



NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

**SELF
LEARNING
MATERIAL**



NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

9

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 ধূলিস্যাৎ 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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CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

PREFACE

In a bid to standardize 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, generic, discipline specific 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 their acquired credits. I am happy to note that the university has been recently accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India (NAAC) with Grade “A”.

UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online 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.) Ranjan Chakraborty
Vice-Chancellor

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Under Graduate Degree Programme
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Course Title : British Literature: The Early 20th Century
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Dr. Asit Baran Aich
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**Course Title : British Literature: The Early 20th Century
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Module-1

The Modern Age: Historical and Social Contexts

Unit 1 □ Britain at the Turn of the Century: A Historical and Social Overview

Structure

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1.1.1 Objectives

This unit has been written with the following objectives in mind:

- To understand the socio-political and cultural cross-currents in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century – roughly the years preceding the First World War till the Second World War and to locate them in a broader European context
- To analyse the social, political and economic condition of Britain during the Edwardian period
- To analyse the politics and aesthetics of the Georgian period
- To closely read three areas of major political turmoil in Britain during the Edwardian and Georgian Age – the growth of the labour movement, women’s movement and conflict in Ireland.

1.1.2 Introduction

In Poem No 64 of *Naibedyo*, written in 1899, Rabindranath Tagore has a dystopic vision of the century to come. He writes, “The sun of the century is setting today in clouds of blood. At the festival of hate today, in clashing weapons sounds the maddening, dreadful chant of death”. Historian C.A. Bayly says that this poem was Tagore’s response to the surfeit of violence by the British against the Chinese in order to suppress the Boxer Rebellion and the slaughter of civilians in the Anglo-Boer War (Bayly 454). Be as it may, these lines remain apt commentary on a Europe on the verge of major changes and a world about to witness and withstand unprecedented violence. Two World Wars were about to take place within a span of forty years. While the First World War exposed the ugly face of European imperialism, the Second World War showed the absolute abyss of the Nazi and nuclear Holocaust. If one looks at the society and politics of Britain of the early years of the twentieth century, one might see a movement from a general sense of stability and security to one of complete disarray and disillusionment.

1.1.3 Social and Political Milieu of Edwardian Britain: Questionable Stability

It would be rather redundant to say that the death of Queen Victoria on 22nd January, 1901 marked the end of an era. More so because the era that followed, the short reign of Edward VII (1901-1910), often portrayed itself as one of unchanging political stability and economic prosperity. That self-perception continued in later cultural and historical renditions. The sense of security associated with the Edwardian Age needs to be seen against the background of the preceding decades. The Victorian Age left behind a mixed legacy. By the mid-nineteenth century England had become a global power – its expansive industrialisation turned it into world’s leading manufacturing and commercial superpower. The commercial clout of England was coupled with its political influence and imperial glory. However, by the end of Victoria’s reign, the political and industrial supremacy of England was no longer unrivalled. New industrial powers such as Germany and the United States of America were challenging it on both economic and political fronts.

The British politics of the 1880s and the 1890s was plagued by the perceived sense of decline of the British military, economic and imperial power. In Africa the British were engaged in territorial conflict with other European imperial powers as well as with local forces. This ultimately resulted in the Anglo-Boer War between the British and the two Boer republics (formed by the Dutch inhabitants of Cape Colony which was a British colony in present day

South Africa) – namely the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. Closer home, the Irish nationalist movement peaked and the question of Irish Home Rule resonated across the political landscape. On the economic front in 1886 a Royal Commission was constituted to look into the depression in trade and industry. It was an initial sign of growing concern about British economy. In the face of increasing competition from other European powers the policy of free trade started being questioned. The Second Boer War ended (1899-1902) at the beginning of Edward's reign. There was much propaganda and eulogy around the modernisation of the British Home Fleet after the war as well as the Halden Reforms which reorganised the British Army with the specific goal of preparing it for major wars. Edward on the one hand tried to foster friendly relation with major European powers, including the arch rival France; his efforts earned him the popular title 'Edward the Peacemaker'. On the other hand, he indulged in traditional and ceremonial royal displays and public events, royal visits and association with other European dynasties creating a sense of imperial pomp and grandeur. One should not forget that Edward VII was the first ever British monarch to travel to India and to hold a great coronation *Durbar* in Delhi.

However, times, they were a-changing. The 1901 census revealed that the population of the United Kingdom had doubled in the last fifty years, swelling to 38 million. The increased population created pressure on the already stressed economic and social framework. One way to deal with it was a surge in the 'nationalist' agenda based on claims of shared culture. Frans Coetzee in his extensive research into the British Conservative politics of the early twentieth century identifies several successive phases in the development of 'nationalist agitation' from the 1890s (Coetzee 7). The first lasted till the conclusion of the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa and was dominated by perceived threats from other European powers such as France and Russia. In 1905 British journalist J. L. Garvin posed a question to his readers – "Will the empire which is celebrating one centenary of Trafalgar survive for the next?" (Coetzee 38). The perceived vulnerability of the empire made people cling to it even more dearly.

1.1.4 The Empire and Its Maladies

In Europe these early years of the twentieth century were marked by political realignment of its great powers, a revolution and setting stage for a World War. The smokescreen of nationalist propaganda often hid horrible imperial crimes, such as the deaths of thousands of women and children in concentration camps used by the British Army for the displaced Boer families in 1901. The same year Australia passed an Immigration Policy to protect the White Australia policy of Britain. In a few years, in 1906, one Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,

confronted by racial discrimination in British South Africa, launched his first programme of *satyagraha* or passive resistance. Another interesting factoid is that in 1908 the British-controlled Burmah Oil Company discovered oil in Iran. The dotted lines between the imperial economic networks and some of our present world crises are for anyone to see. Many would see this as a connection between older and newer forms of the Empire.

The Edwardian era registered a deep concern for the decline of English naval and commercial might. German firms started giving tough competition to the British in various markets. The German navy, along with the French, Russian and Italian navy, posed challenge to the British power in the sea. After the Panama Canal was opened, the United States too started making its presence felt in South-East Asia. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 ended in the unexpected Japanese victory and the Russian Revolution of 1905. Though the war ended with the Treaty of Portsmouth and the Revolution was quelled for the time being, these events resonated across Europe. Particularly the Russian Revolution of 1905 showed the disturbing possibility of a mass upheaval attempting to overthrow the existing order – a possibility largely feared across the European ruling elite. England was not an exception. In order to maintain the status quo of the European political and imperial order older and newer imperial forces entered into various alliances with each other to maintain the balance of power not just in Europe but in the colonies spread across Asia and Africa. The *Entente Cordiale* concluded between France and England, though strictly a colonial negotiation, helped the two countries shake off their traditional rivalry to adjust the balance of power against a resurgent Germany. Through this treaty France gave up its opposition to the British rule in Egypt and the British did the same for the French rule in Morocco. All these developments created a sense of imperial consolidation in Africa and a general sense of comeback in European politics. The result was a façade of order concealing insecurity and struggle for power.

1.1.5 Working Class Unrest and Labour Movement

The shrill nationalist voice in the English conservative and even in liberal quarters should also be seen against the rising discontent and assertive class politics among the British working classes. Charles Booth's multi-volume book *The Life and Labour of the People of London* came out between 1889 and 1903. In a meticulous survey among the people of London's East End Booth revealed that around 30% of people were living in extreme penury. The mass unemployment caused by industrial depression gave rise to vocal demands for a more egalitarian distribution of wealth. The Fabians, socialists and others forced serious reconsideration of individualist economics and the gains of industrialisation. Since the 1900s there was a growing consensus for the state to take a more proactive role in managing economy, working

conditions and wages instead of giving free reign to capitalist profiteering in the name of free market. There were riots of the unemployed in London in 1886 and 1887. Since the 1890s the miners were on repeated strikes. There was dock strike in London in 1889.

An organised labour movement had been growing in England since the mid-nineteenth century. But now more pronounced socialist ideas defined by clear class consciousness started to dominate the English labour movement. The cautious moderation of the earlier years was replaced by more aggressive, even revolutionary approach. Keir Hardie and other socialists founded an Independent Labour Party in 1893. The expanding trade union movement of the late nineteenth century culminated in the establishment of the British Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in 1900. The LRC created a common platform for different socialist groupings in England. In 1906 around nineteen candidates with LRC support won parliamentary seats, giving rise to the English Labour Party. With the backing of the Labour certain liberal reforms were undertaken by the British parliament. In 1906 Workmen's Compensation Act, in 1908 Mines Eight Hours Act were passed. Both were due to the impact of a sustained labour movement, particularly regarding demands for eight working hours. Old Age Pension was another long standing labour demand fulfilled in the Pension Act of 1908. The provision for the imposition of higher land taxes to raise money to pay for pensions and armaments was put in the 1909 budget, often termed as the 'People's Budget'. The House of Lords rejected this budget, propelling the country into a constitutional crisis. Subsequently this crisis was resolved only after the thumping victory of the Liberals in the 1910 election and the introduction of the Parliamentary Act in 1912. It made the Upper House of the Parliament practically ineffective, taking away the veto power of the House of Lords and gave full control of the government policies to the Lower House, constituted of the elected representatives of the people.

1.1.6 Late Nineteenth Century: fin-de-siècle in Europe

Politically speaking, the late nineteenth century was an age of significant shifts in the political baseline. France while engaged in a war with Prussia saw a working class uprising at the end of which the Paris Commune seized power in 1871, establishing, for a brief period, a revolutionary government and the Third French Republic. Karl Marx in *The Civil War in France* called the Commune "The direct antithesis to the empire" (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/ch05.htm>). It exponentially increased the power of the Communists. Communism was expanding simultaneously with various other socialist parties and trade union movements all over Europe including England. On the other hand, in the late nineteenth century there was a spurt of nationalism all over Europe. The unification

of Italy and Germany, movement for independence in various Balkan states under the Ottoman Empire including the Greek movement for independence, Irish and Scottish nationalism are cases in point. One can see it as a global phenomenon in the anti-colonial struggles from Egypt to India. However, if national movements in various colonies were challenging the colonial powers, a supremacist, nationalist rhetoric and policy was used by several European and some non-European states to build and expand their empires.

Another political event that had widespread cultural resonance is the so-called Dreyfus Affair in France. In 1894 Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), an officer in the French military, was court martialled and found guilty of espionage in what was clearly a sham trial. Almost immediately after his conviction, doubts surfaced about Dreyfus' culpability. By 1898 Major Esterhazy emerged as the main culprit. He was then court martialled for the same crime that Dreyfus was earlier convicted of. It was clear that Dreyfus was trapped in order to hide larger corruption inside the French military establishment. But despite compelling evidence Esterhazy was swiftly acquitted as the army and the government chose to keep an innocent man in prison rather than expose institutional malaise. The unfair conviction and imprisonment of Dreyfus came amid a vile anti-Semitic campaign. Since Dreyfus was a Jew, large number of newspapers and popular magazines vilified and implicated all Jews by extension. The affair impacted and divided the European intelligentsia. The French novelist Emile Zola (1840-1902) published a fierce letter calling out the government cover-up of systemic corruption and the anti-Semitism entrenched in the government as well as in society. This letter, titled *J'accuse!* appeared in the front page of the pro-Dreyfus newspaper *L'auror*. Zola himself was convicted of anti-state activities and fled to England in order to escape prison.

The literary and the cultural milieu of the time already started to reflect both the euphoria and the apprehension of the turn of the century, captured in the French term *fin-de-siècle*, literally meaning 'end of the century'. It was applied to a certain bohemian, 'decadent', hedonistic aesthetics espoused by many artists of this era. The doubts and disillusionment about industrialisation, public expressions of religious doubt, post-Darwinian 'crisis of faith' had a lasting impact on the writers of the late nineteenth century. The Victorian moral codes had started to crumble. Already by the end of the nineteenth century those codes were being questioned by writers as varied as Oscar Wilde, G. B. Shaw, Henry James and Thomas Hardy. At least some of them remained equally productive in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Various literary and art movements in continental Europe influenced English writers. The phrase 'Art for Art's Sake', taken from the French term "l'art pour l'art", was used to denote a break from some of the defining assumptions of post-Renaissance art. It was not a consolidated artistic movement; rather an attitude rejecting not just the Victorian moral codes

but the overall mimetic ends of literature – it questioned the automatic assumption that literature has to ‘reflect’ a world outside, it has to have a presumably ‘real’ world as its point of reference and that it must ‘mean’ something to be counted as art. The English slogan is usually associated with Walter Pater and his followers in the Aesthetic Movement. In a review of William Morris’ poetry, published in 1868, Pater writes how the simplicity of Morris’ poetry is of a distinctly different variety than that of William Wordsworth because in Morris’ poetry the desire “is towards the body of nature for its own sake, not because a soul is divined through it”. He advocates a ‘quickened sense of life’ created by “the desire of beauty, the love of art for art’s sake” (http://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1868_pater1.html). A modified form of the review appeared in Pater’s 1873 book *Studies in the History of Renaissance* and had immediate impact on various writers and artists of the late Victorian era such as the American artist James McNeill Whistler, English writers Oscar Wilde and Algernon Swinburne.

