternal Power in Macbeth" (1985) shows how maternal power in its most potent and destructive form is projected in the play through the figures of Lady Macbeth and the three witches as they manipulate the protagonist and plant the seeds of ambition in his mind.

Jane A. Bernstein in her 2002 essay "'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered': Lady Macbeth, Sleep-walking and the Demonic in Verdi's Scottish Opera" adds to this line of thinking when she asserts that *Macbeth* "is loaded with sexual ambiguity: the bearded sisters, a murdered king as 'passive female victim' which among other such instances lead to border-crossings that constantly challenge traditional notions on gender". William T. Liston in his 1989 essay "'Male and Female He Created Them': Sex and Gender in *Macbeth*" emphasizes the presence of a gendered space in *Macbeth* arguing for the preservation of traditional ordering believing that any deviation from it by men and women leads to the loss of their humanity.

H.R. Coursen who in his 1985 essay adopts a Jungian approach to assess the relationship between Macbeth and his wife is close to the theory of one partner complementing and completing the other. He finds in their mutual interchange of qualities normally attributed to the opposite sex a phenomenon that actually fulfils the gaps in their essential selves. It is Lady Macbeth who in II;ii had confidently proclaimed after the murder of Duncan, "A little water clears us of this deed". Ironically in the sleep-walking scene she is shown to be rubbing her hands in a compulsive and symbolic gesture to rid her soul of the stain of murder that has mentally unhinged her. "Out damned spot! out I say!" she cries out in her anguish. She who had allied herself with the powers of darkness needs to have light continually by her as she cannot bear to remain in darkness for any length of time.

It is Macbeth who has the hallucination of the dagger and, as Freud had pointed out it is Lady Macbeth who falls prey to mental illness. In II: ii after the murder of Duncan Macbeth had rued, "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand?" and in V: I it is Lady Macbeth who laments, "Here's the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand". The pangs of conscience having been inordinately active in Macbeth following his murder of Duncan he had cried out in II: ii, "Glamis hath murther'd Sleep, and therefore Cawdor/Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more". And yet it is not he but Lady Macbeth who has forfeited sleep. In V: I she rises from her sleep, and talking in her sleep betrays her guilt.

5.21.6 Structure and Style

A tragedy in five Acts, *Macbeth* is the shortest among the tragedies by Shakespeare. Most editors agree that the text of the play has suffered numerous cuts, additions and alterations. It appears to have emerged from the prompt book or a version of it prepared for the printers.

You will notice that the pace of the action has been varied as long scenes are interspersed with short ones, intense scenes by lighter ones, and scenes of action with those of reflection. Also, the time-frame of the historical action has been condensed where considered necessary by Shakespeare.

In a telescoping of time the three invasions of Scotland mentioned in Holinshed, namely that by Macdowald and his "kerns and gallowglasses", by Sueno and his Norwegians, and by Canute's Danes in revenge for Sueno's defeat are combined by Shakespeare into one important battle in Act 1: Sc. i of the play.

In much the same way the decade of beneficent rule by Macbeth between the murder of Duncan and that of Banquo is scarcely alluded to by Shakespeare while his seven years of tyrannical excess are highlighted and communicated through a few brief and volatile scenes. This lack of shading in the delineation of Macbeth's character detracts from the psychological credibility of the same in Shakespeare's play.

The unfinished, sometimes abrupt sequence of scenes and the general structure of the play owe their unusual brevity and sharp transitions to numerous cuts, excisions, and truncations to the rough and ready exigencies of a prompt book for a particular performance. Thematic and plot compulsions, too, have contributed to the conspicuous brevity of the text. The fast pace of the action along with the lack of development of any but the main character have succeeded in highlighting the rise and fall of the protagonist that is as accelerated as it is stripped of all but the essentials.

Clusters of images, as shown by Caroline Spurgeon, enforce a sense of pattern in the rhetorical ordering of the play. While images of unnatural disorder form one group, clothing imagery constitutes another. Images pertaining to darkness, hell and blood form other recognizable categories. In II: iv after the murder of Duncan you hear of a falcon that had been attacked and killed by a mousing owl and how Duncan's horses had run wild in a fit of frenzy. Macbeth's clothes by the end of the play "hang loose about him like a giant's robe/Upon a dwarfish thief". He is the tyrant who is obeyed out of fear not love as is explained by Angus, "Those he

commands move only in command./Nothing in love". He is the "Hell-kite" and 'Hell-hound" mentioned bitterly by Macduff.

Bradley notes the blackness that broods over the tragedy with almost all the most memorable scenes being played out against such a background. The murders of Duncan and Banquo and the sleep-walking scene of Lady Macbeth are night scenes. Macbeth's encounters with the witches take place in storm-tossed or cavernous surroundings. It presents an atmosphere where "night's black agents to their prey do rouse". Macbeth calls out to the stars to hide their fire that his "black desires" may not be revealed. He embraces "seeling Night" that scarfs up "the tender eye of pitiful day", and Lady Macbeth invokes thick night to come palled in the "dunnest smoke of hell". The witches are addressed by Macbeth as "secret, black and midnight hags" evoking their associations with evil.

This blackness is periodically coloured by a vivid spillage of blood caused by the numerous acts of violence in the play. The murdered Duncan whose silver skin was laced with golden blood, the "blood-boltered Banquo" with "twenty trenched gashes on his head", Scotland which bled under the heels of a tyrant and Macbeth whose guilty hands would as he believed turn "the multitudinous seas incarnadine" are but examples of violence that ironically relieve the darkness with shades that serve only to aggravate it.

5.21.7 Characters

This sub-section will briefly discuss the salient points on which the major characters of the play might be discussed.

➢ **The Character of Macbeth:**

In point of character you will find that Macbeth shares similarities with Shakespeare's Antony and Richard III. Antony in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and Macbeth in the eponymous play seek to redefine the range of their powers pursuing a throne that will yield them prerogatives hitherto not enjoyed by them. Macbeth is linked to Richard III in their shared trait of evil. However, while Richard is from the beginning totally committed to the execution of his sinful purposes Macbeth when he is introduced to us appears a model figure, one who is brave and competent in battle and of whom everyone speaks well. It is his transformation from good to evil, or should one say, the intensification in his nature of what was merely a hint of evil which excites interest in his decline.

Complexities notwithstanding earlier critics such as A.C. Bradley, Lascelles Abercrombie and G. Wilson Knight took unambiguous views regarding the character of the protagonist. While Bradley tended to see Macbeth as the epitome of evil Abercrombie and Knight praised the zest and fearlessness of the general turned king who retrieved his warrior's spirit at the end of his life. L.C. Knights, however, objected to such conclusions claiming that "the critics have not only sentimentalized Macbeth – ignoring the completeness with which Shakespeare shows his final identification with evil – but they have slurred the passages in which the positive good is presented by means of religious symbols".

Macbeth does not achieve a moral recovery at the end of the play though there are traces of his earlier valour as he confronts his enemies head on. Robert B. Heilman in his 1966 essay 'The Criminal as Tragic Hero: Dramatic Methods' exonerates Macbeth from unredeemed villainy recognizing in him a capacity for feeling and imagination that according to him should appeal to our pity and understanding. At the same time Heilman is aware that Macbeth falls short of the requirements of the tragic hero maintaining. "we expect the tragic protagonist to be an expanding character, one who grows in awareness and spiritual largeness; yet Macbeth is to all intents a contracting character who seems to discard large areas of consciousness as he goes, to shrink from a multi-lateral to a unilateral being…" It is Irving Ribner's view in his book *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* that the tragedy *Macbeth* is not resolved through the fallen hero's redemption but through the restoration of the forces of good that had been kept at bay for so long.

➢ The Character of Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth is a character who continues to inspire controversial readings amongst critics. As a rule she is criticized for her role in instigating her husband to murder their king and kinsman Duncan who at the time of the murder was also her guest at the castle in Inverness. At first in the marital partnership she is the strong and vocal one chastising Macbeth with "the valour of her tongue" and goading him to overcome his scruples. Educating her husband in the arts of deception she urges him in I.v: "To beguile the time,/Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,/Your hand, your tongue: look like th' innocent flower,/But be the serpent under't'. Later when Macbeth declares in I.vii, "We will proceed no further in this business" she upbraids him roundly asking him, "Art thou afeard/To be the same in thy act and valour,/As thou art in desire?"

Lady Macbeth stresses the word 'man' linking it to humanity and ironically underscoring, in the process, the deficiencies of mere 'manliness'. In her conversation

with Macbeth in I:vii she equates manliness with killing. When Macbeth protests, "I dare do all that may become a man;/Who dares do more is none", Lady Macbeth retorts, "When you durst do it, then you were a man;/And to be more than what you were, you would/Be so much more the man". So determined is she in this scene before the murder of their royal guest that Macbeth is forced to concede that her "undaunted mettle" should "bring forth men children only".

When Macbeth hallucinates the dead Banquo in III:iv believing that he is confronted by the latter's ghost Lady Macbeth admonishes him by asking him, "Are you a man?" and later when he persists in his illusion she deplores his lack of composure by exclaiming, "What! quite unmanned in folly?" Marilyn French in her essay "'Macbeth' and Masculine Values" believes that in Shakespeare's eyes, if "Macbeth has violated moral law; Lady Macbeth has violated natural law". She goes on to note that Lady Macbeth "fails to uphold the feminine principle. For her, as for Goneril, this failure plunges her more deeply into a pit of evil than any man can ever fall".

Even more unsettling perhaps is Lady Macbeth's invocation to the spirits "that tend on mortal thoughts" to "unsex" her and fill her "from the crown to the toe top-full/ Of direst cruelty!" She cries to the same spirits, "Make thick my blood/Stop up th' access and passage to remorse;/That no compunctious visitings of Nature/Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between/Th' effect and it!" She is indeed frightening when she calls out to the "murth'ring ministers" to come to her woman's breasts, and "take her milk for gall". Janet Adelman in her essay 'Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in *Macbeth*' finds Lady Macbeth to be a witch-like figure whose "unsexing' primarily functions as an "unnatural abrogation of her maternal function". Adelman makes it clear that "latent within this image of unsexing is the horror of the maternal function itself". Through the image of 'perverse nursing' Shakespeare unites Lady Macbeth and the witches in an unholy combination expressing male castration fears.

In II: Act II Scene II when Macbeth is thoroughly distraught after murdering Duncan Lady Macbeth again saves the situation with her presence of mind exhorting her husband, "Go get some water,/And wash this filthy witness from your hand". She further instructs Macbeth to smear the daggers of the sleeping grooms with blood that suspicion related to the crime may fall on them. When Macbeth falls short of the deed she once again takes control of the situation by declaring that she would herself go into the slain Duncan's chamber and do the needful. "If he do bleed", she resolves, "I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal, /For it must seem their guilt." In much the same vein she upbraids her husband a little later when she tells him, "My hands are of your colour; but I shame/To wear a heart so white".

It is till the murder of Banquo that Macbeth is still close to his wife. After this murder, as Macbeth becomes more and more desperate for his security, and ruthless in his methods to achieve the same, the couple drifts apart. Macbeth ceases to confide anymore in his wife. The closeness that had once existed between them manifests itself in a bizarre reversal of belief and destiny. Sigmund Freud in his essay 'Some Character-Types met with in Psychoanalytic Work' mentions Ludwig Jekels' theory that Shakespeare often split a character into two personages which taken separately are not always understandable and become so only when they are conceived as a unity. Applying this theory to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth he observes, "In that case it would of course be pointless to regard her as an independent character and seek to discover the motives for her change, without considering Macbeth who completes her".

➢ The Character of Banquo

As the story runs, Banquo and Macbeth, both victorious generals under King Duncan, are returning from the battlefield. They encounter the witches together for the first time; Macbeth's royal ambitions are fuelled by their prophecies while Banquo is told that his progeny will be kings. Thereafter, Banquo's responses are staid – he even advises Macbeth not to attach much importance to such equivocatory figures, and thereby sets in motion one of the main themes of the play. The character does not have much stage time in the play, since his existence for a longer time means keeping alive a person who could directly place suspicions of the king's murder on Macbeth. But even within this short span, his character offers an interesting foil to Macbeth.