In 1899 Arthur Symons published *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* bringing French symbolist poetry and poets such as Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Jules Laforgue to the attention of the English literary world. The last two decades of the nineteenth century also saw the rise of Naturalism as a literary movement. Emile Zola published his influential essay “The Experimental Novel” in 1880 where he talked about a form of novel based on what he calls ‘the experimental method’ of science. According to him, modern science has extended itself beyond empiricism; it does not concern itself any more with what can be seen, heard or measured. It explores underlying organic and physico-chemical conditions which are fixed and determined. Zola prescribes the same scientific determinism in novels. For the naturalist novelist ‘nature’ stands for those physical, psycho-sexual conditions which, for Zola, are unchanging and the determinant factor behind all social behaviour (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/zola/1893/experimental-novel.htm>). Zola was a self-proclaimed naturalist who remained an important influence on novelists across the continent.

At the same time questions of class and economic disparity remained significant concerns. At the turn of the century the everyday experience of ordinary men and women came back to be the focus of literary activities before the entire structure of understanding and representing human experience was completely revamped by the modernists.

1.1.7 Edwardianism: Conformism and Dissonance

Along with fin-de-siècle another French term gained currency to define the mood in the early twentieth century Europe – *la belle époque*, loosely translated as “the good old days”.

The contradictory implications of the two terms – one implying a morbid awareness of the anxieties of changing times, the other glorifying a mythic past – signify the opposing pulls at the turn of the century, reflected in the Edwardian Age. This age is usually characterised by the desperate attempts of a social and economic elite to hold on to its social etiquettes and cultural mores at a time when its political hold was slipping away. An obvious example of such characterisation is Jimmy Porter's bitter but somewhat idealised invocation of the bygone Edwardian era in John Osborne's 1955 play *Look Back in Anger*.

If Edwardian Britain is sometimes imagined in terms of the swansong of an aristocratic society basking in what historian David Powell calls the 'Victorian afterglow' (Powell vii), there are others who imagine it as a period lived under the looming shadow of the approaching First World War (1914-1918) coupled with several domestic crises. The Edwardian society and economy combined contradictory traits. On the one hand there was conspicuous consumption and growing national wealth. On the other there was rising mass poverty.

The election held in 1906 was largely fought on the questions of social reforms. The Liberal Party won and remained in power in whole of the Edwardian Era and even after that. In 1906 Henry Campbell-Bannerman became the Prime Minister. The general sense of stability and conformity of the age has much to do with this liberal victory signifying a cautious, middle-of-the-road political atmosphere, combining welfarism and conservatism. However, as we have already seen this was far from truth. There were polarising currents in British society and the Liberal Party was seen as increasingly ineffective in bringing any material change to the lives of the masses. They were also seen as making compromises based on political expediency. The reformist David Lloyd George and imperialist Winston Churchill, both being members of the Liberal Party and the same cabinet, are examples of such expedient political cohabitation.

Even then some major liberal reforms took place. Many claim that these reforms laid down foundations of the modern welfare state (Powell 21). School Meals Act came in 1906, empowering local governments to feed children in schools. The reforms gained traction when H. H. Ashquith became Prime Minister in 1908. National Insurance Act was passed in 1911. In 1912 the government introduced a Minimum Wage Act for coal mines.

The changes, both economic and social, even though limited in nature, exposed the social discordance. The aristocrats saw a threat to their privileges. The working classes saw the changes as cosmetic and insufficient. Beneath the crust of conformism and stability, dissonances brewed. During the First World War these dissonances were brushed under the carpet. But the stress on economy increased the hardships of the working classes, not to mention millions of lives lost in the war. The working-class disaffection and disillusionment with the government kept growing in the years following the war and had lasting impact in shaping the post-war society and politics of England.

1.1.8 The Irish Question

The integration of different parts of the British Islands – Wales, Scotland and Ireland – into the United Kingdom has been a slow process going back to the sixteenth century. However, this was not a smooth process; it often faced resistance, the steepest of them all came from Ireland. It was the last to be integrated to the British crown in 1800, following an unsuccessful rebellion in 1798 and the union remained a fragile one. England was a colonial power, ruling an alien land with an iron fist. The Catholic majority of Ireland being ruled by a Protestant England created religious tension. In the 1840s Daniel O’Connell led a mass campaign to repeal the Act of Union. Simultaneously a more radical, romantic, nationalist movement emerged, with conscious allusions to earlier heroes such as Wolf Tone and Robert Emmet. The potato famine of 1845 took severe toll on the Irish population. The Young Ireland Group in the 1840s, the Irish Republican Brotherhood in the 1850s and 1860s staged many insurrections. The Irish Home Government Association was founded in 1870. In the subsequent elections the Association had considerable success, particularly under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. The Irish National League was formed in 1882. Due to the growing demand for Irish independence, the support for the Irish nationalist parties swelled. A similar Home Rule Association was also founded in Scotland, while in Wales a nationalist movement was initiated by the alliance of the Welsh Non-conformists and the Liberal Party.

The British government responded to the rising tide of nationalism across the British Isles through a combination of coercion and concession. In Ireland the government tried to redress some grievances through measures taken in the fields of religion, education and land reform. To assuage the majority Catholics of Ireland, its Anglican Church was disestablished. Government assistance in higher education was increased. Two Irish Land Acts were introduced in 1870 and 1881. At the same time Coercion Acts were implemented to brutally suppress all forms of political dissent. Responding to the growing demand for Irish Home Rule, a bill was brought in the British Parliament in 1886, recognising a separate Irish political identity including the establishment of a second parliament in Dublin. This bill was defeated and created a vertical split within the English Liberal Party between the supporters of Irish Home Rule and the more conservative Unionists who opposed this step. A second Home Rule Bill was brought in 1893 but it too was defeated. In the years leading upto 1906 consecutive Conservative governments undid many of the concessions given and reverted to a policy of political suppression.

Consequently, 1890s onward in Ireland there was widespread disillusionment with the parliamentary parties, making space for more radical political outfits. Instead of home rule, i.e.,

limited political autonomy, a demand for complete Irish independence grew. Pro-independence Sinn Fein was established in 1905 by Arthur Griffin. In the field of culture there was Gaelic Revival – an assertion of exclusively Irish cultural identity taking recourse to indigenous language, mythology and folk elements.

With the Liberals coming back to power in England in 1906 the question of Irish Home Rule resurfaced. The Parliament Act of 1911 did away with the veto power of the House of the Lords which was staunchly opposed to home rule. The decisive power was now with the elected representatives of the legislature. In 1912 a new Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced providing for a two chamber Irish Parliament, comprising an elected House of Commons and a Senate nominated by the government. The parliament would have authority over most internal matters of Ireland barring fiscal policy and for some years, policing. Foreign Affairs, overseas trade and taxation would remain under the control of the United Kingdom parliament. While the bill treated Ireland as a single entity there was deep and often violent friction between the Protestant groups of Northern Ireland, many located at Ulster and the Catholic groups from Belfast. The Protestants were overwhelmingly unionist as they feared if the Home Rule Bill passed they would have to live under the jurisdiction of a Catholic dominated Irish Parliament in Dublin. Irish Unionists, with active support from the English Unionists, organised several demonstrations in Ulster including Ulster Day in September, 1912 culminating in the ceremonial signing of the ‘Ulster Covenant,’ the signatories pledging themselves to use ‘all means which may be found necessary’ to defeat Home Rule and to refuse to recognise the authority of a Home Rule parliament. The Home Rule Bill was again blocked in the House of Lords which, though no longer enjoyed the power to veto bills, still had the power to delay them. The Unionist agitations increased with open calls to arms. The Union Defence League, an armed militia, was founded in 1907. It provoked a corresponding reaction from the Irish Nationalists. Irish Volunteers were founded as a paramilitary force. A civil war fomented in Ireland. There were other popular unrests such as the transporters’ strike of 1913 that took a nationalist overtone. In 1914 British troops opened fire on nationalist protesters in Dublin.

To allay the fears of the Ulster Unionists the government brought an amendment to the original Home Rule Bill allowing the four Ulster counties to remain outside Irish Home Rule, first for a period of six years and then permanently. This compromise could not satisfy either side. It practically meant a partition of the country, and leaving the considerable Catholic population of Northern Ireland outside Home Rule – both possibilities were strongly resisted by the Irish republicans. For the Unionists it meant leaving the Protestant population of Southern Ireland under Catholic domination. The stalemate continued when the First World War broke out, putting the issue on backburner for the time being, but it kept sizzling.

In 1916 the Irish Republicans staged an uprising on the morning of Easter Sunday, known as the Easter Rising. The uprising was brutally suppressed by the British. Many protesters were killed, many leaders hanged. This fuelled nationalist sentiments even more. In the election of 1918 the nationalist Sinn Fein won landslide victory. In 1919 they formed a breakaway government and declared Irish independence. The Anglo-Irish War between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British Army took place from 1919 to 1921. A truce was achieved in 1921 through the Anglo-Irish Treaty. An Irish Free State was recognised by the British government. However, Northern Ireland was given the right to opt out of it, which they did in 1922 thus effectively ratifying the partition of Ireland. This treaty caused major split among republicans as many saw the treaty as a betrayal to the republican cause. The more militant faction of the IRA refused the authority of the Free State and decided to keep fighting for a united Irish republic. Violence raged in Northern Ireland as well. Ireland plunged into a civil war that would continue till the 1980s.

1.1.9 Post-Edwardian England in a Changing Europe

The First World War set in irreversible forces of change in motion, not just in England but in Europe. Alongside the War, came the Spanish Flu. It was the first pandemic of the twentieth century that spread on a global scale, largely due to the War, the movement of soldiers and goods. In two years roughly 500 million people were infected. Estimated number of death due to the Spanish Flu was much higher than that of the First World War. Together, these two events had catastrophic effect on the global population.

King Edward VII passed away in 1910, four years before the war and King George assumed the throne as George V (1910-1936). By the end of the First World War around one million British soldiers, sailors and airmen had been killed, nearly two million were permanently disabled. Along with the loss of human capital Britain also incurred substantial economic losses –it lost much of its domestic and overseas assets, its GDP plummeted. During the War raw material and industrial resources were diverted due to the escalating demands of the war industry. This had negative impact on other industries and after the War there was a steady decline of industrial output, causing mass unemployment. While the First World War helped create a cult of the Glorious Dead, through public memorialisation, cenotaphs, literature and mass media, there was also widespread discontent among the living. In London in 1921 the Armistice Day ceremonies were interrupted by a demonstration of the unemployed who held placards that read “The dead are remembered but we are forgotten”. The stock market crash in America in 1928-29 leading to the Great Depression had its ripple effect across the world, including Britain.

In the decades following the First World War the political landscape of Europe underwent major changes. Many of the monarchical rules had ended. The Tsarist rule of Russia was toppled by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The empires of Germany and Austro-Hungary disintegrated. American economic and political power was on the rise.

Ultranationalist, supremacist, and authoritarian politics too were on the rise across Europe. Initially it grew out of the high pitched nationalist propaganda undertaken during the First World War by all countries involved. As the war progressed, death toll increased, the economic distress intensified, nationalism became a tool to suppress all forms of dissent. Everyone who spoke out against the war could be labelled as working against the interests of the nation. Benito Mussolini was a socialist in his earlier years. He proclaimed himself to be nationalist and changed sides when the socialists opposed the war. After the war, the same rhetoric of bringing glory to the nation was used by the Fascists in Italy to stage a coup, brutally suppress and kill all political opposition, paving way for Mussolini to become a dictator. In Germany too, the broken economy and political instability of the post-war years saw the rise of National Socialism appealing to the wounded pride of the German nation.