➢ The Character of Macduff

Another of Duncan's trusted generals, Macduff's great unrest at the usurpation of royal power at the hands of Macbeth impels him to leave Scotland and garner forces with Malcolm, Duncan's son, in England with the purpose of waging war against Scotland which is reeling with penury under the tyrant. He has however left behind his wife and children who are butchered by the king's men and this perhaps becomes the final spur that triggers Macduff to action against Macbeth. If we consider *Macbeth* as a play with deep political insinuations, then the lengthy interaction between Malcolm and Macduff on English soil is very interesting. We find each trying to gauge the other's readiness to action, because there is an inherent paradox involved in it – avenging Macbeth will also mean attacking their own homeland. In the short and quick battle scenes that follow towards the end of the play, the one between

Macbeth and Macduff is the most interesting. An encounter between two brave warriors, one with the agenda of restoring order and the other, a fallen hero, becomes the high point of the play. Macduff virtually becomes a mirror against which to judge the travesty of the erstwhile hero, Macbeth. The Thane of Glamis who fought loyal battles is not the Macbeth we see now. There are only some traces of his earlier glory, which however peter out the moment he gets to know that Macduff was not 'born' but 'ripp'd untimely' from his mother's womb. The fortuitous prophecy made by the apparition regarding the killer of Macbeth (that gave him a false sense of invincibility) is thus shattered. The inevitable happens and as Macduff returns on stage with the slit head of Macbeth and proclaims: 'Scotland is free', the play comes full circle. Through the character of Macduff thus, not only does the equivocatory nature of the play get revealed taking Macbeth to his final fall, the complex range of issues that Shakespeare takes up are also brought out through him.

5.21.8 SELECT APPROACHES:

i) The Porter Scene in *Macbeth*

The Porter's grim fantasy of Hell Gate symbolically reflects the actual situation in the play. Just after the murder of Duncan the castle of Inverness is indeed hell because Lady Macbeth as the evil priestess has invoked the "murth'ring ministers" to take her milk for gall while Macbeth has cried out to the stars to "hide their fires" before inviting damnation living, as he does in a Dantesque inferno. Moreover, if we regard hell as a state of mind as is seen in Marlowe's play *Dr. Faustus*, then the distinction between inner and outer landscape disappears, and "where we are in hell/ And where hell is there we must ever be".

The figures introduced in the Porter Scene are in some way or the other linked to the developments of the plot at this juncture. The sin of the avaricious farmer who is the first to gain admittance into "hell" consists of hoarding grains to sell the same at a higher price later. An abundance of crops however foiled his plans and caused his ruin. The image of the "avaricious farmer" contrasts with the images of natural growth that are to be found in the play. Duncan greets Macbeth and Banquo in I iv with the words, "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour/To make thee full of growing", to which Banquo replies, "There if I grow/The harvest is your own", thus linking human relationships to the organic and peaceful processes of growth in nature.

The farmer and Macbeth share one characteristic and that is of greed. Both are hungry for profit, and they manipulate natural processes in order to serve their own ends only to be ruined at the end.

The entry of the equivocator is linked to one of the main themes of the play, i.e. equivocation. Father Garnett, a Jesuit priest who was a prime accused in the Gunpowder Plot was held guilty of equivocation. It is interesting to note that he went under the alias of Farmer. Immediately after the exit of the farmer Macbeth equivocates with ease. Macbeth's equivocation at this point in the play, through a brilliant twist of irony, becomes but an aspect of truth that involuntarily surfaces in his speech. Upon the discovery of the royal murder when all present, in a bemused state of mind, bemoan the death Macbeth says, "Had I but died an hour before this chance/I had lived a blessed time..." Unbeknown to him these words are a precise description of his own predicament

The Porter equivocates when he observes, "I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way, to th' everlasting bonfire" deftly concealing his personal stand on hell and presenting the traditional view of it. In a complex web of pretence the Weird Sisters, Macbeth, and the very language of the play each in their own measure engages in the politics of equivocation. In a sense, Rosse sums it up, when in IV ii he says, "But cruel are the times, when we are traitors,/And do not know ourselves".

The third circumstance mentioned by the Porter is that of "an English tailor stealing out of a French hose". The humour of this observation lies in the fact that since the style of the French hose at the time required it to be very short and straight the tailor indeed had to be a master of his craft in order to be able to steal any cloth from the material intended for such an outfit. The entry of the tailor is significant in terms of the recurrent clothing imagery in the play. The tailor's sin is that he had stolen cloth with the result of having fashioned an ill-fitting garment. Macbeth had stolen the royal title and the prerogatives that went with it and the new honours did not quite cleave to his form. In II iv Macduff says, "Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!" Angus in V ii compares Macbeth's regal title to a robe that is too large for him meaning thereby the moral dimensions that are required to fit kingly vestments were so noticeably lacking in the wearer, namely Macbeth. He says, "Now does he feel his title/Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe/Upon a dwarfish thief".

ii) The Presentation of the 'Witches' in *Macbeth*

The witches in *Macbeth* as New Historicist critic Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out in his seminal work *Shakespeare Bewitched*, have the conventional attributes

found in both Continental and English witch lore, associated with tempests, thunder and lightning. They call to their familiars and conjuring spirits, raise winds and sail in a sieve. They stir their hideous broth in their huge cauldron, and above all, they traffic in "prognostication and prophecy". "What are these", asks Banquo in I iii, "So withered and so wild in their attire/That look not like the inhabitants of the earth/And yet are on it?" The basic identity of the witches is unclear, there is uncertainty over their very origins and their gender is also called into question. Banquo wonders, "...you should be women,/And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/That you are so".

The presentation of the witches in *Macbeth* is ambivalent. On the one hand they appear to have been endowed with powers enabling them to foresee the future which has led some critics to see them as a symbolic extension of fate, or the personification of a psychological dilemma. On the other hand they may be viewed, as Peter Stallybrass has pointed out, from a practical standpoint. In I iii they are shown to kill swine and to be involved in petty vendetta, typical offences in English witch prosecution. They have their familiars, (Graymalkin and Paddock) the common companions of English witches but rarely mentioned, according to Stallybrass in Scottish or Continental prosecutions. They further share the features of an English country witch being old women with a withered look, "choppy fingers" and "skinny lips". It is also clear that the witches' power is limited as they can cause discomfort to the sailor and hint to Macbeth his impending doom but are powerless to alter the actual course of action. At best they can ensure that "Though his bark cannot be lost/Yet it can be tempest tost" thereby supplying proof of their perverse and evil intentions.

Feminist criticism of the play encourages you to see the witches as androgynous, equivocal and mysterious, who strike at the stable social, sexual and linguistic forms which the society of the play needs in order to survive. They believe that the witches and Lady Macbeth conspired to persuade Macbeth to overthrow patriarchal authority which led to the 'womanish' killing of the saintly Duncan representing family and state.

iii) **The Banquet Scene**: The Banquet Scene in III iv presents a masterly mingling of elements through which are shown the development of the plot, a crucial phase in the moral degeneration of Macbeth, and the dissipation of order into chaos which becomes increasingly prominent in the play. Macbeth, who has ordered the killing of Banquo and his son Fleance can scarcely maintain his composure during this scene. Inaugurating the feast after being prompted by Lady Macbeth he meets the murderers and learns from them that while Banquo has been killed Fleance has escaped. The

news upsets him greatly but what unsettles him completely is his hallucination of Banquo's ghost.

A figment of his tormented imagination and guilty conscience, the ghost of Banquo appears to Macbeth to be sitting in his place. He turns to the assembled nobles and asks them, "Which of you have done this?" Lady Macbeth saves him by attributing an invented illness to him, an untruth that Macbeth too resorts to a little later in order to save the situation. He barely regains his composure and begins the feast than the ghost reappears bringing on the fit once more in Macbeth.

The elements of irony, hypocrisy, prophecy and usurpation surface in this brief but powerful scene. The conversation between husband and wife, strewn with references to the word 'man' directs attention to the notions of 'manhood', 'manliness' and 'humanity'. This scene is important for its contribution to the development of the action. It exposes Macbeth to the nobles two of whom in the very next scene voice their suspicions about Macbeth maintaining that "this tyrant" has usurped the throne of Scotland. It also shows the moral degeneration wrought in Macbeth, and the depths to which he can descend in his pursuit of power.

5.21.9 Summing Up

Having considered the varied aspects of the play you must have by now gained an understanding of its historical context, Shakespeare's modifications of the same for artistic purposes, some of the major characters and the sequence of action which constitutes the plot. Some of the important scenes, too, have been discussed for your benefit as has been the stylistic elements which are expected to guide you in your understanding of the play.

5.21.10 Comprehension Exercises

Essay Types:

1. Would you consider Macbeth to be a villain or a hero? Give reasons in support of your view.
2. Write a critical essay on the Sleep-Walking Scene in *Macbeth*.
3. Examine the role of the witches in *Macbeth*. Do you think that they are the driving force behind Macbeth's crimes?

4. Write a brief essay on the Porter Scene in *Macbeth* justifying its presence in the play.
5. Examine the main themes in the play *Macbeth*.
6. Compare Macbeth's moral and psychological states before and after the murder of Duncan.
7. Critically comment on the Banquet Scene.
8. Discuss the character of Lady Macbeth.

Medium Length Answer Types:

1. Why do most critics place the composition of *Macbeth* between 1603 and 1606?
2. Briefly discuss the Senecan elements in *Macbeth*.
3. Analyze the significance of the English tailor in the Porter Scene.
4. Write a brief note on a gendered reading of the play *Macbeth*.
5. Discuss the aspects in which Shakespeare's *Macbeth* conforms to its main source.

Short Answer Types:

1. Name the two main sources on which Shakespeare drew for his play *Macbeth*.
2. Provide two instances of how Shakespeare has modified history in *Macbeth*.
3. What is Macbeth's reaction on hearing of Lady Macbeth's death? How does it reflect on the changes in their relationship?
4. What are the acts of violence committed by Macbeth?
5. Why do Malcolm and Donalbain flee the country?

5.21.11 Suggested Reading

Macbeth (Primary Text) – The Arden Shakespeare ed. Kenneth Muir

Shakespearean Tragedy, A.C. Bradley, 1904

The Wheel of Fire, G. Wilson Knight, 1949,

Shakespeare's Imagery, Caroline Spurgeon, 1935

Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence, Kenneth Muir, 1972.

Unit-22 ☐ William Shakespeare: *As You Like It*

Structure

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5.22.10 Suggested Reading

5.22.0 Introduction

As with Tragedy, so with Comedy, the Elizabethan approach in general and the Shakespearean style in particular was quite different from the proposed models of classical drama. In the preceding units you have come across some of the best specimens of post – Renaissance tragedy and seen for yourselves the wide range of issues encompassed. This unit will introduce you to the other kind of drama – Comedy of the period. In course of your study, you will realise how intricate aspects of life, across social hierarchies, can also become the staple of comedy. To pinpoint the specific purpose behind this unit, we are keeping the following areas in mind, as things that are basic to an understanding of the play and the genre:

- To acquaint you with Shakespearean Comedy.
- To give you an idea about the sources of the play *As You Like It,* highlight the evolution of the plot, the themes, structure and style of the play.
- To equip you with the right tools to approach and discuss the various aspects of the text.

- To help you to answer different types of questions.

It is only desirable that on reading this unit after correlating it with the text of the play, you will have many more aspects in your mind!

5.22.1 Shakespearean Comedy

You have already read about the impact of the Renaissance in England and that Shakespeare belongs to the period of the English Renaissance. You have also come across the different literary forms which evolved in that period, including drama. Since we will be studying Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It* I will acquaint you with the dramatic form of Comedy and go on to define and describe Shakespearean Comedy.

Generally speaking Comedy is a dramatic form essentially light and humorous in nature, with a happy or cheerful ending. It may be a play in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstances leading to a happy conclusion. Comedy can be divided into two broad divisions: Satirical Comedy and Romantic Comedy. Classical Comedy, both Greek and Roman, belong to the former category. Its aim is to satirize an individual and his flaws and foibles, or a class of people with a certain ideology. Hence, Jonsonian Comedy or Comedy of Humours of the Jacobean period in England and the Comedy of Manners of the Restoration period can also be called satirical (You have read about these in Module I Unit 3). Latin Comedy, especially the plays of Plautus and Terence – in which certain type characters (the foolish parent, the prodigal son, the parasite, the braggart soldier) are satirized – influenced Renaissance English drama which is obvious when we read a play like Ralph Roister Doister (1553).

The genre of Romantic Comedy evolved in Elizabethan times. The comic plays of Shakespeare's predecessors like Robert Greene belong to this category and are characterized by richness, variety and a sense of abundant gaiety. Such dramas focus on lovers who seek fulfilment in love and find it only after overcoming obstacles to their union. The pursuit of love and happiness usually takes place in a world of fantasy or an idyllic pastoral setting which serves as a symbol of freedom and harmony. Pastoral Comedies/ Romances also belong to this broad category.

Shakespearean Comedy is *sui generis* (a class by itself). It does not belong to any particular class (Satirical or Romantic) and yet imbibes some of the features of both traditions, especially the tradition of Elizabethan Romantic/ Pastoral Comedy. "Although he employs all the devices his forerunners and contemporaries make use

of, the impression one derives from his dramas is fundamentally different from that which is produced by theirs" (S.C. Sengupta, *Shakespearean Comedy*, 1950).