In England the Representation of the People Act was enacted in 1918, bringing in the notion of universal adult franchise. It enabled all men over the age of 21 and women over 30 to vote, regardless of whether they own any property or not (earlier people without ownership of property could not vote). This act increased the number of voters substantially. In 1918 the first general election was held under this act and a coalition government of Liberals and Conservatives came to power. This unlikely coalition itself was the result of the growing strength of the Labour Party that would ultimately bring complete electoral success in 1923 and the first Labour government would be established. In Ireland, Sinn Fein won landslide victory in 1918, cementing the popular support for Irish Republicanism. In the subsequent years there would be considerable political instability in England and time and again the rhetoric of nationalism would be invoked in the face of working class demands and the perceived threats of Bolshevism and Republicanism.

1.1.10 Constructing ‘Georgian Poetry’

‘Georgian Poetry’ is a construction in so far as it was conceived as a self-styled and calibrated break from the Victorian past and as a representative of its time. An anthology series of poetry titled *Georgian Poetry* was published between 1912 and 1922. Five volumes were published. Around forty poets contributed to these volumes. This would include Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, A. E. Houseman, D. H. Lawrence, John Drinkwater, H. E. Monroe, John Masefield and many others. This anthology series seems to define what is known as ‘Georgian Poetry’ and the poets are referred to as Georgian poets. Though the series editor was Edward Marsh he worked in close consultation with Brooke,

Monroe and Arundel de Re, the latter two were editor and assistant editor of the journal *Poetry Review*.

Georgian Poetry was not an organised movement; the poets hardly shared anything in common apart from the anthology. While Marsh himself was once the private secretary of Winston Churchill, the anthology published poets like Wilfred Gibson – a working class poet who wrote poems about farmers, industrial workers and soldiers. Even the name ‘Georgian Poets’ slightly predates the anthology, though used for the first time by Monroe, a poet who was an integral part of the anthology. Monroe coined the term in 1911, the year of the coronation of George V, thus making it coterminous with the reign. The Imagists and the Dadaists were writing around the same time, but they are not clubbed as Georgians. D. H. Lawrence, usually categorised as a modernist, was a regular contributor; he also reviewed the first volume *Georgian Poetry 1911-12*. Timothy Rogers in his *Georgian Poetry, 1911–1922: the Critical Heritage* published in 1977 quotes Lawrence – “we are awake again, our lungs are full of new air, our eyes of morning.” In fact, Georgian Poetry can be included within the broad parameters of literary modernism in its rejection of Victorian sentimentality and morality. Susan Millar Williams calls Georgianism a movement in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*: “The unifying thrust of the movement was toward realism and ‘sincerity,’ and against humanism, academicism, the romantic-Victorian tradition, and the decadence of the fin de siècle.”

Georgian poetry gets associated with what Rupert Brooke names ‘the New Poetry’ in 1913. By this time the search for a new poetic idiom was already on. In 1908 T. E. Hulme in his groundbreaking “Lecture on Modern Poetry” had boldly declared, “I want to speak of verse in a plain way as I would of pigs: that is the only honest way” (http://www.lyriktheorie.uni-wuppertal.de/texte/1908_hulme.html). Georgian Poets too were trying to break new grounds in terms of the themes and vocabulary of poetry. Yet the claims to ‘sincerity’, ‘realism’ and accessibility that separated Georgian Poets from Victorianism also marked their stark difference from the modernists who were looking for a more radical break from the established aesthetic norms. It’s a telling coincidence that the last volume of *Georgian Poetry* came out in 1922, a year often considered to be the Annus Mirabilis – the miraculous year of European modernism. James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, Jean Cocteau’s *Antigone*, Herman Hess’s *Siddhartha* were all published in that year.

1.1.11 The Modernist Turn

At the turn of the century the combination of new technological advances penetrating the world of art, the discovery of a mass market and art forms more suitable to appeal to that

market – from photography to early cinema – started to redefine aesthetic experience. An interesting development was the mass access to the works of so-called high art. Historian Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that in 1908 the new Medici Society started producing cheap reproductions of the paintings of great masters on a mass scale. Inexpensive series of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays came in the market (Hobsbawm, 1987, 221). Walter Benjamin, the famous German philosopher, in his essay “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” discusses how technology, by reproducing a work of art radically redefines the notions of both meaning and value of art which, till now, were associated with ‘originality’. In the post-First World War years cinema develops into the new and perhaps the most significant art form of its time, travelling the distance between popular and high culture.

The need for an entirely new outlook about art and literature – culture – in general was felt, particularly in view of the sense of a civilisational crisis that Europe was going through. In order to achieve that breakthrough not only the older moral and social codes but the older aesthetic codes needed to be broken. The experimental avant-garde art of pre-First World War Europe was already making those attempts in the form of art movements such as post-impressionism and cubism. While the Decadents of the last decades of the nineteenth century were obsessed with the sense of an ending, the Italian Futurists in the first decade of the twentieth century were ecstatic about the birth of a new machine age. In the *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909 Filippo Marinetti writes – “We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath ... a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace” (https://www.societyforasianart.org/sites/default/files/manifesto_futurista.pdf). On one end of the rejection of basic tenets of western humanism could be a gradual movement towards accepting and celebrating political authoritarianism. The same Marinetti was the co-author of the *Fascist Manifesto* written in 1919. But it also led to critical and dispassionate dissection of the times.

While the aesthetic ideals and expressions of the modernists may vary substantially and their political conviction can travel an entire spectrum – from extreme Left to extreme Right – the one common factor is their formal experimentation. In the same lecture of 1908 (mentioned earlier) Hulme declares, “We are a number of modern people and verse must be justified as a means of expression for us”. It was true not only for poetry but for art and philosophy as well. In the subsequent years the ‘modern’ would take myriad forms – from the new experiments with the novel form by the likes of Joyce and Virginia Woolf to the publication of Sigmund Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1922, exploring the ‘death-drive’ within our constant hunt for pleasure to the *Surrealist Manifesto* by André Breton in

1924, giving a new language to art by fusing the precision of reality with the symbolism of dreams derived from Freudian psychoanalyses.

1.1.12 The Emerging Politics of Gender

The role of women was largely restricted to the domestic sphere in the Victorian Age. By the late nineteenth century certain professional opportunities were opening up, particularly for educated middle class women. While in the early nineteenth century the governess was the stereotypical figure of a working woman, later women started to move into professions such as nursing and teaching. For working class women working was not a matter of choice but necessity. They worked in factories, clothing trade and as domestic help. The expanding textile industry was a source of employment for a large section of working class women. But even in that sector the growth started to slow down in the 1870s and 1880s. Further, irrespective of their class location women found that they were offered only low paid, unskilled jobs, were paid less than their male counterparts, were forced to work in terrible working conditions. From the 1860s several movements and demonstrations took place demanding women's right to education, property, their legal rights in marriage and divorce. As a result of the sustained campaign the Education Act of 1870 made elementary education in England compulsory for both boys and girls. Even if for women's education the emphasis was still on their domestic responsibilities at least they were entitled to rudimentary education. A series of Married Women's Property Acts gave married women certain rights to possess and administer property. Back then in England equality of legal rights, including the right to vote, were closely linked to the ownership of property. This progress in terms of property rights made it easier for women to claim political rights for themselves.

The campaign for female suffrage that is, voting rights for women, can be dated back to the 1860s. In 1867 Lydia Becker formed the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee; similar other committees were formed in other cities. Activists organised campaigns, carried out sustained propaganda to keep up the political pressure throughout the late Victorian period. But real changes started only in the Edwardian Age. The Women's Social and Political Union, led by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst was formed in 1903. This organisation is usually associated with the suffragette movement. The earlier suffragist movement followed a path of moderation, negotiation and compromise. However, there was general disillusionment regarding the efficacy of these techniques. The suffragette movement, on the other hand, was a much more radical and consciously political movement. They campaigned extensively, mobilised women, and courted jail. Between 1906 and 1914 the suffragette movement became widespread and increasingly militant. Across class lines it impacted a wide cross-section of

British women. One could also see increasing collaboration among the growing labour movement, the Irish Republican movement and women's movement.

During the First World War, as a large section of the male population in England as well as in other European countries were conscripted and joined the war effort, in order to keep the home economy going, increased participation of women in the labour force was encouraged. For example, 1915 onward women were employed in ammunition factories in Britain for the first time. By the end of the war at least one million women were added to the British work force. This proved to be a seismic change as women's role in the reconstruction of the post-war economy became critical. As a result of the sustained political efforts of the feminists in the Representation of People's Act of 1918 voting rights were extended to women over the age of 30.

While the First World War opened up the labour market for women, it also left many of them without a family, caused economic distress. More women coming out of their homes caused moral anxiety in a deeply patriarchal British society. Yet throughout the 1920s women participated in public life, fought elections, were being elected to the parliament. New movements were being formed to open up more professions for women, for the equal rights for women workers. In this regard the reforms initiated by the newly formed Soviet government in Russia encouraged British activists. Several new women's journals and magazines were launched in the 1920s dealing with political questions concerning women. Writers and activists such as Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West started writing about various matters related to women's social, economic and creative lives as well as the relation of women's rights with other political questions of the time. West, for example, wrote about the Nazi war criminals in the late 1930s. As a result of their concerted efforts a consolidated and self-conscious domain of gender politics emerged.

1.1.13 Summing Up

This unit has tried to give you a broad understanding of the social, political and cultural changes taking place in Britain in the early years of the twentieth century, covering the First World War and leading up to the Second. In order to put things in perspective we moved back to the late Victorian Age and also contextualised the events in British society and culture against the background of those taking place in Europe at large. It will help you to realise how class politics, nationalist politics and gender politics shaped those years and how they impacted culture, literature being a part of it. It will help you to critically engage with the historical context of many of the texts, particularly those belonging to Irish literature, literary modernism and Feminism.

1.1.14 Comprehension Exercises

Essay Type Questions:

1. Do you think the Edwardian Age in England was one of stability or of conflict? Discuss with reference to the major socio-political events of the time.
2. Write a historical overview of Britain's 'Irish Problem'.
3. Critically analyse the emergence of working class politics in Britain.
4. How did the opposite feelings of the end of an era and a new beginning shape European culture in the early twentieth century? Elucidate.
5. How would you characterise Georgian Poetry? Critically comment on its relationship with literary modernism.

Mid-length Questions:

1. Write a note on the socio-political milieu of England between the two World Wars.
2. Write a short note on the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century.
3. Write a short note on the liberal reforms during the Edwardian Age.
4. Critically comment on the constitutional crisis in Edwardian England.
5. Write a short note on the women's movement in the early twentieth century England.
6. Write a short note on different forms of nationalism in Europe in the early twentieth century.

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. What is the meaning of fin-de-siècle? Which time period is it applied to?
2. What does the phrase *la belle époque* mean?
3. What is the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921?
4. What is the difference between Suffragists and Suffragettes?
5. Who was Emmeline Pankhurst?
6. What is *Georgian Poetry*?
7. Give the names of four important Georgian poets.
8. What is Irish Home Rule?
9. What was called 'People's Budget' in England?
10. Write three important features of the Representation of People Act of 1918.

1.1.15 Suggested Reading

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Unit 2 □ The First World War: An Overview

Structure

- 1.2.1 Objectives**
- 1.2.2 Introduction**
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- 1.2.4 Background of the First World War**
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 - 1.2.4.5 Rise of New Empires**
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 - 1.2.6.1 Social and Economic Impact**
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- 1.2.7 World War I: An Unfinished War**
- 1.2.8 Summing Up**
- 1.2.9 Comprehension Exercises**
- 1.2.10 Suggested Readings**

1.2.1 Objectives

This unit has been written with the following objectives in mind:

- to understand the historical context of the First World War
- to analyse its underlying socio-political and economic causes
- to analyse the immediate political and diplomatic milieu

- to provide a brief account of the war – how it unfolded, main military events and the treaties ending the war
- to assess the political, economic, literary and cultural effects of the First World War.

1.2.2 Introduction

The First World War took place between 1914 and 1918. It started primarily as a conflict among various European states but soon engulfed much of the non-European world. The countries directly involved in the war were divided into two opposing sides – the Allied Powers consisting of Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Japan and later the United States of America and the Central Powers consisting of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. It had far reaching military, political, socio-economic and cultural consequences.

1.2.3 Conceptualising the ‘World War’: The World as a Battleground

The First World War had wide-spread effects – it was indeed fought across a vast and geographically diverse area so much so that the world itself had to be conceived as a battlefield, even though only a few European powers directly fought with one another. The term ‘World War’ indicates the Eurocentric bias of our historical understanding wherefore the ‘world’ is imagined in terms of Europe. But it also shows how imperialism expanded the influence of Europe beyond its geographical boundary; many parts of Asia and Africa were colonies of different European states. These areas were drawn into the war, they supplied armies and resources, and were turned into battlefields, making it truly a war fought world-wide.

1.2.4 Background of the First World War

1.2.4.1 Setting the Stage: Emerging Economic Realities

At the turn of the nineteenth century almost the entire world was already ‘discovered,’ much travelled and elaborately mapped by Europeans; there were hardly any ‘dark continents’ to explore. It was a densely populated world. But it was a world that was more close-knit than ever, “bound by the bonds of moving goods and people, of capital and communications, of material products and ideas....” (Hobsbawm 14). In the later part of the nineteenth century

the technological revolution started changing the very nature of industries. The earlier years of industrialisation were associated with the idea that progress can be achieved only through competition of different players in a free market. But these later years saw remarkable concentration of capital. Hobsbawm observes, "...the crux of the global economic system was that a number of developed economies simultaneously felt the same need for new markets" (66), leading to unprecedented rivalry among imperial powers. How did this rivalry play out in political terms?

1.2.4.2 'Balance of Power' in Post-Napoleonic Europe

After the imperial expansions of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century, Europe saw a period of relative political stability. 'Stability' should be taken with a pinch of salt though. In 1848 a series of revolutions swept over Europe. In France, it ended the constitutional monarchy and established what is called the Second Republic with Louis Napoleon as president. This Republic too did not survive for long and gave way to the Second Empire. Louis Napoleon staged a coup, took the name Napoleon III and became the emperor. Then there was the Crimean War (1853-1856) fought between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the latter being assisted by other European states such as Britain and France. Russia was defeated in the Crimean War. Italy was unified. Prussia and Austria fought with each other and Austria was defeated. But none of this led to pan-European conflicts.

Thus 'stability' was fragile. It depended on maintaining mutually agreed upon national boundaries. Those boundaries followed the Westphalian notion of territorial sovereignty. One need not be too worked up by that term. In the early seventeenth century two wars took place simultaneously engaging almost all the major European powers; there was the Eighty Years War between the Spanish and the Dutch and there was the Thirty Years' War fought between the Catholic and the Protestant states of Europe. Many people died in these wars and none emerged as the clear victor. In Westphalia a peace congress initiated a diplomatic process and in 1648 Peace of Westphalia, achieved through a series of treaties, ended these wars. In Westphalia certain principles of international relations were established wherefore it was accepted that irrespective of relative size and economic or political clout, each state should have full control over its own territory. No state can interfere in another state's domestic affairs (The good people negotiating with each other were all Europeans and they were talking about the sovereignty of the European nation-states. Later, they freely occupied territories in other parts of the world; their colonies did not enjoy the same courtesy).

This principle was further strengthened in the Congress of Vienna in 1815 that tried to bring lasting peace in Europe after the Napoleonic wars. The leaders who participated in that congress led by the Austrian statesman Metternich were all conservatives. They thought that

it was the spirit of the French Revolution and resulting waves of republicanism that upset the stability of Europe. The only way to restore that stability and peace was to maintain a 'Balance of Power' which was a delicate and complex network of treaties among different European powers to put checks on each other's territorial ambitions.

1.2.4.3 Unification of Germany

Times changed. Many of the states that negotiated the Treaty of Westphalia were no longer powerful enough to call the shots. Post-Napoleon Britain, France and Russia dominated European diplomacy. They were happy slicing through lands and joining hands or fighting with one another as it suited them.

Things changed in 1870 when the French Empire was unexpectedly defeated by a Prussia-led coalition of German states. France had to concede the Alsace-Lorraine region to the Germans. Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), the Minister President of Prussia, was the main architect of this coalition. He first became the Chancellor of North German Confederation. This Confederation can be considered as the first attempt at a unified German nation-state. After the victory of this Confederation in the Franco-Prussian war it was dissolved to pave way for the German Empire which included all the German states barring Austria (Prussia and Austria were old rivals. Their rivalry would have serious consequences for Europe). Bismarck then became the Chancellor of the German Empire and would have singular influence on European diplomacy during his tenure between 1870 and 1890.

1.2.4.4 The Snowballing: the 'Age of Empire'

Eric Hobsbawm calls the time period between 1875 and 1914 the 'Age of Empire'. It was not the first time that the world had seen empires. But Hobsbawm says that this was the time for a new type of empire, namely the colonial empire. The economic and military dominance of the western capitalist countries had been established right after the industrial revolution. It was mainly maintained by colonial economic exploitation of the non-capitalist world. Attempts to translate this dominance into actual territorial conquests and administration in the form of empires started only in the late nineteenth century. As a result, between 1880 and 1914 most of the world outside Europe and North America was sliced up under the formal or informal rule of a few states such as Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and America. The one Asian country that features prominently in this list is Japan. Hobsbawm points out that in this period a quarter of the global landmass was distributed among these powers. The biggest losers in this new world were the earlier, pre-industrial empires, such as Spain and Portugal.

A new development in international relations was clearly discernible, both political and economic, the two being increasingly difficult to separate. The word 'imperialism' started to

gain currency in the 1890s. Later Vladimir Ilich Lenin, in his 1916 book, would identify imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. According to Lenin, as a result of the extensive industrialisation of many western countries international trade grew many-fold, leading to increased competition. But due to the concentration of production competition is ultimately transformed into a tendency towards monopoly. We would see a little later how several European and a few Asian countries entered alliances with each other. We would also read about the rise and fall of empires. While reading about political factors behind the First World War we should not lose sight of their connections with economic realities. For example, the alliance system of international relations was paralleled by alliances of international capital – big corporations of Europe and America too entered into double or triple alliances with each other. Along with western political powers western bankers began to intervene in the political affairs of the Ottoman Empire, playing an active role in its imminent downfall. Imperialism was thus a mechanism to effectively redistribute wealth and resources within Europe as well as in European colonies.

1.2.4.5 Rise of New Empires

These were seismic changes. The emergence of Germany as a new ‘Empire’ affected the balance of power in Europe, more so because Germany by now had the strongest military in the continent along with large and expanding industrial resources. In order to counter a resurgent Prussia and later the German Empire, Austria adopted a new constitution in 1867 making way for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There were too many empires, giving credence to Hobsbawm’s characterisation of the age. On the other hand, after the defeat of 1870 in the hands of Germany, the French Empire collapsed making way for the Third French Republic.

1.2.4.6 Fall of an Old Empire: The Balkan Crisis

The Ottoman Empire – one of the oldest Asian empires, spread across Europe and Asia, was on decline. Because of its reduced power, parts of West Asia and South East Europe were up for grabs. The European territories of the Ottoman Empire mainly consisted of the small states in the Balkan Peninsula. Movements for self-determination erupted in these states in the late nineteenth-century. Some of them, such as Serbia became nominally autonomous. The Balkan states spoke Slavic languages, shared Slavic culture, something they had in common with Russia. That is why Russia became a stakeholder in the so-called Balkan Crisis culminating in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 between Russia and Ottoman Empire in which Russia joined forces with four Balkan states – Greece, Serbia, Romania and Montenegro – and defeated the Ottoman Empire. Serbia, Romania and Montenegro became independent states. However, there was a nationalist aspiration for the independence of all the Balkan

states and their unification based on common Slavic identity. The problems continued through the Balkan Wars in 1912-13. In these wars the remains of the Ottoman control were wiped out. Afterwards the Balkan states fought among themselves for the spoils of the wars. As the Balkan states came out of Ottoman control, everyone wanted to control this strategically important region. The so-called 'great powers' fanned the rising nationalistic fervour in the Balkan states for their own benefit.

1.2.4.7 New Political Alliances

These 'great powers' kept each other on check by entering into understandings and alliances with each other. Bismarck emerged as a master of this 'alliance system' which, in reality, depended on shady deals and secret treaties driven by political self-interest of different European rulers.

What followed was a series of events and treaties that put this alliance system firmly in place. Following are the major developments:

- The Three Emperor's Agreement took place among Germany, Austro-Hungary and Russia in 1873.
- After the Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin, led by Bismarck, took place in 1878. The so-called six 'great powers' of Europe – Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Britain, France and Italy participated along with the Ottoman Empire and four Balkan states. It sounds complex but actually it was quite simple. The Ottomans were defeated and now the question was how to divide their land and influence areas (like the Balkan Peninsula) among the winners while ensuring winners do not start fighting among themselves.
- The result was the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 which practically redrew the map of the Balkans (Remember the names of the states. They are going to be important in starting the First World War, even though they were small and not really powerful in themselves)
- In 1879 Germany and Austria-Hungary entered into the Dual Alliance.
- In 1881 the Three Emperors' Agreement was renewed.
- In 1882 Italy, Germany and Austria-Hungary concluded the Triple Alliance
- In 1887 a Reinsurance Treaty took place between Germany and Russia.

The treaties were way too many and each had their finer points. But a general pattern emerged:

- Each treaty had the permutation and combination of the same five or six states. All of them were ambitious. All of them were threatened by each other. These treaties

were driven as much by the instinct of self-preservation as by the need to stall each other.

- Germany would seem to be one common factor in all treaties. It entered multiple agreements with its archrival Austria to ensure its own safety while controlling its rival. Same holds true for its alliances with the other European states.
- Many of these alliances were shady business. As one can see from the list (not an exhaustive one) above, many of the countries were party to more than one treaty. But the details of one treaty were kept secret from the partners of another treaty. To give one example, Germany concluded the ‘Reinsurance Treaty’ with Russia without informing Austria-Hungary their partner in the Triple Alliance. As a result, even though almost all the powerful European states were in some kind of alliance with one another, they did not trust each other. There were elaborate spy networks to fish out each other’s dirty deals and military secrets.
- Details of alliances and international agreements were kept secret not just from other alliance partners but also from the public domain of respective countries. The people of these countries, or their elected representatives (apart from England and France others did not have elected representatives. Most of them were ruled by authoritarians) were mostly kept in the dark. This was done in the name of ‘national interest’ and ‘security’.

1.2.4.8. The Eruption:Rehearsal

Bismarck believed that the alliance system which would put limits to the expansion of any one European power would stabilise Europe. This was a politics of diplomacy, often called ‘Realpolitik’, because this was thought to be driven by the practical logic of self-defence. But after Wilhelm II became the German emperor in 1888 he had considerable differences with Bismarck. Bismarck had to resign in 1890, following which there was a significant change in German foreign politics. Instead of ‘Realpolitik’, a new term came in fashion – ‘Weltpolitik’ which is German for ‘World Politics’. This was an expansionist imperialist policy that wanted to transform Germany into a global power. Naturally the other European states did not like it a bit. They entered into alliances with each other in order to alienate Germany. For example, by 1894 there was a formal alliance between Republican France and Tsarist Russia, something quite unthinkable earlier.

In 1905 itself the Germans had a military plan to attack France, again something unthinkable in Bismarck’s time. This is often referred to as the ‘Great Memorandum of 1905’.

Another important thing happened in 1905. The war between Japan and Russia that was going on since 1904 ended in a humiliating defeat for Russia. A peace treaty was signed with

the mediation of the United States. While it increased the international stature of America, it also marked a change in the balance of power with Japan making political and territorial gains with an Asian empire on the rise now.

The Russo-Japanese war made a significant impact on the domestic politics of Russia. It started a chain of political movements that ultimately redefined world politics. There was already widespread poverty in Russia. Farmers as well as workers were in distress. The long-drawn war added to their suffering. In 1905 a mass political movement started that included peasant unrest, strikes by workers and agitation by soldiers. It forced the Tsar to accept reforms such as the establishment of the parliament (State Duma), a multi-party system and ultimately the adoption of the Russian Constitution in 1906. The revolution of 1905 is often considered as the ‘dress rehearsal’ (a term used by Lenin) for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

By 1914 all the so-called ‘Great Powers’ of Europe were divided into two coalitions – there was the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy, and the Triple Entente among France, Russia and Britain.