Shakespeare's Comedies can be divided into four groups: the Early Comedies, the Middle Comedies (often known as Mature Comedies), the Dark Comedies and the final plays (they are linked thematically and can be called Comedies). We should concentrate on the Middle or Mature Comedies because *As You Like It* belongs to this group. The main theme of these plays is love and its fulfilment in a real world which presents obstacles both external and internal. It is often contrasted with a parallel quasi-fantasy world where love grows and matures so that it can later adapt itself in a realistic space. This can be seen in *As You Like It* in which the main love relationship germinates in the corrupt world of the court of Duke Frederick, but grows and matures in the forest of Arden. Usually there are several love relationships running parallel to the main relationship. The dramatist posits different kinds of love to show its variety and different perceptions of the lovers involved. Most of Shakespeare's Comedies are concerned with love and desire, overcoming barriers to the fulfilment of these and end in physical and emotional union, usually marriage. Renewal of life through marriage is an underlying theme of these plays.

Shakespearean Comedy is a mixture of many disparate elements which, however, cohere to convey a single impression of harmony and joy. C. L. Barber (in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 1972) associates this spirit of unpolluted joy with the gaiety of 'festivals' celebrated by people in Shakespeare's time. Hence, he feels that *As You Like It* is also a 'festive' Comedy. Shakespeare's Mature Comedies are characterized by a variety of moods and tones which ultimately blend into one another. Characters from different areas of society meet and their attitudes to life are constantly juxtaposed. We find this in *As You Like It* in the dialogues between Touchstone and Jaques, or Rosalind and Celia, or Corin and Touchstone, or Rosalind and Orlando. There is also a unique mingling of humour and poetry in the Comedies and a stylistic balance of the use of verse and prose.

The main characters of Shakespeare's mature comedies are delineated with a fine understanding of human psychology. Characters like Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night* take charge of the development of the plot. They are daring individuals who do not hesitate to admit their own frailty on many occasions. They are aware of the vagaries of fate in a real world and yet fall in love 'at first sight'. The use of disguise in the plays also complicates the plot and allows the central female characters to manifest a diverse range of attitudes and emotions. Such disguises are also related to issues of gender which are constantly highlighted to

convey traditional and non-traditional views. We also find isolated characters like Jaques and Malvolio who remain outside the mainstream of humanity. In most of the plays the professional Fool has a significant role as choric commentator and source of sophisticated humour.

There are many other characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy which have not been mentioned. You must refer to some important reference books (a short bibliography is given towards the end of this unit) to find and understand them.

5.22.2 Date and Text of *As You Like It*

There are basically two ways of knowing the date of the text: internal evidence (records of productions/ performances or publications), and internal evidence (references in the play to contemporary events whose dates are known, the play's style vis-a-vis the evolution of Shakespeare's style).

The date of the play is fixed by the fact that it does not appear in the list Francis Mere gives in *Paladis Tamia* in 1598, and it does appear In the 'Stationer's Register' in August 1600. It has been suggested that *As You Like It* could have been produced after 1598 to rival two Robin Hood plays: *The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* and *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* which were very popular in 1598.

The figure of the satirical Jaques and the discussion of the ethics of satire are suitable to the year 1599. But there are two allusions to events of a later date than 1600: Rosalind's words "...though I say I am a magician" which may refer to a severe statute against witchcraft passed after James I had come to the throne in 1603, and her reference to "pretty oaths that are not dangerous" which may be an allusion to another Act of the early years of James I's reign, restraining the "abuses of players" and forbidding the use of the Holy name of God in stage plays.

5.22.3 Sources

Shakespeare's main source for *As You Like It*, identified by Capell and Farmer in 1767, is a prose romance by Thomas Lodge - *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie*, first published in 1590. An introductory remark in Lodge's text is "If you like it, so", and this may account for Shakespeare's choice of the title. *Rosalynde*, a pastoral romance, is itself based on an earlier poem, 'The Tale of Gamelyn', wrongly attributed to Chaucer. The tale as appropriated by Lodge, provided the intertwined

plots, and suggested all the characters except Touchstone and Jaques in Shakespeare's play.

Two other minor debts have been suggested by some critics. The first is Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, a poetic description of England, but there is no evidence that the poem was written before *As You Like It*. The second suggested source is *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* by Robert Greene, produced around 1592.

5.22.4 A Summary of The Play in Five Acts

➤ **Act I**

As You Like It has a twin plot: two narratives about two brothers (the Duke Senior and his younger brother Frederick; Oliver and his younger brother Orlando) are intertwined. Although the **first Act** starts with the story/ sub-plot of Oliver and Orlando, we have to know the background of the entire play which contains the seeds of the main plot. A Duke has been usurped by his younger brother Frederick. The banished Duke lives like Robin Hood and his merry men in the Forest of Arden which provides the pastoral setting in the play. His daughter, Rosalind, is allowed to live in the Duke's court with the younger Duke's daughter Celia. Similarly, another pair of brothers, the sons of the Elder Duke's friend Sir Roland de Boys, are shown to be in conflict because Oliver, the elder brother treats Orlando, the younger brother, as a second class citizen and deprives him of the education suitable to his rank.

Act I begins with Orlando and the old servant Adam. He complains about his brother Oliver's attitude towards him and his disregard for the instructions of their father about the upbringing of the younger son. When Oliver approaches them there is a verbal skirmish between the brothers. Orlando is seen as a positive and spirited character. Hence, very rightly he rebels against his brother's treatment, exclaiming, "**Shall I keep your hogs and eat husks with them? What prodigal portion have I spent that I should come to such penury?**". This is a reference to the parable of the prodigal son in the Bible. Adam and Orlando have barely left the stage when Oliver begins plotting to punish his brother for his impudence. Hearing that Orlando is planning to try his strength against Charles, the Duke's prime wrestler, Oliver incites Charles to foil his brother and teach him a lesson.

The following scene (**Scene 2**) takes place in the Duke's court where Rosalind and Celia are seen conversing on topics like the former's depressed state of mind and the latter's love for her. The affection between the two cousins presents a contrast

to the hatred between the two brothers that we have just witnessed in Scene1. Rosalind, whose father has been banished is in low spirits and feels she is compelled to show more 'mirth' than she is capable of. There is a witty exchange between the cousins which clearly shows the importance of the concept of 'Fortune' in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Celia wishes that the "**hussif Fortune**" may distribute her gifts among mortals "**more equally**". Rosalind aptly calls Fortune "**blind**." Then the court jester/ clown Touchstone appears and they engage in a playful war of wits. He contributes to the Folly versus Wisdom motif in the play: "**The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly**." He suggests that it is fools only who attempt to criticize the foolish actions of men (people in high places like Celia's father). There seems to be a precarious balance between foolishness and wisdom. These characters then witness a wrestling match between Orlando and Charles. Orlando wins the match, but after being snubbed by the Duke he receives a chain from Rosalind ("**Wear this for me; one out of suits with fortune**") who shows an interest in him from the moment they meet. Orlando is also struck by Rosalind (her beauty and her manners) and his state of wonder and confusion is suggested in the words, "**What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue**".

In **Scene 3** of this Act the Duke, reluctant to keep Rosalind in the court any more, banishes her, despite Celia's outspoken defiance: "**Pronounce that sentence then on me, my liege. / I cannot live out of her company**". When left alone with Rosalind Celia insists upon following her cousin. They decide to disguise themselves, Rosalind as a boy and Celia as an ordinary girl. Touchstone, the jester also accompanies them.

In the **opening Act** we are introduced to some of the important characters in the play. Their characters as they are revealed to us merely outline their behaviour and attitudes in the **Duke's Court** and its vicinity. In the **second Act** the action moves to the **Forest of Arden** which presents a stark contrast to the setting in **Act I**. This contrast is one of the main themes of the play which is often seen as a conflict between the civilized state and the natural condition of man.

➢ Act II

The **Second Act** begins in the Forest of Arden which, according to Helen Gardner, "is set over against the envious court ruled by a tyrant and a home which is no home because it harbours hatred, not love" (*More Talking of Shakespeare*, 1959). In **Scene 1** the banished Duke is shown living in the heart of nature with his

followers. He goes on to describe the world of nature, not as an ideal state of existence, but a harsh world with extreme climatic changes: "**the icy fang / And churlish chiding of the winter's wind.**" This is where Arden differs from the typical Arcadian pastoral scene often evoked in pastoral romances of the Elizabethan age. This is a real world never free from "**winter and rough weather**". It is characteristic of the Duke that he should transform disadvantages into advantages. In his very first speech in this scene he utters the famous lines, "**Sweet are the uses of adversity, / Which like a toad ugly and venomous, / Wears yet a precious jewel in his head**." These philosophical musings lead to a discussion on the 'melancholy Jaques' who is a significant character in the play both as choric commentator and a type-character – almost "the humorous character ... the man with a dominant passion carried to the point of absurdity" (Agnes Latham, Introduction, Arden edition of As You Like It, 1975). The humour emerging from the First Lord's description of Jaques's reflection on the weeping deer is very much in tune with the spirit of *As You Like it* – a Romantic-pastoral comedy and a 'festive' play (refer to C.L. Barber).

In the next scene (**Scene 2**) Duke Frederick comes to know about the flight of Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone. He is further incensed by reports that they may have joined the young wrestler, Orlando. Here we also see that Oliver is summoned by the Duke.

This is followed by **Scene 3** in which the sub-plot advances as Orlando, warned by Adam not to return home, also proceeds towards the Forest of Arden with the old servant and his meagre savings.

Back in the Forest of Arden in **Scene 4** the three travellers (Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone) totally exhausted, come upon an old shepherd who informs them about a farm for sale. Rosalind and Celia, who are well provided with funds, suddenly decide to purchase it, retaining the old man as their servant at higher wages. We are also introduced to Silvius, the love-sick shepherd who expresses his passion for Phebe, the cold-hearted shepherdess. This is a typical example of the kind of love which is often satirized by Shakespeare. It also presents a contrast to Rosalind's mature love for Orlando.

The focus then shifts back to the Duke and his band of outlaws in **Scene 5**. This scene opens with the famous song by Amiens: "**Under the greenwood tree**". Here we are properly introduced to Jaques. In his typical manner he asserts that he "can suck **melancholy** out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs". After the song is over Jaques responds with his own kind of song: "**If it do come to pass / That any man turn to ass**". Amiens departs to announce to the Duke that a banquet awaits him.

A brief scene (**Scene 6**) follows. We see the weary Adam and Orlando who have walked into the forest. The former, faint from hunger sinks on the wayside, while the latter goes deeper into the forest in search of some food to revive the former.

In **Scene 7** the sub-plot converges with the main plot. At first the Duke and his companions are seen gathered around the venison from the deer they have slain, when Jacques joins them, relating how he has been detained in the forest by a most edifying conversation with a Fool. He has obviously met Touchstone. Suddenly Orlando bursts into the scene with sword drawn and demands food. Surprised, but unperturbed, the Duke generously offers him food. After hearing the young man's story about the plight of Adam, the Duke asks him to fetch his companion, promising that not a morsel shall be eaten until the weary travellers can share the meal. It is when Orlando goes to bring his companion that Jaques delivers the famous "**seven ages of man**" speech. He says that "**all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players**,' and describes the seven ages of man in sentences so graphic that they have become world-renowned quotations. The comparison between the world and a stage in a theatre is a typical Shakespearean metaphor which can be found in many of his plays, both tragedy (*Macbeth*, *King Lear*) and comedy (*The Merchant of Venice*). Orlando returns with Adam and while they eat, Amien sings "**Blow, blow, thou winter wind**". This song once again reminds us that Arden is not an ideal place for the outlaws, and yet it is superior to the court and its corruption. This over, the Duke, who has been studying Orlando's countenance, recognises his strong resemblance to his old friend, Sir Roland de Boys. On learning about his identity he bids him welcome to Arden. Adam is revived and he also joins the rest.

➢ **Act III**

The **First Scene** of **Act III** takes us back to the court of the ruling Duke who angrily orders Oliver to produce his brother alive or dead very quickly or else forfeit his property, which is confiscated in the meantime. When Oliver protests against this decree and declares that he never loved his brother, the duke instead of supporting him, banishes him.

Back in the Forest of Arden in **Scene 2** the theme of love advances further – love has transformed Orlando into a poet, and he hangs verses in praise of Rosalind and carves her name on trees ("**Hang here my verse, in witness of my love**"). After a conversation between Touchstone and the old shepherd Corin regarding the advantages of the court and the countryside Rosalind, in the guise of a youth, enters the scene and reads the poems. While Rosalind as Ganymede and Touchstone argue about the

verses, Celia as Aliena joins them. Rosalind herself is critical of the verses hanging from the trees; she comments: "**O most gentle Jupiter, what tedious homily of love have you wearied your parishioners withal**". When left alone with her cousin Celia tells her that she has met Orlando in the forest. At this stage Jaques and Orlando arrive and the two girls hide themselves to hear them talk. After Jaques leaves Rosalind peers at Orlando from behind the tree, asking the time. When he reproves her for using the expression "**the lazy foot of time**," she saucily describes how time passes for different persons under varying circumstances. She also offers to give good advice to the man who hangs verses from trees because "**he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him**." "Quotidian" means an ague or malarial attack accompanied by continuous shivering. It is obvious that Rosalind considers typical love-sickness as a kind of disease. She represents Shakespeare's view of mature love which is adapted to reality with all its inconsistencies. After conversing on the subject of Orlando's love for the lady who is the inspiration for his verses, Rosalind as Ganymede offers to cure the love-sick youth if he will woo her as if she were Rosalind. Orlando consents to try the plan, before he and Rosalind disappear into the forest depths.

The Clown, Touchstone, strolls into the next scene (**Scene 3**) with a shepherdess, Audrey, whom he is helping to gather her goats. Here we witness another variant of 'love' which seems to be ubiquitous in the Forest of Arden. Touchstone proposes an immediate marriage; but an unaccredited priest, Sir Oliver Martext, refuses to marry them unless someone gives away the bride. At this point Jaques, who has been eavesdropping upon Touchstone's conversation, intervenes and postpones the wedding. Touchstone then leaves with Audrey deciding to be properly married some other day.

The following scene (**Scene 4**) in the forest brings back Rosalind and Celia, the former lamenting that Orlando has not kept his promise to visit them. She also refers to her meeting with her father who fails to recognize her. Their conversation is cut short by the arrival of Corin who takes them to another part of the forest where the young shepherd Silvius is pleading with the disdainful Phebe (**Scene 5**). This presents another kind of love experience – the lovelorn man suffering from the pangs of unrequited love. This is a typical motif in Elizabethan plays and sonnets. After the three have overheard Phebe rejecting Silvius, they enter the action and Rosalind rebukes Phebe in strong terms. Phebe adds to the complexity of the plot by falling in love with Rosalind in the guise of Ganymede. They depart as Phebe decides to write a letter to the young man she desires and asks Silvius to deliver it.

➢ Act IV

The setting of the **Fourth Act** is the Forest of Arden. In the **First Scene** Jaques meets Rosalind and Celia. Rosalind refers to his 'melancholy' which Jaques tries to explain as being of a peculiar sort. He further adds that in his life he has gone through many experiences, and Rosalind wittily retorts that if experience only serves to make him sad, it would be better to have none: "**I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad** ...". While they are arguing Orlando appears and Jaques leaves them in haste. Then we witness the fake courtship which was arranged in **Act III, Scene 2**. Rosalind who pretends to be Ganymede is ironically pretending to be Rosalind. Hence she chides Orlando for his absence and eggs him on to make a proposal. When Orlando declares that he would kill himself Rosalind mockingly comments that "**men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love**!" Being good-natured and charmed by the witty Rosalind (as Ganymede) he consents to a mock-marriage. After that Orlando asserts that he would like to possess Rosalind "**For ever and a day**" and she retorts, "**Say a day without the ever. ... men are April when they woo, December when they wed**". She is obviously critical of the typical attributes and expressions of conventional love. And yet she herself is deeply in love: "**O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love ... My affection hath an unknown bottom like the Bay of Portugal**".

Scene 2 deals with Jaques and the merry followers of the banished Duke. A deer has been killed and this event is being celebrated with a song. Jaques suggests that the hunter who has killed the deer should be presented to the Duke with the deer's horns set upon his head.

In **Scene 3** Rosalind and Celia return to the spot where they are supposed to meet Orlando again, apparently after two hours. Rosalind complains to Celia about Orlando's unpunctuality. Sylvius arrives with Phebe's letter to Ganymede. Rosalind reads it aloud and asks Sylvius to tell Phebe that if she truly loves him/ her she should then love Sylvius. Once he leaves Oliver appears and reports that his brother has asked him to carry a blood-stained handkerchief to the youth whom he calls 'Rosalind' in sport. He goes on to relate to them the incident where Orlando saved him from a serpent and a lioness and was wounded in the fight with the latter. Reconciled with his brother Oliver had followed him to the Duke's cave where Orlando fainted. After that he had asked Oliver to explain his absence to Ganymede and deliver the handkerchief as proof of his condition. Hearing this and losing her consciousness briefly, Rosalind/ Ganymede regains consciousness and pretends that

she has pretended to faint. This episode introduces Oliver to Celia bringing together the different strands of the plot. Oliver and Celia stand out as another love-pair adding to the complex pattern of love experiences in the Forest of Arden.

- **Act V**

The **Fifth** and final **Act** ties all the loose ends together preparing us for the grand finale in the concluding scene. It begins with Touchstone and Audrey (in **Scene 1**) wandering in the forest discussing the marriage that did not take place. Another suitor walks in – he is another clown who stupidly answers Touchstone's questions. After Touchstone lectures this simpleton, Corin enters and asks them to meet Rosalind and Celia.

In **Scene 2** the brothers, Oliver and Orlando, are seen together; the former expresses his love for Celia. The truth of this newborn passion is proved, when he proposes to give up everything and settle down as a shepherd for the sake of his peasant lady-love. When Orlando sees Rosalind/ Ganymede approaching, he asks his brother to go and 'prepare' Celia/ Aliena. Rosalind regrets that Orlando's arm is in a sling and reports what we already know: Oliver and Celia's love for each other. Their approaching marriage makes Orlando complain that the sight of such great happiness intensifies his loneliness: "**But O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes**!" When he also tells Rosalind/ Ganymede that he is not satisfied with the fake relationship between them, the latter assures that she, with the help of magical powers, will bring Rosalind tomorrow so that they are also united in matrimony. At this point another pair of lovers enters the scene: Sylvius and Phebe. After being reproached by Phebe Rosalind as Ganymede manages to prove that Sylvius is deeply enamoured by the shepherdess by making him describe his passion. Phebe exclaims that she feels the same way about Ganymede. Towards the end of the scene Rosalind tells the shepherd that she will help him, adding that should he ever marry a woman it will be Phebe, but exacting in exchange for this conditional promise Phebe's solemn pledge to marry either Ganymede or the shepherd on the morrow.

In the following scene (**Scene 3**) Touchstone and Audrey enter and refer to their imminent marriage. Two pages of the banished Duke also enter and sing to the lovers one of the most popular lyrics in Shakespearean Comedy: "**It was a lover and his lass**".

Act V, **Scene 4** marks the climax of the play. It is also the concluding scene of this pastoral comedy. Here Duke Senior and his companions are present to witness

a quadruple wedding. While the Duke and Orlando, who is also present, discuss the possibility of Rosalind/ Ganymede living up to her/ his promise, Rosalind herself (still in the guise of Ganymede) appears with Silvius and Phebe. Rosalind initially obtains the Duke's promise that he will give his daughter Rosalind to Orlando if she (as Ganymede) brings her in and Phebe's promise to marry Silvius if she refuses to marry Ganymede. She then leaves with Celia so that she can bring the Duke's daughter with the help of magic. While Orlando and the Duke are speaking about Ganymede's resemblance to Rosalind, another pair of lovers – Touchstone and Audrey – enters the scene. There is a lively conversation between Jaques, the Duke and the Clown. But this is interrupted by the appearance of Hymen, the god of marriage with Rosalind and Celia. While father and lover are surprised to see the change in Ganymede, Phebe is compelled to dismiss her illusions and give consent to marry the shepherd, Silvius. Immediately after the four pairs of lovers are united in holy matrimony by Hymen, the god of marriage, Orlando's second brother, Jaques de Boys, appears, saying that he is sent to atone for the wrong the usurping duke has done. He then relates how Duke Frederick had entered the forest to pursue and kill his elder brother; but he met a hermit who changed him totally. The younger Duke has now decided to restore his kingdom to his elder brother and retire into a monastery. Thus the ending of the play establishes the harmony which Shakespearean comedy celebrates and upholds. It also re-affirms the magical quality and reformative powers of the Forest of Arden.

The epilogue of this play is recited by Rosalind. She declares that just as '**good wine needs no bush,**' a '**good play needs no epilogue**,' before 'conjuring' the audience by stating that for the love they bear men the women cannot help liking this play, while for the love they bear the women, the men will do likewise.

5.22.5 Characters

- ✓ **Rosalind (Ganymede)**: As the central character of the play Rosalind (Ganymede) embodies the very spirit of this Romantic/festive comedy. Her lively character "arises from, and continually illuminates the thematic structure of the play" (John Russell Brown, Shakespeare and his Comedies, 1957), especially in her role as someone who mocks at love and also falls deeply in love.

She is the daughter of the banished Duke Senior and cousin to Celia. In the Duke's court she is very reserved and hence, restrained in her response to her

cousin's words, feelings and attitudes. She is also the saucy and practical person who, after being banished by the present Duke, dresses as a young man, Ganymede, and reaches the Forest of Arden accompanied by Celia and Touchstone. From the moment she puts on doublet and hose her vivacity is irrepressible. The free ambience of the forest allows her to express her freedom from all conventional modes of behaviour and manners. She is a free spirit, merry, witty and also down-to-earth. Her constant bantering with Orlando show-cases her wit and good-natured humour (Refer to her comments in **Act IV, Scene 1**). In the Forest of Arden she takes control of the action and characters like Orlando, her father Duke Senior, Silvius and Phebe. Shakespeare puts the "denouement into her capable hands" (Agnes Latham). Although she is in love with Orlando, she does not hesitate to mock conventional love and its romantic excesses. She allows herself to be disguised as a boy who pretends to be a girl, so that Orlando can practice his so-called art of loving and yet is willing to wed the very person she ridicules for writing love lyrics on trees. Rosalind's notion of love is endorsed in this play. It is a love which can withstand the obstacles and problems of reality and still remain intact as a powerful emotion and inextricable bond. "What she will not countenance is an affected and humourless intensity, the besetting fault of Elizabethan love-cults" (Agnes Latham).

- ✓ **Orlando**: Even though he is Rosalind's partner and the so-called 'hero' of the play he seems a mere shadow beside the vivacious Rosalind. He is the youngest son of the banished Duke's friend Sir Rowland de Boys and the brother of the tyrannical Oliver. He is not one of Shakespeare's usual comedy heroes. He lacks wit and presence of mind, prefers wrestling to witty give-and-take. After he falls in love with Rosalind and escapes to the forest he hangs indifferent verses on trees to express his feelings. "He comes from the folk-tale of Gamelyne and not from a polished novella" (Agnes Latham). Initially Orlando's idea of love is highly artificial. Rosalind in the garb of Ganymede helps him to grow into a mature lover.

- ✓ **Celia (Aliena)**: Even though she is the daughter of the selfish younger Duke, she remains, throughout the play, an unselfish, loyal cousin who accompanies Rosalind in her exile in the guise of a simple country girl, Aliena. The two girls balance one another even as they participate in similar activities. She also contributes to the romantic plot of the play by falling in love with Oliver.

- ✓ **Jaques**: He is one of Duke Senior's attendants and he has got a well-deserved reputation for being "melancholy." We might even say that Jaques

enjoys being sad because he purposefully seeks out experiences that are depressing. He also plays a choric role in the play as an observer and commentator. He is the very essence of sophistication – he experiments with everything and finds nothing worthwhile in human life. His sensitive resentment against man's cruelty and injustice even in a semi-magical world like Arden cannot be taken too seriously because that would go against the very spirit of *As You Like It*.

He is best known for his "**Seven Ages of Man**" speech in **Act II, Scene** 7. It has been praised too frequently. "It is an instance of a highly rhetorical structure successfully expressing a truth which would seem too stark for rhetoric" (Agnes Latham). Like Touchstone he is also an incongruous figure in the Forest of Arden. Jaques and Touchstone complement each other. In the eyes of his fellow companions he is bit of a 'fool', more so than Touchstone can ever be.

"His cynicism, which is temperamental, has been aggravated by his experiences" (S.C. Sengupta). He also presents the typical figure of a man suffering from melancholia which is an Elizabethan type figure and would be ridiculed in Shakespeare's time.

✓ **Touchstone**: As the court jester Touchstone is a typical witty clown of the Elizabethan period, and yet he has a more important role in the play because he goes with Rosalind and Celia to the Forest of Arden. There he contributes to the plot and the theme of love by being involved with Audrey. He is also a choric figure inasmuch as he comments on different topics in the play. He has the training of the court 'jester' whose role is to flout the world. But many critics give him importance as a critic in the play (E. Welsford, *The Fool*, 1935). "He tests all that the world takes for gold, especially the gold of the golden world of pastoralism" (J.D. Wilson, Shakespeare's *Happy Comedies*, 1962).

His response to Corin's "How like you this shepherd's life" is an elaborate piece of nonsense, comparable with the sham logic he uses to baffle characters like William. The values of romantic love, which are what the play endorses, are strengthened rather than undermined by the presence of Touchstone.