1.2.5 World War I: Beginning and Main Events

On 28th June 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was assassinated during his visit to Sarajevo by a member of a group of Serbian and Croatian nationalists. Amid all these groundbreaking developments the immediate trigger for the First World War would seem an isolated act; it could have such catastrophic impact because of the pre-existing volatile condition in Europe.

Russia was in alliance with Serbia and helped to form an alliance of the Balkan states in order to check the expansion of Austria-Hungary in this region. In 1878 through the Treaty of Berlin Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina, another Balkan state. However, since there were many Serbs living in Bosnia, their demand for freedom from the Austrian rule continued, with support from Serbia as well as Russia.

Against this background the assassination of an Austrian prince by Serbian nationalists quickly turned into a bilateral crisis between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Germany was an ally of Austria-Hungary and Russia was of Serbia. Thus the bilateral problem snowballed into a wider diplomatic crisis known as the July Crisis involving at least three powerful European states. Countries like France and England which were not directly involved could not stay neutral for very long and war was formally declared on 28th July 1914.

By August 1914, there was a mobilisation of six million men by different European armies. That same month Germany invaded Belgium. The Belgian government had professed neutrality

in case the war breaks out. As a result, both alliances wanted to gain strategic advantage over the Belgian territory. The German invasion led to a flood of refugees and killing of an estimated 5000 civilians. It was an indication of things to come – incremental loss of civilian lives and large-scale displacement of the population. The Belgian independence from German occupation became a rallying cry for the allied powers.

The First World War took place on three main fronts. The Western front constituted of a series of trenches in France; German troops were on the western side, the British and French troops were on the east. The trench warfare, opposing armies occupying deep-dug trenches for days, men often trapped to death in those trenches became one of the lasting images of the horror of the First World War. Two years into the war, all sides involved lost a large number of combatants. For the allied forces 1916 was a particularly terrible year. The Battle of Verdun and the Battle of the Somme had seen an estimated loss of around 600,000 men only on the allied side, on the German side a million and a half men either died or were wounded.

The Eastern front was regions of Western Europe under German control, such as Prussia and Poland. Here Germany was on the western side and Russia was trying to hold the eastern side.

A so-called ‘Middle-Eastern Front’ opened when both Russia and the Ottoman Empire mobilised troops against each other. The Ottomans entered a secret alliance with the Germans. After Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire, its allies France and Britain too joined.

By 1917 both the human and economic toll inflicted by the war resulted in popular unrest and protests all over Europe. Economic blockade of the rival power was an integral part of war strategy. According to historian Michael Howard, Germany, which was industrially one of the most advanced states of Europe, suffered heavily due to the British economic blockade. In Germany, mortality among women and children increased by 50 percent. Hunger-related diseases were rampant. Howard informs that by the end of the war around 730,000 deaths were attributed by official German estimates solely to the economic blockade. However, there was food shortage in other European countries as well. Trumping up military production and the diversion of raw material and resources towards it created a crisis for the industry, high inflation added to the economic hardship, particularly of the working classes, the urban poor and lower to middle income groups. While there were beneficiaries profiteering from the ongoing war, there were strikes and food riots. The bread riots in Petrograd started the February Revolution in Russia, forcing Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate his throne, marking the end of the Romanov dynasty.

After maintaining neutrality for a long time the United States joined the war in 1917 on the Allied side. In the Asian territories still under Ottoman control a series of battles took place

between the British and Ottoman forces, the latter backed by German and Austrian troops. The Ottoman forces were gradually pushed back as the British troops entered and gained eventual control over the whole of Palestine.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the new Soviet government, under the leadership of Lenin signed a peace treaty with Germany in Brest-Litovsk in 1918, ending Russia's engagement in the war. Russia had to concede a substantial part of its territories in the East to the Germans.

Since 1917 bombardment of cities, civilian population and resources had become a fixture of the war strategy on both sides.

By late 1918 the Central army began to retreat. In Germany, a newly formed government of Social Democrats started peace negotiations with the Allied Army. On 11th November, 1918 Armistice was declared on the Western front, formally ending the war, though fighting continued on other fronts for some time. In 1919 Paris Peace Conference was held to officially end the war. A peace treaty was signed with Germany in Versailles. Separate treaties were signed with Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

1.2.6 World War I: After-Effects

1.2.6.1 Social and Economic Impact

The most immediate impact of the First World War was demographic. It was undoubtedly the deadliest war that the world had seen till then. An estimated 10 million military men died in the war. Around 2 million people are estimated to have died not directly in the battlefields but by the diseases caused by the war. Around 6 million people went missing. Millions of civilians died as a consequence of the war. Many more were maimed. Apart from the regular standing armies of respective countries a large number of young men were conscripted. Troops were instrumental in spreading the influenza pandemic of 1918 across Europe, killing a large number of people. Worldwide, one out of five people, that is, around 500 million people got sick, around 50 million died. Everything put together the First World War obliterated a large portion of the total population of Europe and proved equally deadly for a large part of the rest of the world.

The next impact, a related one, equally severe and lasting, was economic. In this war France and Germany lost more than 80% of their male population aged between 15 and 49. This had a significant impact on the economy since a large part of the productive workforce was either wiped out or impaired. Both agricultural and industrial production collapsed. There was an acute shortage of food. Every few days the price of everyday goods doubled. Due

to the war countries imposed restrictions on trade, capital flow and immigration of people. The war also resulted in increased taxation.

The conscription of a large number of men in active war duty opened doors for women to participate in economic activities to keep the home economy going. Even after the war, women's economic participation continued, even increased. This encouraged ongoing women's movements demanding voting, property and other rights. We would see in the decade following the First World War women would gain the right to vote in most European countries as well as in the United States and in Canada.

However, the economic impact was not bad for everyone. It boosted the American economy. America ramped up its natural resources in just a few years. Its economic output doubled in the four years of war, giving it competitive advantage in mass economic production. This helped immensely to catapult the United States into becoming a world power in the years following the First World War.

The First World War had a particularly devastating economic impact on Germany. German production dropped by 27%. Its debts increased. It had to print money to pay for the war. After the war it was forced to pay reparations to the Allied Forces, causing further economic distress.

Economy is directly linked to the socio-political impact of the First World War. It affected the balance of power in Europe as well as within the European countries. In Britain, for example, the economy actually grew, the government became richer but the people got poorer. The British government funded much of the war effort, but it was also forced to borrow from America. The distress of the people and huge loss of life and property resulted in civic unrest. It was not a coincidence that trade unions grew manifold during and after the years of the First World War.

Russia was badly hit. The economic distress led to a situation of mass starvation. This was a major factor behind the popular support for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

The economic hardship caused by the war and the efforts at compensating for the damages of the war caused disaffection among the German people. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were thought to be humiliating. Germany had to acknowledge complete responsibility for the war. The Allies occupied all German territory on the Left bank of the Rhine, Germany had to give up all territory won in Eastern Europe since 1914, mineral rich Alsace-Lorraine had to be restored to France. Restrictions were put on the German armed forces. National Socialists would use the discontent against the terms of defeat and reparation to fan nationalist pride in order to come to power, paving way for Nazi atrocities and the Second World War.

1.2.6.2 Political Impact

The economic and social distress caused by the First World War had a wide-ranging political impact. On one end of the spectrum there was socialist upsurge across Europe. Many within the international socialist movement were opposed to the war which they saw as an advancement of the imperialist project, at the cost of the working classes. As the war progressed, these voices were drowned in the rising jingoism and nationalist fervour. Many socialist parties had to toe the line and support the war efforts in their respective countries. However, the resulting economic crisis, growing unemployment, inflation, food scarcity brought the question of class conflict and class privilege at the centre of political activities. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia encouraged the possibility of a socialist revolution in other parts of Europe. In Germany, even before the war ended, a naval mutiny in 1918 turned into a revolution that quickly spread across several cities. Workers and Soldiers' Councils seized power on the Soviet model. The Kaiser had to abdicate power, Social Democrats, the largest party in Reichstag, formed the government. In 1919 the Spartacist uprising took place against this government. It was a working class revolt, led by the German Communist Party and conducted through a series of strikes and agitations. The revolt was brutally crushed but its ripple effect was felt across Europe. In England the Labour Party grew out of the radical trade union movement, particularly after the electoral reforms of 1918 which extended voting rights to all men aged over 21 and all women over 30. This reform added a significant number of working-class voters.

On the other end of the spectrum, disillusionment with the political establishment provided popular support to reactionary, right wing politics across Europe, epitomised by charismatic authoritarian leaders. This trend would gradually consolidate in the form of the Fascist Party in Italy and the National Socialist Party in Germany.

On the whole, the political cartography around the world underwent major changes. European powers were badly hit. The United States, on the other hand, isolated so far from the affairs of the world, grew in importance and stature.

Building on the Fourteen Points— a statement of principles prepared by the American President Woodrow Wilson as the foundation for peace negotiations – the League of Nations was founded in 1920 in the Paris Peace Conference. The Covenant of the League of Nations vowed

- to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security
- by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,
- by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,

by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and

by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another

(https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)

These became the cardinal rules guiding international relations and have been reflected in the covenants of later international bodies such as the United Nations.

The First World War also had a significant geopolitical impact on West Asia. Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the intervention of several European powers changed the shape of Greater Syria that included Palestine and present-day Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. According to Palestinian American historian Rashid Khalidi, this region suffered around half a million deaths between 1915 and 1918 along with penury, starvation and large scale dislocation. Even as the war was still on the secret agreement between France and Britain, namely the Sykes-Picot Agreement defined their respective spheres of influence, paving way for the eventual partition of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the Balkan states, the Arabs living under the Ottoman rule were not granted independence. Further in 1917, Great Britain issued the controversial Balfour Declaration in favour of “the establishment in Palestine of a home for the Jewish people”, arguably sowing the seeds of the Palestine-Israel conflict.

1.2.6.3 Literary and Cultural Impact

The First World War had both immediate and long term effects on the literary and cultural scene of Europe in the early twentieth century. The catastrophe of the war and loss of young lives in their prime were explored in war poetry that emerged as a distinct genre. Catherine Reilly in her seminal book *English Poetry of the First World War* (1978) lists more than 3000 individual war poems by more than 2000 poets. The critic Edna Longley describes poetry as the unprecedented ‘mass medium’ of the First World War in Britain. It was more or less true for other European countries as well.

The war was as much military as it was ideological. A large portion of the literature produced during and immediately after the war contributed to creating and sustaining a romanticised notion of ‘The Great War’. Leading English newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Daily Chronicle* regularly published war poems. Wartime anthologies came out in rapid succession. War poetry became part of the curriculum. In *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, Samuel Hynes describes the myth of the Great War as a Grand Narrative defining “a generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory and England” (Hynes 7). Their subsequent disillusionment created an unassailable gap between pre- and post-war England.

Many of the war poets were soldiers who had firsthand experience of the carnage, its physical and psychological impact. Many lost their lives in the War. These included English poets Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), Edward Thomas (1897-1917) and Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), French poets Charles Péguy (1873-1914) and Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918). Rupert Brooke's poetry displays patriotism and youthful idealism about the war – consider these oft-quoted lines from his sonnet “The Soldier”– “If I should die, think only this of me/That there's some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England....” or these lines from “The Dead”:

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

However, there are also instances in which the myth is questioned from within. Wilfred Owen, for example, in ‘Strange Meeting’, captures the unmitigated horrors of war with unwavering honesty:

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, —
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

Those who survived the war, such as the poet Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967), bear witness to simultaneous efforts at public memorialisation and collective forgetting, not to mention glorification of war that would often be used to mitigate the responsibility of the political leadership and growing disaffection among people. Sassoon's poem “Aftermath,” written in 1919, begins with the question, “Have you forgotten yet?” He goes on:

For the world's events rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you are a man reprieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.
But the past is just the same – and War's a bloody game...
Have you forgotten yet?...