✓ **Oliver**: As the eldest son of Sir Roland de Boys and Orlando's elder brother he is initially a negative character. His jealousy compels his bother to escape from his home. But in the Forest of Arden he reforms completely and becomes Celia's worthy partner.

- ✓ **Duke Senior**: Rosalind's father, the Duke, lives in exile in the Forest of Arden. He is a wise and amiable person who enjoys the fruits of nature despite nature's adversities. At the end he consents to Orlando and Rosalind's marriage and returns to the court after his brother restores the kingdom to him.
- ✓ **Duke Frederick**: The younger Duke is a usurper, an unpleasant character who dominates over the court and all the people of his dukedom. He even banishes his niece to whom his daughter Celia is attached. At the end he also reforms as he steps into the magical arena of the forest of Arden and comes across a religious man who changes him completely. He gives back his kingdom to his brother.

The others are minor characters like Adam, the faithful servant who accompanies Orlando to the forest, Silvius the love-sick shepherd, Corin the genial but typical shepherd, Phebe the disdainful shepherdess in love with Ganymede, Audrey Touchstone's love interest, etc.

5.22.6 Themes

- **Love:** Being a Romantic Comedy, pastoral romance and a festive comedy *As You Like It* centres round the theme of love in all its variety. In the figures of the principal characters it becomes clear that each in his/her own way is in search of love, and each person's notion of love is different from the other. Here typical Romantic love is purged of its excesses and seems to contribute to the development of the persons pursuing it. This is very clear from the character of Oliver who finds love when he meets Celia and changes his ways.

The central love relationship is that between Rosalind and Orlando. Although they meet and fall in love in the court of Duke Frederick, their love grows and flourishes in the forest of Arden which has a congenial atmosphere for such an experience. Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede serves as a means through which she educates her lover in the proper attitudes to love. All the other love-relationships stand out as variations of different kinds of love. While Silvius and Phebe are the typical lovers of a pastoral romance with all its excesses and stereotyped nuances, the love of Touchstone and Audrey present an opposite extreme by underscoring the physicality of such a relationship. Rosalind and Orlando's love is poised between these two extremes. The Celia and Oliver love relationship has not been developed at all in the play.

Rosalind's understanding of love stands out in this play and it is she who balances the practical and idealistic aspects of love. "Romantic participation in love and humorous detachment from its follies, the two polar attitudes which are balanced against each other in the action as a whole, meet and are reconciled in Rosalind's personality" (C.L. Barber).

- ***Court Life Versus Country Life:*** Much of this play is based on the difference between the two different value systems: that of the country and the city. In the country (Forest of Arden) the value system is characterized by simplicity, honour and truthfulness. By contrast the value system in the city (the Court) is governed by deceit and hypocrisy. The play sets out to expose the destruction of human relationships, which such values can cause, while at the same time highlighting the power of simplicity and loyalty which the country upholds. The Forest of Arden epitomizes freedom. Here love grows and flourishes to full fruition. Here the exiled Duke finds 'winter and rough weather' preferable to the deceit and envy of the court. It may not be wholly idyllic as a place of rest, but it underscores the possibility of happiness in human life which is largely dependent on values which the forest breeds. Its reformative power is evident in the way Duke Frederick is said to be transformed into a holy man when he steps into the forest.
- **Foolishness and Folly:** There is an intricate interplay between foolishness and wisdom in the play. Both Orlando's effusive declarations of love and Jaques's melancholic philosophical ramblings are exposed as forms of foolishness. The so-called Fool Touchstone is one of the wittiest characters in the play. His quick wit and insight into human nature allows him to expose the folly of those around him, even as he participates in clowning and tomfoolery. Despite its critique of human folly, *As You Like It* also acknowledges that foolishness and folly are the very things that make us human.
- **Gender:** Like some of Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies *As You Like It* features a cross-dressing heroine whose disguise enables the playwright to explore the fluidity of gender construction. When Rosalind flees into the woods for safety, she disguises herself as an attractive young boy, "Ganymede". Rosalind's gender-bending game of make-believe is further complicated by the fact that she pretends to be a woman while disguised as a man in order to teach Orlando the meaning of true love, and also by the fact that the actor playing the role of "Rosalind" in Shakespeare's time

would have been a boy since women were not allowed to perform on the public stage. In *As You Like It,* Shakespeare makes it clear that gender roles can be imitated and performed – in theatre and in real life.

5.22.7 Structure and Style

As we have discussed earlier *As You Like It* is a Romantic Comedy, a genre which was very popular in the English theatre of the Renaissance. Its structure includes a plot dealing with a pair of lovers who encounter many problems in the beginning and in the end are united. Usually there is an ideal space in which love is seen to progress through various stages. The structure also includes sub-plots dealing with similar love interests. All these sub-plots are tied up together in the conclusion.

Shakespeare's version of the Romantic Comedy presents a criticism of life within a taut structure, and the main pair of lovers move towards a more mature understanding of love, both ideal and real. *As You Like It* has also been called a pastoral comedy within which lovers meet and unite in an ideal pastoral locale. But in *As You Like It* this particular structure is somewhat subverted because the play is also a satire on the typical pastoral romance. As mentioned earlier C. L. Barber calls *As You Like It* a 'festive comedy' associating it with midsummer celebrations and festive spirit. But in Shakespeare's play the festive spirit is often undercut by shades of melancholy, harsh experiences and man's innate evil inclinations.

Shakespearean drama is mostly written in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter), which the dramatist has often modified and used fluently to suit the genres and the moods of each play. In comedies he uses both blank verse and prose. This is evident in *As You Like It.* It is often seen that people belonging to the aristocratic class speak in blank verse (e.g. Duke Senior) and common people like Audrey speak in prose. But there is no such rule in *As You Like It* where Rosalind speaks to Orlando in prose in the courtship scenes and Silvius and Phebe speak in blank verse. Sometimes the logic behind such use of verse and prose is not obvious. Perhaps Rosalind speaks to Orlando in prose to do away with the artifices associated with the courtly tradition of 'courtship'. It could also be that Silvius and Phebe speak in verse because they are the typical shepherd and shepherdess of pastoral romance which Shakespeare satirizes in his play. But the blank verse used by Jaques is unique in its distinctive character. The sheer brilliance of the "Seven Ages of man" speech has been acknowledged by all critics – here the blank verse gives depth to the philosophy conveyed through the use of its rhythm, apt words and rhetorical figures.

5.22.8 Summing Up

As You Like It is a typical Shakespearean comedy which appropriates two different genres: the Romantic Comedy and Pastoral Comedy/Romance. It strips the artificiality of both the forms and makes the play a lively comedy based on a mature vision of love. It is also called a 'Festive Comedy' because of its spirit of celebration. It is a celebration of both love and life. There is also an intermingling of levity and seriousness in the play which allows the play to be both entertaining and philosophical in many ways.

5.22.9 Comprehension Exercises

Essay-Type

1. Discuss *As You Like It* as a Romantic Comedy.
2. Discuss *As You Like* It as both a pastoral comedy and a satire on pastoralism.
3. Compare and contrast the life in the Forest of Arden and in the Court in *As You Like It*.
4. Discuss the different notions of 'love' as expressed in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.
5. "Rosalind embodies the very spirit of the play, *As You Like It*". Discuss.
6. Analyse the role of Touchstone in *As You Like It*.
7. Discuss the role of Jaques in the play *As You Like It*.
8. Analyse the plot-construction in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

Questions for Medium-length answers:

1. Write a brief essay on the element of wit in As You Like It.
2. Comment on the use of disguise in As You Like It.
3. Critically evaluate the function of music in the play As You Like It.
4. Discuss the effectiveness of the climax of the play.
5. Comment briefly on the minor characters in the play.

Questions for Short Answers:

1. "The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly." Explain.
2. Write a short note on the debate between Court and Country life in the play.
3. Explain with reference to the context the following line: "I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad ..."
4. Mention (quote) any two references to love in the play and explain their significance.
5. Give the summary of the "Seven Ages of Man" speech in Act II, Scene 7.

5.22.10 Suggested Reading

H.B Charlton, *Shakespearean Comedy*, Gaskell-House Publishers, New York: 1972 (1938).

S.C Sengupta, *Shakespearean Comedy*, Oxford University Press, Delhi: 1950.

Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1967.

C.L Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton N.J: 1972.

Harold Bloom, ed., *William Shakespeare's As You Like It: Modern Critical Interpretations*, Chelsea House Publications, New York: 2003.

Unit-23 □ Elizabethan Theatre—Stage, Court and City

Structure

5.23.0 Introduction

5.23.1 Historical Background

5.23.2 Early Vernacular Drama

5.23.3 The Elizabethan Theatre Houses

5.23.4 Development of Public Theatre Houses in the Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Period(Chart 1&2)

5.23.5 The Theatre Companies

5.23.6 Elizabethan Theatre Audience

5.23.7 Elizabethan Actors

5.23.8 Props and Costumes of Elizabethan Theatre

5.23.9 Songs and Music in Elizabethan Drama

5.23.10 Journey of the Elizabethan Plays from Stage to Page

5.23.11 The City of London and Elizabethan Theatre

5.23.12 Summing Up

5.23.13 Questions

5.23.14 Suggested Reading

5.23.0 Introduction

This Unit familiarises you with the origin and development of theatre in England with special focus on drama produced in the Elizabethan period. After reading this Unit you will be able to:

(a) learn about the historical background of theatre practices in England and trace its development in Elizabethan period;

(b) know the important playwrights of the time and their works;

(c) understand why Elizabethan period was called the golden age for theatre.

5.23.1 Historical Background

Henry of Lancaster defeated Richard III of the House of York at the battle of Bosworth in the fifteenth century English civil war, popularly known as "The War of the Roses" (1453-1487). With this victory of Henry Tudor, the Tudor Dynasty (1485-1603) started to rule in England. Henry Tudor became Henry VII of England. After the death of Henry VII,Henry VIIIascended the throne in 1509 and ruled till 1547. Theperiod of his kingship was troubled by both his personal preferences in life and his cold war with the religious leaders against the backdrop of the nation's divided faith in Christian religious beliefs. Some significant events during his reign are as follows:

- In the year 1517 Martin Luther published the 95 theses at Wittenberg to mark the beginning of the Protestant revolution. In 1521 Henry VIII was given the title "Defender of the Faith" by the Pope.

This good relationship between the king and the Pope did not last long and with the contentious issue of the king's divorce the breach between them enlarged so much that the king abolished the authority of the Pope and declared himself the "Head" of the Church of England. The English Anglican church was the official religious institution, but the Catholic faith survived among groups of people. Also, a more extreme form of Protestantism, Puritanism, was a growing influence among the citizens of London.

After the brief and politically unstable reigns of Edward VI (1547-1553), and Queen Mary I (1553- 1558),in 1558, there came England's first eminent queen, Elizabeth I (1533-1603). She ruled with great efficiency till her death in the year 1603. With her, the Tudor Dynasty came to an end. After her, James I (1603-1625)(actually James VI of Scotland)became the first Stuart king of England and with this incident the crowns of England and Scotland were united. Elizabeth restored Protestantism but ruled with tolerance. Under her reign, England defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588 and achieved supremacy in the seas. The prosperity and the political stability of her reign provided a favourable background for forms of arts, including the dramatic art to flourish.

5.23.2 Early Vernacular Drama

We shall request you to refresh your memory by re-reading Module 2 Unit 10 in which we talked about the beginning of European Drama in general and, more

specifically, about the beginnings of Vernacular Drama in England. We discussed the Miracle play cycles, the Morality plays and the Interludes. We shall take a brief look at how these early plays were staged.

The religious and quasi-religious Miracle plays were staged on pageant wagons which moved from one point to another in the cities where they were presented. Later, the Moralities were presented on circular stages somewhat resembling modern "theatres in the round". In the early and late Tudor eras dramatic entertainments were often performed in the great halls of the royal or the noble houses. Plays were also offered by traveling bands of actors on portable stages set up at fairs and other crowd-gathering occasions. In the sixteenth century, enclosed inn yards were also used. When theatre houses were first constructed in London, many characteristics of the pageant wagons and the inn-yards remained.

5.23.3 The Elizabethan Theatre Houses

The Elizabethan Theatres were of two kinds – i) Indoor or "private" theatre, ii) Outdoor or "public" theatre. Very little information is available about the Indoor or "private" theatres. They were smaller in comparison to the public theatres and were roofed. Troupes did shows indoors in winter when it was too cold to be outside – which suggests that the staging was probably similar. One of the earliest among indoor theatres was *Blackfriar's* – first used as indoor theatre house in 1576 and closed by 1584. *The New Blackfriar's*was opened in 1596 by James Burbage. His company, the *King's Men*, used it after 1610 as their winter performance area. Children's troupes had been very popular in these theatres for a while until 1610. By 1642, there were six private theatres in London. Both the theatres (private and public) were open to anyone who could pay, but the private theatres cost more, were smaller, and had a more select audience. "The terms 'public' and 'private'", Andrew Gurr clarifies in his book, *The Shakespearean Stage: 1564- 1642*, "did not appear until the boy companies started up at the turn of the century in serious commercial competition with the adult companies. There is no obvious reason why the indoor playhouses should have been called 'private' houses,unless in order to differentiate them from the 'public' amphitheatres by reference to the tradition they grew out of, performing in halls of private houses for the private entertainment of the owner and his guests." (p 114). There were eventually nine public theatre houses during the late 16th and early 17th century England.

Image: Architecture of Elizabethan Theatres (Source: internet)

Until 1608, theatre buildings were illegal within the city limits of London, so theatres were built outside of the city area. The first permanent theatre in England was located in Middlesex, just outside the walls of London. 'The Theatre', as it was called, was created by James Burbage, father of Richard Burbage, the famous actor. There is little direct information about the appearance of 'The Theatre'. It was dismantled in 1598 and its timbers were carried to Bankside, south of London across the Thames River. When it was reassembled in 1599 it was called 'The Globe'. The original Globe was also in Southwark. The theatrical company known as 'The Lord Chamberlain's Men' staged most of their plays here. A number of Shakespeare's later plays, including the great tragedies, Macbeth, Hamlet, Othello and King Lear, were staged here. 'The Swan' was built around 1594-96, in Southwark, across the Thames. In appearance it seems to have been the most impressive of the playhouses from the description of Johannes de Witt, a Dutchman who also made a sketch of it. The original of de Witts' sketch is lost, but a copy survives, the only existing sketch of an Elizabethan theatre. 'The Rose' was another theatre house, also outside the City of London area, in Southwark. It was built by Philip Henslowe. It seems to have had the capacity, alone among the theatres, to stage large scenes on the upper second level.

Images: Inside Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. (Source: internet)

Image: Inner view of Blackfriars Theatre (Source: internet)

Blackfriars theatre was the first indoor theatre of Elizabethan England and also had the unique privilege of being situated within the civic area of the city of London. The name Blackfriars originated from the fact of the theatre's being situated in the precincts of a former Dominican monastery, because of the black robes worn by the Dominican friars. At first the hall of the monastery was used by child actors of the

queen's chapel choir. In 1596, James Burbage bought part of the property and made additions and alterations to it. In 1608 'The king's Men'(Formerly 'The Lord Chamberlain's Company') leased it and used it during winter. The Blackfriars introduced some important innovations which have continued to this day, for example, the use of artificial lighting and use of music between acts. Ticket prices here were much higher than in the other theatres.

5.23.4 Development of Public Theatre Houses in the Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Period

Chart I

Year (AD)	Events
1564	Birth of William Shakespeare
1576	James Burbage built *The Theatre* in Shoreditch, London. Pulled down 1597 when the ground lease expired.
1577	*The Curtain*was opened in Shoreditch. It was still in use 1626.
1581	*The Paul's Theatre* emerged. It was the first roofed theatre.
1587	*The Rose*was opened at Bankside, Surrey, by Philip Henslowe and was used till 1603.
1593	Theatres were closed due to the bubonic plague.
1595	An unroofed theatre, *The Swan* appeared. Van Buchell's sketch after de Witt of it is still available.
1596-97	Theatre presentations were banned by London authority.
1596	James Burbage purchased *Blackfriars* but due to the dispute over lease, he could not open the theatre.
1598	*The Globe* was constructed.

1599- 1600	*The Fortune* in Cripplegate by Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn was built as a rival to *The Globe*.
1606	The theatre, *Red Bull* emerged and it was last used as theatre in 1663.
1603	The bubonic plague again attacked London and all theatre houses were closed.
1603	*Whitefriars*, a small roofed theatre near Salisbury Court was constructed.
1613	Fire broke out at *The Globe*.
1614	*The Hope*, an unroofed theatre and bear baiting arena situated on the Bankside.
1614	*The Globe* was rebuilt and this time with solid construction.
1616	Death of William Shakespeare.

Chart 2

General Architecture & Structure of the Elizabethan Theatres:

Amphitheatre facts	Open arena – the actors as well as the audience would face the changes of weather simultaneously.
Size of amphitheatre	Up to 100 feet in diameter.
Varying Shapes	Octagonal, circular in shape having between 8 and 24 sides.
Building materials	Timber, nails, stone (flint), plaster and thatched roofs. Later amphitheatres had tiled roofs.
Overall design	The open air arena, called the 'pit' or the 'yard', had a raised stage at one end and was surrounded by three tiers of roofed galleries with balconies overlooking the back of the stage. The stage projected halfway into the 'pit'.

Audience Capacity	1500 plus. Up to 3000 people would flock to the theatre and its grounds. The indoor theatres were much smaller and could accommodate only 300 to 400 spectators.
The Grounds of the theatre	Bustling with people. Stalls selling merchandise and refreshments. Attracted non playgoers to the market. Presence of pickpockets and whores are also recorded.
The Entrance to the theatre	Usually one main entrance. Some later theatres had external staircases to access the galleries
Access to the Balconies & Galleries	Two sets of stairs, either side of the theatre. The first gallery would costanother penny in the box which was held by a collector at the front ofthe stairs. The second gallery would cost another penny.
The interior design	Design was similar but far smaller version (1500-3000 crowd capacity) than the Colosseum of the Roman period (50,000 crowd capacity) allowing the maximum number of playgoers in the space available.
Lighting	Natural lighting was used as plays were produced in the afternoon. However, there were some artificial lighting (like candle, or taper etc.), mainly intended to provide atmosphere for night scenes.
Stage Props and sets	They used few stage props and no stage sets in the modern sense of theterm. These seeming limitations encouraged several of the most brilliant features of Elizabethan drama. The lack of stage sets allowed the dramatists to create rapid, extremely fluid actions. Scenes succeeded each other without interruption, somewhat in the manner of twentieth-century movies.

Heating	There was no heating arrangement. Plays were performed in the summer monthsand transferred to the indoor playhouses during the winter.
Stage dimensions	Varying from 20 foot wide 15 foot deep to 45 feet to 30 feet.
The height of the stage	A raised stage – 3 to 5 feet and supported by large pillars or trestles.
The floor of the Stage	Made of wood, sometimes covered with rushes. Trap doors wouldenable some special effects e.g., smoke.
The rear of the Stage	A roofed house-like structure was at the rear of the stage, supported by two large columns (pillars).The 'Herculean' pillars were made of huge, single tree trunks. These were drilled through the centre to eliminate warping of the wood.
The 'Heavens'	A roof area. The pillars supported a roof called the 'The 'Heavens'. The 'Heavens' served to create an area hidden from the audience. This area provided a place for actors to hide. A selection of ropes and rigging would allow for special effects, such as flying or dramatic entries.
Frons Scenae	Behind the pillars was the stage wall. A doorway to the left and right and a curtained central doorway from which the actors made their entrances. Above the door area was a highly decorative screen called the 'Frons Scenae' (taken from the name given by Imperial Rome to the stage walls of their amphitheatres)

The Stage Gallery above the Stage Wall–The 'Lord's rooms'	Immediately above stage wall was the stage gallery that was used by actors (Juliet's balcony) & the rich nobles – known as 'Lord's rooms.'
The 'Lord's rooms'	Considered the best seats in the 'house' despite the poor view of the back of the actors. The audience would have a good view of the Lords.And the Lords were able to hear the actors clearly. The cost was around five pence & cushioned seats were provided.
The 'Gentlemen's rooms'	There were additional balconies on the left and right of the 'lord's rooms' which were called the 'Gentlemen's rooms. For rich patrons of the theatre – the cost was approximately four pence & cushioned seats were provided
The 'Tiring House'	The stage wall contained at least two doors which lead to a small structure, back stage, called the 'Tiring House'. The stage wall was covered by a curtain. The actors used this area to change their attires.
The 'Hut'	Above the 'Tiring House' was a small house-like structure called the'hut' complete with roof. Used as covered storage space for the troupe.
The 'pit' (also referred to as the yard')	The stage projected halfway into the 'pit', also called the 'yard' (if tiled or cobbled) where the commoners (groundlings) used to pay one penny to stand to watch the play. They would have crowded around the three sides of the stage.
Access to the Galleries	Two sets of stairs, either side of the theatre. The stairways could also beexternal to the main structure to give maximum seating space.

Seats in the galleries – Three levels	The seats in each of the three levels of galleries were tiered with three rows of wooden benches, increasing in size towards the back, followingthe shape of the building. The galleries were covered affording some shelter from the elements.
Other facilities	No toilet or other civic facilities. People irrespective of gender used to go outside to relieve themselves. High chances of spreading infectious diseases like plague.

5.23.5 The Theatre Companies

In the medieval Miracle and Morality plays the local people were the actors. The audience could perhaps see their local butcher or blacksmith enacting Herod or Noah. The folk plays known as mummers plays were performed by troupes of amateur itinerant actors. In early Tudor England actors were regarded with suspicion and treated as vagabonds. Things began to change however with the growing popularity of drama and the establishment of theatres. Theatre companies were formed as business by several groups of men who put up the capital and shared profits and losses. Two notable names were of James Burbage and Philip Henslowe. Acting companies had to have a license, and the patronage of a nobleman. Provincial troupes were deprived of legal status, so theatre was concentrated around London.

E. K. Chambers in *The Elizabethan Stage* – Volume II, states that about twenty four companies of adult actors performed in London and surrounding areas at different times between 1500 and 1620. In 1578 six companies were granted permission by special order of the queen to perform plays. They were the *Children of the Chapel Royal, Children of Saint Paul's, The Servants of the Lord Chamberlain, Servants of Lords Warwick, of Leicester, and of Essex*. The building of the playhouses outside the city had already begun in 1576. Though much before it by the 1570s, noblemen probably paid a fixed yearly sum to the actors and they did additional public performances for more money. As early as 1529 we read of a group of actors called 'Cardinal Wolsey's Men' and their performance. The first important troupe among all of them was the *Earl of Leicester's Men*, licensed in 1574, headed by James Burbage. In 1603, the most financially successful company,*Lord*

Chamberlain's Men which was formed in 1594 became *The King's Men* and retained this honour till 1642. In 1583 *Queen Elizabeth's Men* was formed with twelve men – this was the largest company of actors of the contemporary time. A company used to have three types of members – i) the sharers, ii) the hired men, iii) the apprentices. Most of the troupes worked in a democratic way. The members shared both the profit and loss in equal portions and in justified manner. Actors too were shareholders. There were no trade guilds of actors but the basic rules of the guilds were followed.

5.23.6 Elizabethan Theatre Audience

The Elizabethan audience was heterogeneous, comprising different social classes, the nobility as well as the poorer sections. Ticket prices depended on where one wanted to sit. People who could afford to pay only a penny could not sit at any of the three levels of the theatre but could stand in the pit, just below the stage. The term 'groundling' became popular to refer to them after Hamlet in his instructions to the players referred contemptuously to the 'groundling' who were incapable of appreciating anything but 'dumb shows and noise'.

With the open stage format, the audience used to gather on the three sides, often all sides, of the stage. There was no possibility of 'slice- of- life realism'. Since the audience was a combination of people from mixed socio-cultural and economic backgrounds,the Elizabethan plays were a mixture of sophisticated wit and rhetoric, dazzling poetry, clowning, farce, duels and fencing matches, supernatural characters, music and song, bloodshed and so on.The richer patrons would sit in the covered galleries, paying as much as half a crown each for their seats.In 1599, Thomas Platter, a Swiss doctor visiting London from Basel, reported the cost of admission in his diary:

> "[There are] separate galleries and there one stands more comfortably and moreover can sit, but one pays more for it. Thus, anyone who remains on the level standing pays only one English penny: but if he wants to sit, he is let in at a farther door, and there he gives another penny. If he desires to sit on a cushion in the most comfortable place of all, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen then he gives yet another English penny at another door. And in the pauses of the comedy, food, and drink are carried round amongst the people and one can thus refresh himself at his own cost." (*Diary of Thomas Platter*)

Ben Jonson commented on the diversity of the playgoers in his verses praising Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*:

The wise and many headed bench
That sits upon the life and death of plays, is
Composed of gamester, captain, knight, knight's man
Lady or pucelle, that wears mask or fan,
Velvet or taffeta cap, rank'd in the dark,
With the shop's foreman, or some such brave spark,
That may judge for his sixpence. (Ben Jonson, *Underwood*)

As G.M. Trevelyan has pointed out, the emotive range of the Elizabethan plays is so extensive because dramatists like Marlowe and Shakespeare knew that they had to cater to polite taste of the upper classes as well as the low and brutal tastes of the commoners.