Memory then becomes a contested territory and in the decade following the war one finds efforts to shape collective remembrance of the war as war novels and memoirs pour out. John Hay Beith's novel *The Five Hundred Thousand* published in 1916 (two sequels published in 1917) exhibits a certain kind of positive portrayal of the war from a soldier's perspective. Ernest Raymonds' *Tell England* (1922), recounting the sacrifices of two English public school boys who volunteer for service and die in action, exemplifies construction of a sanitised and sentimental memory of the war. A more critical approach towards the war can be found in Siegfried Sassoon's semi-autobiographical Sherston novels, particularly in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930). Memoirs started coming out a little later and included Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Richard Arlington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (1933) etc.

Some of the most comprehensive critiques of the war came from women writers and activists. Irene Cooper Willis, a member of the radical faction of the British Labour Party, brought out *How We Went into War: A Study of Liberal Idealism* (1918) questioning not just the war efforts but liberal values. Dora Marsden, the founding editor of *Freewomen* maintained a similar critical stance.

The war was seen not only as a political crisis, but also as a civilisational crisis; a complete and irreparable break from the past. It impacted national identities, class consciousness and gender identities. It shook Europe's confidence in its own political and cultural superiority to the core, paving way for a sense of disenchantment with the status quo, political as well as cultural.

Apart from those who fell in the war and those who survived there was a third group which would have a significant impact in shaping the public discourse around the war. They were the deserters and conscientious objectors, exposing the moral futility of war and resisting its glorification. Many of them ended up in Switzerland, a declared neutral zone. There were many other exiles residing in Switzerland at that time such as V. L. Lenin and the Irish writer James Joyce.

One such conscientious objector was the German artist Hugo Ball (1886-1927), who, along with Emmy Hennings (1885-1948), opened a bohemian gathering in Zurich in 1916 named Cabaret Voltaire. Other experimental artists and poets such as the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) and the German writer Richard Huelsenbeck (1892-1974) joined and began to ‘perform’ their poetry in the cabaret. There would often be ‘simultaneous poems’ – three or more poets reciting their poems simultaneously in different languages, creating deliberate cacophony. They brought together different ideas and techniques explored by various avant-garde art movements of the day. Tzara, Ball and others named their efforts ‘Dada’ – an apparently meaningless word, the first utterances of a child – a word that means ‘nothing’, to quote Tzara’s *Dada Manifesto 1918*. It marked a conscious rupture not only with the past but between the settled link of word and meaning, sense and reason.

Cultural modernism was already underway in pre-war Europe in the form of different art movements such as Futurism, Cubism and Expressionism. However, Dadaism was the first among the European avant-garde that came directly as a response to the First World War. Surrealist André Breton remarks, “Cubism was a school of painting, futurism a political movement: DADA is a state of mind” (Nicholls 247). This state of mind was characterised by a spirit of rejection, scepticism and anarchism shaped by the devastations of the First World War. Hans Arp, the German French artist and sculptor involved with the Dada movement, writes, “In Zurich in 1915, losing interest in the slaughterhouses of the world war, we turned to the fine arts” (Nicholls 247). Their turn to ‘Fine Art’ is not to seek refuge in some kind of an idealised world created by art; rather to turn art against itself. Dada is often considered anti-art. However, it did not deny the relevance of art; just questioned the piety and purity associated with it. Hugo Ball writes in 1916, “What we are celebrating is at once a buffoonery and a requiem mass” (Ball 51).

In spite of there being a manifesto, Dadaism was never a programmatic aesthetic movement. The manifesto questioned the foundations of any such movement – “Does anyone think he has found a psychic base common to all mankind? The attempt of Jesus and the Bible covers with their broad benevolent wings: shit, animals, days. How can one expect to put order into the chaos that constitutes that infinite and shapeless variation: man?” It declares: “...Dada was born of a need for independence, of a distrust toward unity. Those who are with us preserve their freedom. We recognize no theory”. *The Dada Manifesto 1918* also questions the objective value attached to the subjective experience of art and its relation with the capitalist order. Even the most radical experiments of modernist artists do not “prevent the canvas from being a good or bad painting suitable for the investment of intellectual capital” (https://writing.upenn.edu/library/Tzara_Dada-Manifesto_1918.pdf).

Some of the features associated with Dadaism are:

- Rejection of the traditional view of art
- Expression of anger
- An ironic postulation
- Dark Humour
- Sound Poetry and Performance Poetry
- Replacing conventional use of language with verbal gestures that do not necessarily ‘mean’ anything – “the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies” (Tzara 13)

(Consult relevant and authentic documents on the internet and note down important points on ‘Dada Manifesto’ and Dadaism)

The Dada movement added to already ongoing experiments with artistic forms, questioning, overhauling or overthrowing conventional rules dictating the relation of form and content. All such movements, paralleling, criss-crossing, even contradicting one another at times constituted literary and cultural modernism that will be discussed in Module 2, Unit 4.

The fact that rational political decision making could lead to such mass slaughter put the discourse of Enlightenment rationality, the edifice of western modernity, under scanner (Again not to forget that the European colonies have witnessed mass extermination in the name of civilisation for a long time. But now, Europeans themselves faced the same and were horrified by it). This realisation necessitated new forms and vocabulary to express the horror. Ezra Pound published “Studies in Contemporary Mentality,” a series published through 1917, exploring and critiquing the ‘reasonableness’ of war.

The looming shadow of the First World War can obviously be detected in other well-known modernist texts such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* or “Sweeney among the Nightingales” which, according to Vincent Sherry, presents “the ‘Lost Generation’ of the first post-war moment” (Sherry 124). In the poem ‘Gerontion’ composed in 1919, Eliot questions:

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving.

1.2.7 World War I: An Unfinished War

The First World War is often seen as a historical rupture – a moment in history that changed everything. And it did, in many ways. But it also preserved much of the history that came right before it. You must have noted that in this unit we have discussed events going as far back as the late nineteenth century in order to understand the reasons behind the First World War. Geoff Dyer writes in his book *The Missing of the Somme*, “Life in the decade and a half preceding 1914 has come to be viewed inevitably and unavoidably through the optic of the war that followed it” (Dyer 5). On the other hand, historians such as Michael Howard consider the two World Wars as essentially one, “a Thirty Years War of the twentieth century, a war interrupted by twenty one years of peace” (qtd. in Purdue 19). There were obvious causal links between the two World Wars. But their linkage goes beyond causality. Even though the two World Wars began with the impetus of imperialist nation-states to expand their territorial boundaries, they signify the emergence of the ‘Empire as a world order’ as opposed to the good old imperialism. Whereas imperialism is about territorial expansion, Empire as world order does not depend on fixed territorial boundaries; it is an instrument of rule which is ‘decentred and deterritorializing’ (This last bit is taken from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s famous book *Empire*, written in 2001. You can have a look into this book, it gives you an idea how the modern empire is more than controlling land; it is about controlling resources).

1.2.8 Summing Up

This unit, as you must have noticed, has examined the background of the First World War from various perspectives. It has analysed the factors that led to the War, in the process going back to the events of the late nineteenth century. It has explored the main events that took place during the War and analysed their importance. Moreover, it has assessed the political, economic and socio-cultural impact of the War. Most importantly, the discussion on the impact of the War on literature will help you understand many of the literary works included in your syllabus.

1.2.9 Comprehension Exercises:

Essay Type Questions:

1. Critically examine the causes of the First World War.
2. Comment on the socio-political effects of the First World War.

3. Critically analyse the impact of the First World War on English literature of the twentieth century.

Mid-length Questions;

1. How would you relate European literary modernism to the First World War? Elucidate.
2. Do you consider The First World War to be the result of imperialist aspirations of competing nation-states? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Did the First 'World War' give rise to the concept of the 'world as a battleground'? Give your considered opinion.
4. Write a short note on the Unification of Germany.
5. Write a short note on the concept of the 'Age of Empire'.
6. What is Balkan crisis? Elaborate.
7. What did the Covenant of the League of Nations vow? Elucidate the points.
8. Will you consider World War I as an 'unfinished war'? Explain.

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Which were the opposing power blocks involved in the First World War?
2. What is Peace of Westphalia?
3. Who was the Archduke Franze Ferdinand? What happened to him?
4. How and when was the League of Nations established?
5. What is Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points'?
6. Who is Tristan Tzara?
7. What is 'Dada Manifesto'? Why is it important?

1.2.10 Suggested Readings

Ball, Hugo. 'Dada Fragments, 1916-1917'. ed. Robert Motherwell. *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1989.

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Unit 3 □ The Second World War: An Overview

Structure

- 1.3.1 Objectives**
- 1.3.2 Introduction**
- 1.3.3 Causes of the War**
- 1.3.4 Major Events and Developments**
- 1.3.5 The End of Empires**
- 1.3.6 Literature**
- 1.3.7 Summing Up**
- 1.3.8 Comprehension Exercises**
- 1.3.9 Suggested Reading**

1.3.1 Objectives

This Unit is a continuation of the earlier units dealing with the historical background of the Modern Age. It attempts to familiarise students with the causes, developments, consequences and the literature of the Second World War.

1.3.2 Introduction

The Second World War was declared on September 3, 1939. The war was fought between Britain, France and Russia, who were later joined by the United States of America forming the Allied forces, and Germany, also supported later by Italy and Japan who comprised the Axis powers. The war which began as a European conflict later assumed a global character with Germany raiding the French and British colonies in northern Africa and West Asia. Similarly, Japan occupied several islands in the Pacific Ocean, the South China Sea and large parts of South-east Asia.

As a consequence, the war, ironically, revived the anti-imperialist movements across the world. The suppressed Boers re-established their apartheid regime in South Africa in 1948; Rashid Ali seized power in Iraq in 1941 but was quickly crushed; India intensified her nationalist movement and finally won freedom at the midnight of August 15, 1947. The Japanese invasion drove the French from their possessions in Indochina. The United States, however, was opposed to this extension of Japanese power and imposed trade and maritime

sanctions on the latter. Japan, therefore retaliated by attacking the U.S. naval and air-force base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaii on December 7,1941 thus giving the war a pan-continental character. In this sense World War II could also be considered a “total war” not only because it involved several nations across the globe but also for witnessing the complete defeat and subjugation of Germany and, finally, Japan with the first use of nuclear weapons when the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9,1945, respectively, thereby bringing the war to an end.

1.3.3 Causes of the War

Unlike the First World War, there was little doubt or controversy regarding the origins and causes of World War II. The hostilities were mainly ascribed to the power and policies of Adolf Hitler (April 20,1889-April 30, 1945) and the racial and imperialist ambitions of Nazi Germany. However, it has now been historically confirmed that the beginnings of World War II can be traced to the First Great War, more specifically, to the Treaty of Versailles signed by the Allied victors and Germany in 1919. In fact many of the world leaders who participated in the Peace Conference which followed World War I together with later historians were unanimous about the Treaty as a shocking instance of injustice against Germany. Not only was this nation compelled to compensate the war-costs of the Allied forces, but was also economically devastated, territorially divided and nationally humiliated.

Moreover, the Versailles Treaty did not honour the terms of the Armistice of 1918 which had formally announced a ceasefire. France, thus brazenly occupied the Ruhr region in 1923 and went on to divide several parts of West Germany carving a Polish corridor and granting Bavaria and then Danzig, a major German sea-port, independence but under the control of French government (Hobsbawm 37). Several British statesmen described these moves as “acts of war”; and a contemporary newspaper predicted that “Day by day another European war is being made more and more certain...” (Fuller 21). Thus, the instability in European politics after World War I quickly escalated into aggression such as the German intervention in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in1935, the German re-occupation of the Ruhr and Rhineland in1936, the German invasion of Austria in 1938 and of Czechoslovakia in 1939. Finally, in 1940, Germany attacked and occupied Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Britain was, therefore, left with the challenging task of withstanding and repelling the German *juggernaut* (*juggernaut*: large, powerful and destructive force that cannot be stopped) (Hobsbawm 37).

1.3.4 Major Events and Developments

Historians have suggested that one of the reasons for the effortless German overpowering of France was the total economic, material and moral exhaustion of the French army and its citizens after the ravages of World War I (Fuller 82-83). Moreover, the use of a World War I strategy of entrenched warfare, by creating a long stretch of the Maginot line Front to block the German advance, proved futile against the enemy's superior tank and aircraft attacks. Thus the German tactic of a *blitzkrieg* or lightning war of annihilation and exhaustion reduced the French to concede defeat and accept a provisional French 'state' with its capital at Vichy, a health resort (Hobsbawm 38).

By removing France from the European theatre of war, the Germans could now concentrate on dealing with the invasion of Britain. However, the English Channel stood as a major deterrent against the German advance for, as Shakespeare had written in *Richard II*, it acted as a natural defence, "This fortress built by Nature for herself,/ Against infection and the hand of war,/ This happy breed of men, this little world,/ This precious stone set in the silver sea,/ Which serves it in the office of a wall/ Or as a moat defensive to a house" (Act 2, Sc1, ll 43-48).

Having lost her ally on the Continent, England, however, was denied the territory and the military strength to confront Germany on land. Therefore, the British had to depend on its navy and air-force, particularly the fighter plane, the *Spitfire* which inflicted considerable destruction on the German air-force, the *Luftwaffe*. Together with this, the Royal Navy guarded the Strait of Dover protecting the passage of American ships carrying food and military supplies to the besieged island. In fact, by declaring war against the U.S. and then by attacking Russia in 1941 Germany seemed to have sealed its inevitable defeat in this war. Hitler miscalculated the Russian determination to fight back after the initial German victories in the North. Repulsed by the proverbial Russian winter, the Germans thus capitulated before the relentless march of the Russians towards Berlin. They were joined by the Americans who, in 1941, had joined the Allied forces. On May 7, 1945 Germany unconditionally surrendered at the Allied Headquarters in Rheims, France; then on May 8, this instrument of submission was ratified under Russian supervision thus bringing to an end the European phase of this war.

In the Asian theatre of the war, Japan continued its unopposed aggression and occupation of the South Asian countries and several Pacific islands. This forced the U.S. to intervene to protect its own trade and imperial ambitions in the region. Finally, the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 forced the U.S. into an active participation in the war against Japan. The Americans, however, first concentrated on defeating Germany which took another three

years; then, to prevent a prolonged engagement in the East, it dropped the two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which, conclusively, ended the Second World War.

1.3.5 The End of Empires

As one of the most important British colonies, India became automatically involved in the war. Therefore, a considerable amount of man-power and material resources was supplied from this nation to the war effort. The contribution of Indian soldiers in assisting the Allied forces in achieving victory over the Axis powers was unanimously recognized by British commanders. In fact, the Indian Division's role in Europe, Africa and in withstanding the march of the Japanese army in South East Asia received glowing tributes. General Sir William Slim, Commander of the 14th Army deployed against the Japanese, thus observed in 1946: "India was our base, and three-quarters of everything we got was from there. The best thing of all we got from India was the Indian army. Indeed the campaign in Burma (now Myanmar) was largely an Indian army campaign. The bulk of the fighting troops and almost the whole of those on the lines of communication were soldiers of the Indian Army, and magnificent they were".

The war, however, had a disastrous effect on the Indian economy and society. There was a rapid increase in the prices of essential commodities owing to an acute inflation following the British move on trading only against gold reserves. The diversion of resources towards the war effort created a severe scarcity of food items that had a direct effect on the common citizen. The Report of the National Planning Committee formed in 1938 clearly admitted to the failure of the government rationing system which encouraged corruption and the black-market. In fact, it has now been confirmed that the dreadful Bengal Famine, which killed about a million and a half of poor Bengalis was a consequence of the war and the inhuman indifference of the colonial administration (Majumdar 971).

As a result it soon became evident that the World War gave a significant impetus to the Indian Nationalist movement. This movement had asserted its demand for self-government (*Swaraj*) and adopted Non-cooperation as its strategy in the Congress Conference in Calcutta as early as 1920. In fact, the Congress who had formed a provincial government in 1937, opposed the British decision to drag India into the war. They demanded that the war aims include the end of the Raj and a granting of freedom to India. In 1940 the Civil Disobedience was revived by Mahatma Gandhi which soon became a mass struggle in 1942. The British government adopted severe repressive measures – arrested all the Congress leaders and crushed all peaceful protests with arms.

Despite suppressing all such popular non-violent movements, the British were faced with another armed challenge when Subhas Chandra Bose, a former Congress president, had

escaped arrest in 1941 and thereby established contact with Germany and Japan for assistance in an armed struggle against the British. Therefore, under an agreement with the Japanese government, Bose gathered the Indian soldiers, taken prisoner by the Japanese in Malaya, to form the 'Azad Hind Fauz' or the Indian National Army. Inaugurating the Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore on October 21, 1943, Bose's army joined the Japanese army to the eastern frontier of India. Bose's example was followed by the Royal Indian Navy which, on February 14, 1946 mutinied and shook the confidence of the British Raj. Independence, however, did not come to India before the fateful and tragic division of the Indian subcontinent, particularly, of the Punjab and Bengal to form the nation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947. Following this, India won freedom from British rule on August 15, 1947. Similarly, Burma and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) which were British colonies gained self-rule the following year. Finally, after the surrender of Japan, the majority Muslim population of Malaya (now Malaysia) organized a movement demanding self-government called the Malayan Emergency in 1948 and was successful in acquiring independence from the British in 1957 to form a federation of eleven states named Malaysia.

1.3.6 Literature

In comparison with the literature of the First World War, that of the Second has not been able to claim an equal respect, prominence and significance in the histories of English literature. This may be ascribed to the fact that the horrors, anguish and tragedies of the Great War, because it was the first of its kind and marked a complete break with the great history and tradition of Western civilization, seemed to predict its decline and dissolution. Moreover, the inter-war years which feature the great works of the major modernist writers, namely, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster, seemed to overshadow the literature of the war that followed (Bergonzi 71).

The idea of the war poet in fact was a development more specific to the First World War and was not commonly associated with the Second. The popular image of a patriotic Rupert Brooke or the pitiful protest of Wilfred Owen were somewhat missing in the latter. The general feeling among the poets and novelists in this period was, as Bernard Bergonzi observes, "a stoical acceptance that since the folly of politicians had made the war unavoidable, Nazi Germany had to be defeated, but there should be no conventional heroics, nor any illusions about what war involved or any false expectation about the likely triumphs of the outcome". This sentiment is aptly expressed in Herbert Reads's poem, 'To a Conscript of 1940': "There are heroes who have heard the rally and have seen/ the glitter of a garland around their head./ / Theirs is a hollow victory. They are deceived./ But you my brother and my ghost, if you can

go/Knowing that there is no reward, no certain use/ In all your sacrifice, then honour is reprieved” (qtd. in Bergonzi 71).

T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, which appeared in 1944, is one of the major poems to have been inspired by the war. Basically a poem of memory and introspection, the poem tries to trace the poet’s American origins which went to shape his identity. Eliot repeatedly uses the metaphor of darkness, which is literally a reference to the black-out of England during the war, regretfully observing, “O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,/ The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant,/the captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters,/ The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and rulers,/ ... all go into the dark” (“East Coker” Part III, 1-6). The poem also reflects on the loss and uncertainty of the times and its consequent sense of spiritual crisis. In fact, the opening lines of *Burnt Norton*, the first poem in the series, with Eliot’s preoccupation with the idea of time can be considered a relevant comment on the period: “Time present and time past/ Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past./ If all time is eternally present/ All time is unredeemable” (“Burnt Norton”, Part I, 1-5).

An important development for English poetry during the war years was poetic movement calling itself the New Apocalypse or Neo-Romanticism. This movement rejected the social and political poetry of the Auden group of poets. The poets of the New Apocalypse thus emphasised individualism, subjectivity, mythology and medievalism in their poetry. The movement was based on the poetry of Dylan Thomas (1914-53), a Welsh writer with a gift for experiments in language, rhythm and syntax, whose poetry mainly dealt with the themes of man and nature, memories of childhood and the individual’s search for sexual and spiritual fulfillment in poems such as, “Fern Hill”, “In Country Sleep”, “Poem on his Birthday” and “In the White Giant’s Thigh.” Thomas also wrote a set of poems on the air raids namely, “Deaths and Entrances”, “Ceremony after a Fire Raid” and the much anthologized, “A Refusal to Mourn the Death by Fire of a Child in London”.

The poetry of the New Apocalypse appeared in two anthologies, *The White Horseman* (1941) and *The Crown and the Sickle* (1944) containing the poems of J.F. Hendry, Henry Treece, G.S. Frazer and Nicholas Moore. Moore’s poem, “Soldiers in Ice” included in the collection, *The Glass Tower* (1944) was a notable poem on World War II. However, among the many who were contributing to the popular literary journal, *Horizon* (1940) and in *Penguin New Writing* (1941) three can be considered as representative of the poetry of this time: Alun Lewis (1915-44), Keith Douglas (1920-44) and Sidney Keyes (1922-43). All of them died in their twenties in the war but left behind a recognizable collection of writing. Lewis, who was Welsh, displayed a satirical and tragic sensibility in his poem, “All Day It Has Rained”; his poems collected in *Raiders Dawn* (1942) and short stories in *The Last*

Inspection (1943) remain important works of this period. Douglas's poems reveal his preoccupation with death as in the noted poems, "Simplify Me When I'm Dead" which appeared in his *Selected Poems* (1943). His *Alamein to Zem Zem*, published posthumously in 1946, is one of the best prose memoirs of the war. Like Douglas, Keyes's poetry also shows a natural concern with death; this elegiac element marks the two collections, *The Iron Laurel* (1942) and the posthumous, *The Cruel Solstice* (1943). Another World War II poet often overlooked was Henry Reed (1914-86) whose *Map of Verona* (1946) contained two of the finest poems from the section "Lessons of the War" – "Naming of Parts" and "Judging Distances": "Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,/ We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,/ We shall have what to do after firing. But today/ Today we have naming of parts."

A notable development during the war was the growth of the short story or prose sketch. A representative collection is available in Dan Davin's *Short Stories of the Second World War* (1983). Alun Lewis's "They Came," "Private Jones" and "Night Journey" were among the foremost examples. Another writer, Julian Maclaren-Ross (1912-64) whose collection, *The Stuff to Give to the Troops* (1944) contains a remarkable comic piece called, "A Bit of a Smash in Madras." Henry Green's (1905-73) stories gave some the most graphic descriptions of fire-fighting in "A Rescue" and "Mr Jonas" and he was joined in this theme by William Sansom's (1912-76) striking piece titled, "The Wall." One of the most distinctive stories written about the war was Elizabeth Bowen's (1899-1973) "Mysterious Kor" describing the fantasy encounter between a girl and a soldier in the dark and crumbling landscape of bombed London.

The war years, however, were not very encouraging for the novel. There hardly was an emergence of any significant new writer or the publication of a prominent work. In fact, there was a sharp decline of the number novels from 4222 in 1939 to 1179 in 1945 (Bergonzi 27). A major reason for this may have been the shortage of paper; also, quite evidently, the young writers in service or other war work found little time or freedom to write novels. Nevertheless, despite this recession notable novels did not cease to appear during these years.

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), who committed suicide in 1941 completed, but was unable to revise her *Between the Acts* which was later published by Leonard Woolf that same year. Situated in the end of the inter-war period in a typical English village it has premonitions of the approaching battle in its references to low-flying aircraft. However, and characteristically, the novel deals more with a belief in the power of art to overcome the ravages of time. The London blitz features largely in Graham Greene's (1904-91) *The Ministry of Fear* (1943). Like his novels, *It's a Battlefield* (1938) and *The Confidential Agent* (1945), it was listed by Greene as an 'entertainment' or thriller. However, it remains one the best recreations of

wartime London. Evelyn Waugh's (1903-66) *Put Out More Flags* (1942) was a satirical account of the early days of the war which was termed, by Waugh, in the novel as the 'Phoney War'. Though *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) was set in the period of the war it tends to be more of a retrospective portrait of an England in the early decades of the century.

The other novels of this period which deserves attention include Henry Green's *Caught* (1939), Patrick Hamilton's *Hangover Square* (1941) and Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome* (1941). Together with these, George Orwell's (1903-50) novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Air* (1939) seem to predict the bombing of London. Drawing on his experience of the Nazi-occupied Europe, Arthur Koestler (1905-83) published his first novel in English – *Arrival and Departures* in 1943. Finally, Kingsley Amis's (1922-95) novella, "I Spy Strangers" which was included in his collection of short stories, *My Enemy's Enemy* (1962) is a remarkable commentary on the war against the backdrop of the complex negotiations of European politics.