5.23.7 Elizabethan Theatre Actors

When Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558 there were no specially designed theatre buildings in England. Companies of actors toured the country and performed in a wide variety of temporary acting spaces. Acting companies were usually small and mobile. Records suggest that an average touring company consisted of five to eight players, often consisting of four adult men and a single boy to play all the female parts. Soon after Elizabeth came to the throne laws began to be passed to control wandering beggars and vagrants. These made criminals of any actors who toured and performed without the support of a member of the highest ranks of the nobility. Many actors were driven out of the profession or criminalized, while those who continued were forced to become officially servants to Lords and Ladies of the realm (Act of 1545). During the Elizabethan time the famous characters, generally, were of two kinds – the clowns and the heroic characters. Tarlton, Wilson, and Will Kempe were experts in comic characterizations especially in the acts of improvising, jigging, song, and dance. On the other hand, actors like Alleyn and Richard Burbage earned their glory through performing the majestic roles of Marlovian and Shakespearean plays viz. Tamburlaine, Barabas, Faustus and Richard III respectively. All the actors in an Elizabethan Theatre company were male. There were laws in England against women acting onstage. One woman - Mary Frith, better known as Moll Cutpurse - was arrested in the Jacobean period for singing and playing

instruments onstage during a performance of a play. The male actors who played female parts have traditionally been described as "Boy Actors", but there is now an academic controversy about exactly how old these actors would have been.In *Hamlet* we find Hamlet addressing a boy actor:

> "What, my young lady and mistress! By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring."

The rehearsal and performance schedule that Elizabethan players followed was intense and demanding. Unlike modern theatres, where a successful play can run for years at a time, Elizabethan theatres normally performed six different plays in their six-day week, and a particularly successful play might only be repeated once a month or so. Instead of being given full scripts, each actor had a written "part", a long scroll with nothing more than his own lines and minimal cue lines (the lines spoken by another actor just before his own) to tell him when to speak - this saved on the laborious task of copying out the full play repeatedly by hand. There was a book-holder or prompter who held a complete script and who helped actors who had forgotten their lines. The book-holder usually also had a "plot" or a brief summary of the play, scene by scene, listing the various entrances and exits and telling which characters and properties were required upon the stage at any one time. Surviving manuscipts of plots actually have a square hole to allow them to be hung upon a peg in the playhouse. The two most famous Elizabethan actors normally played tragic and romantic heroes. They were Edward Alleyn, lead actor of the Admiral's Men, and Richard Burbage who was the lead actor in Shakespeare's Company (belonging at various times to Leicester, Lord Strange, and the Lord Chamberlain and finally becoming - in the Jacobean period - the King's Men). Alleyn was probably the most famous Elizabethan actor, who was best known for his performances in Christopher Marlowe's plays. The Elizabethan actor had to be a versatile entertainer who could, simultaneously, sing, dance, fence, and perform acrobatic tricks, improvise the plot, and so on.

5.23.8 Props and Costumes in Elizabethan Theatre

When one thinks of costume in the age of Elizabeth one naturally thinks of three details as most characteristic: the ruff, the huge-padded hose, and the farthingale. Ruffs were made of linen, often decorated with gold and silver thread, and adorned with jewels. They were expensive garments, and could be worn but a few times. The

use of starch first in the year 1564 gave the ruff a new birth. The corresponding garment for men was the doublet. It was usually padded and stuffed till quite twice the size of the natural body. The doublet was cut and slashed in front and sides as to show the gay-coloured lining of costly material. It was sometimes laced, but was more frequently buttoned up the front. Two or three buttons at the top were left open and the shirt of delicate white lawn pulled out a little way. The nether garment for men was called the hose. Its size was likewise carried to a ridiculous extent. The man, however, laboured under an additional disadvantage. Instead of spreading himself out with whalebone, he gained his volume by padding. The Fools used to wear a special type of cap to distinguish themselves from the other characters on stage.Stage make-up, like costumes, helped the audience to understand the character. Actors playing moors wore make ups that made them dark-skinned. Pale-skinned fair women were said to be the most beautiful at the time. A white face, red cheeks, and a blonde wig turned a boy actor into a beautiful young woman. Crushed pearls or silver could produce shimmering effects. When two characters wore the same make up and wigs you knew they were twins— even if they did not look alike. Props were few and moveable. A few articles of furniture like chairs and stools, cups and goblets, candles, daggers etc. They were used non–realistically, for example a post could be used for a tree and could signify a forest like Arden. Chairs were thrones. The paucity of props made it possible for the playwright to take his audience from one country to another in the twinkling of an eye. In Act III of *Antony and Cleopatra* the action shifts from location to location in thirteen scenes. The lack of a drop curtain necessitated the physical clearing of the stage in clear view of the audience. Thus, Hamlet hasto go out dragging Polonius. The absence of props was the impetus behind the magnificent flight of poetic imagination in Elizabethan drama.

5.23.9 Songs and Music in Elizabethan Drama

Edward Gordon Craig in *The Art of the Theatre* says, "the Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance." (p 138).This idea of a complete theatrical presentation was visibly present on the Elizabethan stage. During the reign of Elizabeth, music was used extensively. The shift from religious music to the secular one was an important event. Instrumental music came into existence for the

first time during this period. Shakespeare used many songs in his plays and they were highly significant, popular, and expressive— helping to portray the characters of the singers. E.g.,the songof Ophelia in Act IV, Scene v of *Hamlet:*

> "He is dead and gone, lady,
> He is dead and gone,
> At his head a grass-green turf,
> At his heels a stone."
> (*Hamlet*, 4.5.28-31)

Some critics suggest that the song in the third casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice*: "Tell me where is fancy bred/Or in the heart or in the head" is intended by Portia to provide an oblique hint to Bassanio, with the obvious rhyme of bred/ head and lead (for the lead casket).

5.23.10 Journey of the Elizabethan Plays from Stage to Page

During Shakespeare's lifetime Elizabethan playwrights cared little about seeing their work in print. Only the rare drama was intended to be read as well as performed. Writers would usually sell their plays to the theatrical company which staged the performances, and if the company committed a particular play to paper, it would create only one copy - the official copy - in the form of a prompt-book. It was a custom for the contemporary professional theatre companies to maintain and protect their collections. However, the private theatre authorities used to modify the plots on regular basis by following the audience's demands. The increasing use of inductions, prologues, and epilogues is a proof of it. This tradition was perceptible even in the dramatic career of the most successful playwright of the time, William Shakespeare. Before the publication of the First Folio in 1623, only nineteen of the thirty-seven plays in Shakespeare's canon had appeared in quarto format. With the exception of *Othello* (1622), all of the quartos were published prior to the date of Shakespeare's retirement from the theatre in about 1611.Ben Jonson was unique in his time for the unusual care he took and the attention he paid to the text of his published plays.

5.23.11 The City of London and Elizabethan Theatre

The 'City of London', with a capital 'C', has a specific meaning, and may not be confused with 'the city of London'. It designates a particular area in central

London and means the business, commercial and banking locality of London. The City maintained a special identity, separate from the rest of London ever since it had received a special charter of status from William the Conqueror.The growth of trade and commerce during the Elizabethan era led to the growth of a new social class, that of the merchants, which, unlike the older social classes, the nobility, the gentry, or the yeomanry, were not dependent on land. Elizabeth's policies encouraged England's commercial expansion. The City consequently acquired great financial power. Its growing demand for political power would later lead to the Civil War in the next century. This merchant class, the nascent middle class of England, was hardworking, thrifty, ambitious. It was strongly anti-Catholic, choosing Calvinistic Protestantism rather than the Anglican Church.

The attitude of this class to theatrical entertainment of all sorts was one of suspicion and distrust. The theatre houses had not been allowed to be built within city limits. Even then, the rat-infested wooden structures were considered, not without reason, sources of the plague and ordered to closedownwhenever there was an outbreak of the disease.The actors were considered no better than rogues and vagabonds. The plays were considered irreligious and subversive. Attending the plays encouraged idleness and was anoffence to Calvinistic work ethics.

The people associated with the stage were naturally antagonistic to this class. Repeatedly in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays we find this class satirised for its love of money and its hypocrisy. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare's Malvolio is covert portrayal of a puritan, with his black clothing, his high opinion of himself, his social ambition, his hatred of humour and merriment. Ben Jonson satirises them in *The Alchemist* in the characters of Ananias and Tribulation, castigating their fanaticism and money grabbing. In *Bartholomew Fair,* Zeal-of –the- land Busy is another scathing attack on the puritans, who were regarded as enemies of the theatre. However, the puritans had the last word. As the political situation grew more dangerous, Parliament ordered the closure of the theatres. In 1647 two more orders were passed. The first threatened dire punishment to those who indulged in any kind of acting. The second ordered the demolition of all stage structures and seating arrangements. The great age of Renaissance drama ended. When the theatres reopened in 1660, a new kind of drama would hold the stage.

5.23.12 Summing Up

In this Unit we have told you about the various factors connected with the great achievements ofElizabethan and Jacobean drama. Drama is not pure literature. Its

soul is performance. So, the stage, the actors, the music, the spectacle, the audience response –all are essential ingredients which flesh out the skeleton of the author's text.We hope this Unit will encourage you to go back to the drama texts in this paper and re-read them with greater understanding and appreciation.

5.23.13 Comprehension Exercises

Essay Type Questions

1) Write an essay tracing the development of the English theatre during the Elizabethan period.
2) Discuss in detail the general features of the Elizabethan theatre.

Mid-length Questions

1) Critically examine the role of the Renaissance in the growth of the Elizabethan theatre.
2) Comment on the socio – political background of the Elizabethan theatre.
3) Write in detail on the difference between the private and public theatres during the Elizabethan period in England.

Short Answer Type Questions

1) Write a short note on the actors of the Elizabethan theatre.
2) What was the theatre audience like during the Elizabethan period?
3) Comment on the use of dress and costume by the Elizabethan theatre actors.
4) Comment on the use of songs and music in Elizabethan plays.
5) What were the reasons for the closing down of the theatres in 1642?

5.23.14 Suggested Reading

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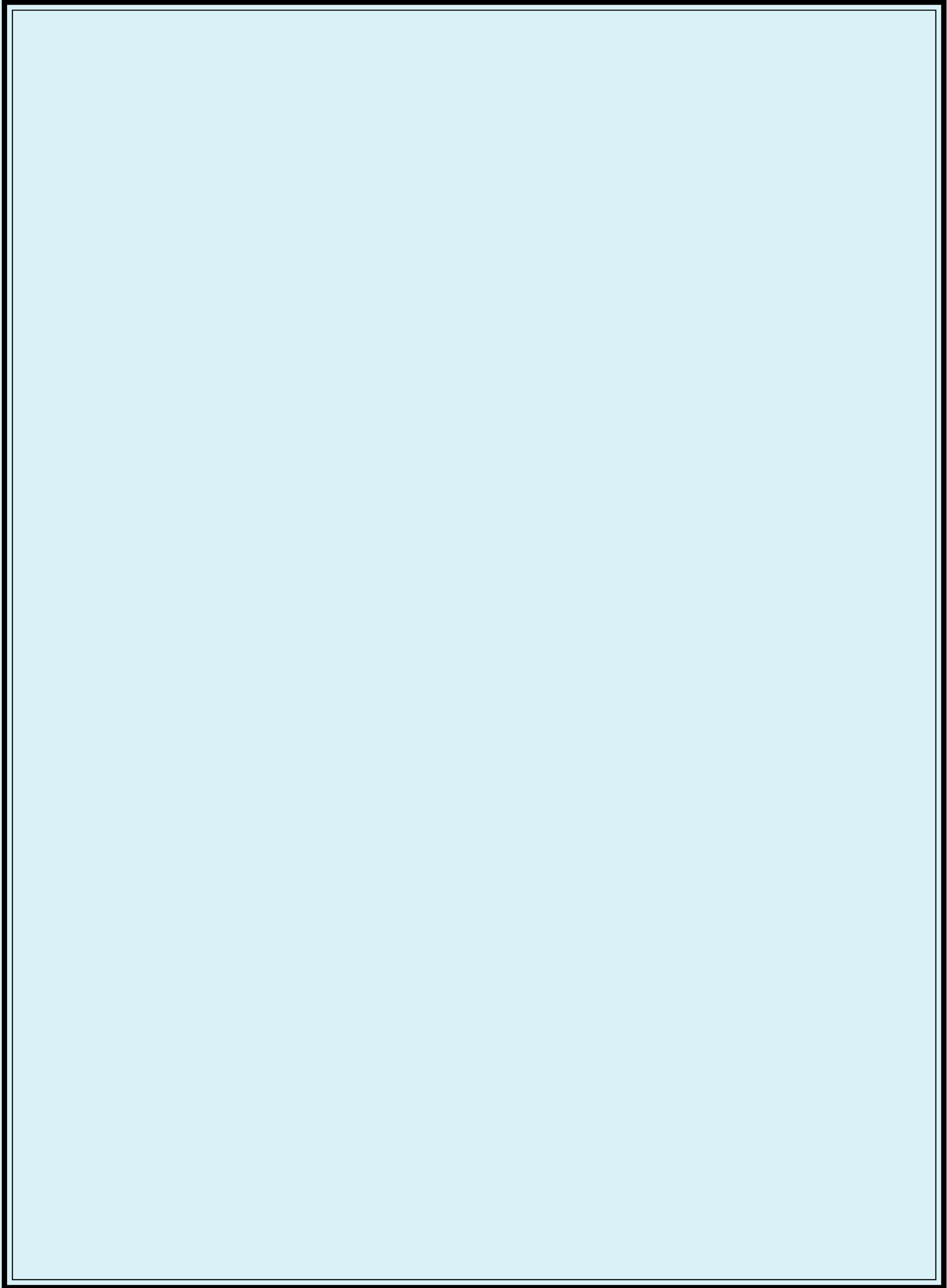
Timeline Chart



Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
450	Traditional date of the coming of the Saxons to England		
597	St Augustine's mission arrives in Kent		
		AD 731	Bede (673-735), *Ecclesiastical History of the English People Ecclesiastical*
793	First Viking raid		
	Alfred becomes King of Wessex. He dies in 899.		
991	The Battle of Maldon fought between the Essex nobleman, Byrhtnoth, and the raiding party of the Vikings. The heroic poem based on this war was written around 1000.		
		992 c. 1000	Aelfric, *Catholic Homilies* The four surviving manuscripts of Anglo-Saxon poetry: The *'Vercelli'*, *'Exeter'*, *'Junius'* Manuscript, and *'Beowulf'* MSS.
1042	Accession of Edward the Confessor. He dies in 1066.		
	Harold succeeds Edward the Confessor but is deposed by William of Normandy in the Battle of Hastings. William of Normandy takes the name of William I (popularly known as		The effect of Norman Conquest was also felt in architecture. Vast Romanesque buildings, notably the new cathedrals at Canterbury (begun in 1070),

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
	William the Conqueror) and ascends the throne of England. This event is also known as the Norman conquest.		Ely (begun in 1083), London (begun in 1087) and Durham (begun in 1093), Canterbury (after its part was burnt in 1174), and so on.
		1086	Domesday Book, amanus-cript prepared by William the Conqueror that contained the records of the survey of the settlements and taxes in England and Wales under the rule of Edward the Confessor.
1087	William I died. England by this time had an ordered feudal system reinforced by a powerful Norman aristocracy and Church. William II ascends the throne. He was popularly known as William Rufus. He reigns till 1100.		
1100	Henry I ascends the throne. He reigns till 1135		
1135	Stephen, the last king of the House of Normandy (which begins with William the Conqueror), ascends the throne. He dies in 1154.		
		1136	Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*. His work influenced later day Anglo-Norman poets like Geoffrey Gaimar, Wace and Layamon.

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
1154	The first king of Plantagenet dynasty, Henry II ascends the throne. He was instrumental behind the murder of St Thomas Becket (c.1118-70), the Archbishop of Canterbury. He reigns till 1189. He was succeeded by Richard I (Richard, Coeur de Lion) who dies in 1199.		
		1138	*Poema Morale* written by an unknown preacher in South-Eastern dialect.
1199	King John ascends the throne.		
		1200	*The Owl and the Nightin-gale*, written by an anonymous author, Orm: *Ormulum* Layamon: *Brut*
1215	Magna Carta		
1216	Henry III ascends the throne. He reigns till 1272.		
		1220	*Ancrene Riwle*, the anonymous monastic manual for the anchoresses.
		1225	*King Horn*, a chivalric romance and considered to be a part of the Matter of England. Anonymous origin.
1272	Edward I, also known as the Hammer of the Scots becomes the ruler. He dies in 1307.		

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
		1275 1303	Guillaume de Lorris, *Roman de la Rose* Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Handlyng Synne*
1307	Edward II ascends the throne of England. He was not a very popular ruler and was murdered in 1327. His life inspired Christopher Marlowe to write the well-known historical play *Edward II*.		
1314	Battle of Bannockburn, the first war of Scottish independence, in which the English king Edward II lost to the army of Robert Bruce.		
			Cursor Mundi, universal history, written in Northumbrian dialect by an unknown cleric.
1327	Edward III also known as Edward of Windsor ascends the throne. He reigns for next 50 years. His eldest son Edward, the Black Prince was renowned for his military exploits.		
1337	Beginnings of the Hundred Years War.		
		1343	Birth of Chaucer, one of the most celebrated poets in English literature. His major

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
			works can be divided into three groups: (i) lyrical and allegorical poems- *The Book of the Duchess*, *Parlement of Foules*, *Hous of Fame*, *Legende of Good Women*; (ii) under Italian influence- *Knight's Tale*, *Troilus and Criseyde*; (iii) *The Canterbury Tales*
1348	Black Death in England		
1377	Richard II ascends the throne at the age of ten, after the death of Edward III. He was courageous but unbalanced. He sought to bring an end to the Hundred Years' war. He was murdered in 1399. He was the last king of the Plantagenet House.	1377	Langland (c. 1330-c.1400), *Piers Plowman*. According to many historians the text has three versions: first written around 1362, the second around 1377 and the third around 1398.
1381	The Peasants' Revolt	1382	Wycliffe (1324-84) comple-ted his translation of the Vulgate into vernacular English. This is known as Wycliffe's Bible.
		1390	Gower, *Confessio Amantis*
1399	Accession of Henry IV (Bolingbroke), first king of the House of Lancaster. He was also the first king to address the Parliament in English.		

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
		1400	Sole surviving manuscript of *Sir Gawain and the Greene Knight*, *Pearl*, *Patience* and *Cleanness*
		1411	Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*
1413	Henry V ascends the throne after the death of Henry IV. He rules till 1422.		
1422	Henry VI, the last ruler of Lancaster house becomes the ruler. He was the founder of the famous Eton College. He was murdered in 1461.		
1453	Fall of Constantinople (currently known as Istanbul, a famous city in Turkey), the Eastern capital of the Roman Empire. The city was captured by the Ottoman Turks. This historical event signals the beginning of the Renaissance in Europe.		
1455	First battle in the War of the Roses between the houses of Lancaster and York fought	1455	The Gutenberg Bible is printed in Mainz
1461	Edward IV proclaimed King after the deposition of Henry VI		
1470	Restoration of King Henry VI		
1471	Murder of King Henry VI, Edward IV becomes king again		

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
		1473	William Caxton, History of Troy: first book to be printed in England.
		1477	Lord Rivers: *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers:* Printed in Caxton's press
1483	Death of Edward IV; accession and suspected murder of young Edward V; Richard III ascends the throne		
1485	Richard III killed in the battle of Bosworth; Henry VII becomes king.	1485	Malory, Morte Darthur
1492-1504	Voyages of Christopher Columbus to America		
1503	James IV of Scotland marries Margaret Tudor		
1509	Death of Henry VII; Henry VIII becomes king		
1513	Battle of Flodden between England and Scotland		
		1516	Thomas More, Utopia
1517	Martin Luther nails his '95 Theses' on the church door at Wittenberg		
1521	Henry VIII accorded the title 'Defender Of the Faith' by Pope.		

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
		1526	Publication of Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament
1529	Rise of Thomas Cromwell, chief minister under Henry VIII; Thomas More becomes Lord Chancellor		
		1531	Elyot, Boke named the Governour
1533	Thomas Cranmer appointed Archbishop of Canterbury; Henry VIII divorces Catherine of Aragon and marries Anne Boleyn		
1534	Abolition of Pope's authority in England; King Henry VIII declares himself to be the 'Head of Church'.		
1535	Thomas More executed for not taking the Oath of Supremacy	1535	Coverdale's Bible printed
1536	Anne Boleyn executed; Henry VIII marries Jane Seymour (mother of James VI) ; Beginning of dissolution of monasteries in England under Thomas Cromwell		
1540	Fall and execution of Thomas Cromwell		
1544	Henry VIII and Charles V invade France		

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
1545	Opening of Council of Trent		
1546	Death of Martin Luther		
1547	Death of Henry VIII and accession of Edward VI to the throne.		
1549	Act of Uniformity passed; introduction of uniform Protestant service in England	1549	Archbishop Cranmer, The Book of Common Prayer. It is established as the sole legal form of worship in England
		1551	Nicholas Udall, Ralph Roister Doister. It is the first extant comedy in English language
1553	Death of Edward VI; Mary Tudor becomes the Queen of England; Restoration of Roman Catholic bishops in England		
1555	England returns to Roman Catholicism. Cranmer burned at the stake along with other Protestants.		
		1557	Tottel, Miscellany or Songes and Sonettes
1558	Death of Mary; accession of Queen Elizabeth I. Repeal of Catholic law in England		
1560	Treaty of Edinburgh among England, France and Scotland	1560	Geneva Bible

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
		1562	Sackville-Norton, Gorboduc. It is the first English play in Senecan form
		1563	Foxe, Acts and Monuments
1564	Birth of William Shakespeare		
1567	Mary, Queen of Scots imprisoned and forced to abdicate; James VI becomes King of Scotland		
1570	Excommunication of Elizabeth	1570	Ascham, The Scholemaster
1571	Battle of Lepanto between allied Christian forces and the Ottoman Turks		
1577	Sir Francis Drake starts his circumnavigation of the world	1577	Sidney, Arcadia; Holinshed, Chronicles
		1579	Lyly, Euphues; Spenser, Shepheard's Calender
		1581	Sidney starts writing Astrophil and Stella
		1584	Peele, The Araygnement of Paris
1586	Death of Philip Sidney at Zutphen		
1587	Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots; England at war with Spain; opening of Rose theatre	1587	Greene, Alphonsus, King of Aragon; Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great
1588	Defeat of the Spanish Armada		

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
		1590	Spenser, Faerie Queene; Lodge, Rosalynde
		1591-92	Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy; Marlowe, Doctor Faustus; Daniel, Delia; Shakespeare, Henry VI (Part 1,2,3)
		1593	Marlowe, Hero and Leander; Drayton, Idea; Shakespeare, Richard III, Comedy of Errors, Venus and Adonis
		1594	Shakespeare, Sonnets, Romeo and Juliet, Taming of the Shrew, Love's Labour's Lost, Titus Andronicus; Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveller
		1595	Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream; Daniel, Civil Wars; Spenser's Amoretti; Sidney, Apologie for Poetrie
		1596	Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice
		1597	Bacon, Essays: First edition published
		1598	Ben Jonson, Everyman in his Humour
1599	Globe theatre opened	1599	Shakespeare, Henry V, Julius Caesar; Daniel, Poetical Essays; Dekker, The Shoemaker's Holiday

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
1600	Elizabeth I grants charter to East India Company		
1601	Essex rebellion against Queen Elizabeth I		Shakespeare, Hamlet, Twelfth Night; Donne, Of the Progres of the Soule; Campion, A Book of Ayres; Jonson, The Poetaster
1603	Death of Elizabeth; accession of James VI as James I; union of the crowns of England and Scotland	1603	Jonson, Sejanus; Heywood, A Woman Killed with Kindness
			Shakespeare, Othello, Measure for Measure
1605	Gunpowder Plot	1605	Shakespeare, Macbeth and King Lear; Bacon, The Advancement of Learning
1607	Colony of Virginia established at Jamestown (first permanent settlement in North America) by the Virginia company		
		1608-09	Jonson, The Masque of Beauty and The Masque of Queens
			James I's Authorized Version of the Bible published; Shakespeare, The Tempest
1613	Fire at Globe theatre	1612-13	Webster, The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi

Date	Major Historical Events	Date	Major Literary Figures and their Works
1616	Death of William Shakespeare		
1618	Execution of Walter Ralegh; beginning of Thirty Years' War in Europe		
1620	Pilgrim fathers (Puritans) set sail for America on the 'Mayflower'		
1621	John Donne appointed Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London (Church of England)	1621	Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy
		1622	Middleton, The Changeling
		1623	First Folio of Shakespeare's works published
1625	Death of James I; accession of Charles I	1625	Samuel Purchas, Purchas his Pilgrimes
		1628	Cowley, Pyramus and Thisbe
1629	Charles I dissolves Parliament and begins independent rule		
1633	William Laud appointed Archbishop of Canterbury	1633	Donne, Poems; Herbert, The Temple; Massinger, A New Way to Pay Old Debts; Ford, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore; Fletcher, The Purple Island;

Adopted from BDP EEG 1 and 2 SLM's prepared by Debamitra Kar.
Formatted by Dr. Md Intaj Ali
Assistant Professor of English
Netaji Subhas Open University

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