Any account of wartime writing would remain incomplete without a consideration of the non-fiction prose. Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (1941) was acclaimed as a collection of perceptive commentaries on English life and Western civilisation. Richard Hillary's memoir, *The Last Enemy* (1942) was a detailed and graphic account of his war experiences as a fighter pilot during and after he was shot down in flames terribly burned and temporarily blinded. During this time there was an equal tendency among British writer to write of earlier times before the war; thus, a literature of nostalgia and escape became evident in such works as Cyril Connolly's *The Unquiet Grave* (1944) and Osbert Sitwell's autobiographies. Koestler's collection of essays, *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1945) also drew attention for its memorable insights on wartime England. Koestler thus warned his readers that while one totalitarian power had been defeated another was waiting to emerge in Europe. Though, widely criticised for his views at this time, his writing seemed to anticipate the nature of the developments in the postwar world. The Second World War in which about sixty million lives were lost and much more maimed and rendered homeless remains an apocalyptic disaster in world history. Probably the best observation on this event is contained in the following sentence from Orwell's *The Lion and the Unicorn*: "As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me" (Bergonzi 17).

1.3.7. Summing Up

This unit attempted to map the historical background of the twentieth century and the Modern period by giving a brief but comprehensive account of the Second World War. Therefore, it sought the causes of the war and its major developments. Further, it suggested that a significant consequence of the war was the decline and dissolution of British imperialism

particularly in India and South Asia. Finally, there is a detailed chronicle of the literature written about and during this period.

1.3.8. Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer type questions:

1. Discuss the major causes and developments of the Second World War.
2. Consider the main events that led to the end of the British Raj in India.
3. Give a critical account of the stories and novels written during the war years.
4. Critically analyse the revival of Romantic poetry during wartime.

Medium-answer type questions:

1. How did the Second World War affect India?
2. How would you explain the comparative indifference towards the literature of World War II?
3. Suggest an explanation of the nostalgic recreation of an earlier pre-war England in some of the works written during this period.

Short-answer type questions:

1. Briefly comment on the importance of the Treaty of Versailles.
2. Write a note on the poetry of the New Apocalypse.
3. Explain the reasons for the decline of the novel in the war years.
4. Write a short note on the non-fiction prose of World War II.

1.3.9. Suggested Reading

Allen, Walter. *Tradition and Dream: A Critical Survey of British and American Fiction from the 1920s to the Present*. London and New York: Penguin, 1994.

Beevon, Antony. *The Second World War*. London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2012.

Bergonzi, Bernard. *Wartime and Aftermath. English Literature and Its Background, 1939-1960*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Fuller, J.F.C. *The Second World War 1939-1945*. 1948. New Delhi: The English Book Store, 1969.

Geyer, Michael and Adam Tooze ed. *The Cambridge History of the Second World War: Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*. V 3. London: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Module-2

**The Modern Age: Intellectual and Cultural
Contexts**

Unit 4 □ Modern, Modernity and Modernism

Structure

- 2.4.1 Objectives
- 2.4.2 Introduction
- 2.4.3 Modern
- 2.4.4 Modernity
- 2.4.5 Modernism I
- 2.4.6 Modernism II
- 2.4.7 Summing up
- 2.4.8 Comprehension Exercises
- 2.4.9 Suggested Reading

2.4.1 Objectives

This module is aimed at acquainting students with the three basic terms whose meanings and implications are essential for an understanding of the literature of the modern period.

2.4.2 Introduction

The keywords *Modern*, *Modernity* and *Modernism* form a triad which helps to trace a historical ancestry and a conceptual map for the art and literature of the modern period. Though the terms are evidently linked and have an overlap of meanings and ideas, they also involve important differences which need to be carefully identified to recognise the contesting relationships between them. The terms are thus part of an aesthetic and cultural history in which they often tend to respond and react against each other. Therefore, though Modern remains foundational in this relationship, Modernism defines itself by opposing and sometimes denying it. Similarly, Modernity's contribution to Modernism remains doubtful and ambiguous owing to a conflict of interests and intentions among them. Consequently, any attempt to understand the literary and cultural developments of this time would require a serious engagement with the terms which contribute its identity and nature.

2.4.3 Modern

In an essay written in the 1960s entitled, ‘Modernisms’, Frank Kermode observed, “Somebody should write the history of the ‘modern’; and he went to add that the term implied a serious relationship with the past ... that requires criticism and, indeed, reimagining.” Though attempting such a history would be ambitious and gratuitous here, its necessity becomes evident when the etymological and semantic journey of the term is traced. *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (1993) therefore states that the term ‘modern’ comes from the French ‘moderne’ which is itself derived from the Latin ‘modernus’ from the root ‘modo’ meaning ‘just now’. This sense is a continuation of the Latin ‘hodiernus’ suggesting ‘of today’ or pertaining to ‘the present and recent times’ as opposed to the remote past. The term thus designated current fashion and not that which had become obsolete; a form of language in present use or at its most recent stage of development; and, finally, art and architecture marked by a departure from traditional themes and forms.

Raymond Williams in his book, *Keywords* (1981, [1976]) points out that, in its earliest sense, ‘modern’ was nearer in meaning to ‘contemporary’ or ‘something existing now’. Thus in the late fifth century, the Latin ‘modernus’ was used to refer to the Christian present as against the Roman past; similarly, modern English was distinguished from Middle English. A conventional literary comparison used to explain the term during the Renaissance would be a contrast between the ‘Ancients and Moderns’. In fact, the modern period of literature is usually traced to the sixteenth century, often considered to be a part of what is termed the ‘Early Modern’ period. For the neo-Classical writers of the eighteenth century, the Ancient-Modern contrast implied the idea of the ‘new’; modern became ‘of the now or the present’ and thus the ‘new’ thereby attesting to the term’s fluidity of meaning.

In England, however, the term modern did not acquire any special prominence. After the publication of George Meredith’s *Modern Love* in 1862, it remained in obscurity till Michael Roberts’s anthology, *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* which appeared in 1936. It soon became evident that the sense of the term was conflated with the idea of ‘new’, innumerable references of which are found in the 1890s such as the ‘New Spirit’, the ‘New Hedonism’, the ‘New Drama’, the ‘New Party’ and the ‘New Woman’. Therefore, when Ezra Pound (1885-1972) raised the slogan, “Make It New” for Modernism in his 1934 collection of essays, it became a necessary signature of the writing which emerged and dominated the literature of Europe, England and America between 1880 and 1950. This was variously named as the literature of ‘the Modern’ or of Modernism generally conforming to the

exhortation of the French poet, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891): “It is necessary to be absolutely modern.”

The innovations that defined the ‘newness’ about the ‘modern’ has been addressed in the earlier module. However, what was distinctive about the development of the new industry and technology was a definitive shift from the ‘heavy’ industries of the nineteenth century to a science and technology which was more personal, domestic and even invisible such as electricity, x-rays and radiation. The personalised nature of technology became evident in the motor car, telephone, radio, gramophone and other household gadgets causing a transition of the character of industry from that of production to consumption. Further, the development of mass communication and the airplane deeply affected and changed both the nature of war and everyday individual experience – as illustrated in Virginia Woolf’s (1882-1941) novel, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).

One important result of these new developments was a growth of mass culture in Europe and America between 1880 and the Second World War. In Britain, this was influenced by the extension of education following the Education Act of 1870. Not only did this legislation increase the level of literacy but also created a new reading public, particularly, among the working-class. Thus while in the nineteenth it was believed that the working-class could be kept under control by keeping them illiterate, the twentieth century was prompted to admit that this control could be achieved by making them read the ‘right’ kind of books. The Newbolt Report published in 1921, in fact, argued that the teaching of English Literature would have a considerable influence in developing the shared nationalist and social values and beliefs that would bring a sense of order in the new industrial masses. Therefore, the inclusion of English literature as a discipline in universities was strongly recommended by two professors of Cambridge University – F.R. Leavis and I.A. Richards.

The growth of a reading public brought about a significant change in publishing and the nature of the relationship between the writer and society which was distinctive to the Modern. With paper becoming cheaper and the printing and marketing of books more efficient, it became possible to produce newspapers, journals and books in large quantities and at exceptionally reduced prices. The demand for a variety of subject matter encouraged publishers to oppose the monopoly of the circulating libraries such as that of Charles Mudie. In 1885 George Moore published a pamphlet attacking these libraries – *Literature as Nurse or Circulating Morals*– and then, that same year, went to publish a novel in a single volume called *The Mummer’s Wife*. This became a direct challenge to the convention of the expensive three-decker or three-volume novels established by these libraries.

With the one-volume novel, writers gained a greater freedom over the length and structure of their work; it allowed them to experiment with the traditional forms and styles of fiction to produce shorter and more poetic novels. A fundamental change, however, was created between writers and readers. Therefore, the stable sense of beliefs and values shared by the Victorian novelist with readers was denied to the twentieth century author whose work was at the mercy of the economics of contemporary taste and the open market. Though modern writers were free to innovate with their own individual artistic beliefs and styles, they also became increasingly distanced from their readers losing much of the authority and influence of their Victorian predecessors.

The term 'bestseller' first appeared in the 1890s and can thus be considered another modern addition. During this decade lists of bestsellers began appearing in newspapers and journals. The bestseller which catered to a mass readership for their gripping plots, credible characters and a shared system of values became a direct threat to the innovative, complex and serious work of the modernist writers. This anxiety about popular and mass literature had already been voiced by Matthew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and reiterated by several modernist thinkers such as Theodore Adorno (1903-69) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) in their book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). A split was, therefore, created between the literature of the masses and that of the educated and intellectual reader. In the writing of the great modernists such as Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (1882-1941) there developed a literature of 'high modernism', particularly after World War I, whose intellectual range and formal experimentation challenged and were often considered hostile by the common reader. In spite of its generic and natural links, critics have, therefore, admitted that the experimental tendency of Modernism was a reaction against the historical developments and implications of the term Modern.

2.4.4 Modernity

In his essay, 'The Painter of Modern Life' written in 1860, the noted nineteenth century French poet, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) is said to have first used the term 'modernity'. For Baudelaire the term referred to an art which was popular and, therefore, transient. The term, however, has a wider historical implication by which it designates the Modern Age as beginning in the Renaissance, developing through the Age of Enlightenment and, finally, including in its sweep, the twentieth century. Therefore, the term implicitly identifies with Renaissance humanism and the consequent secularization of European society; it adopts and advocates the Enlightenment belief in reason, progress and human mastery over

nature; and, eventually, it engages with the life and ideas which followed industrialisation, urbanisation and the radical changes which characterised the society and culture of the twentieth century. The term Modernism, which denotes the art, literature and culture of the first half of this last century, therefore, forms a small phase within the wider historical rubric of Modernity.

The world-historical origins of the term, therefore, imply that it can be contextualised within the important economic and social developments and changes in Europe during the periods of its development. One of the main features of this change and growth is the shift from feudalism to capitalism that reorganised agricultural and rural life in Britain towards the end of the fifteenth century. This was evident in the growth of commerce and the emergence of towns and cities. This major transition was considerably hastened by the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries. This resulted in a massive migration from the country to the city and the inevitable shift in the forms and customs of life from the rural to the urban. Thus, the stable values of a community experience disintegrated in the random variety, anonymity and alienation of city life. This is clearly apparent in the change of the nature of work. Earlier, labour was organised in terms of the seasons, the light of the day and the time taken to complete a task; now, factory and industrial jobs were fixed by clock time. Therefore modernity and modernism tend to be anxiously preoccupied by this sense of time.

One of the significant influences which shaped the idea of modernity was the Enlightenment. This refers to a process involving a search for rational and universal laws that named, classified and ordered the natural and human worlds. The Enlightenment, therefore, believed that history was an onward enterprise towards human progress and development; and that the 'rational' individual had a responsibility to be the observer, knower and master of the environment. Originating in the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment tended to promote a Europe-centered view of the universe; thus, the European world-order became dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing inspiration from the extension of the frontiers of knowledge brought about by global travel, the movement imbibed ideas from the philosophical writings of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the scientific discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and the French thinkers such as Voltaire (1694-1778) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). While the French Revolution of 1789 represented a celebration of its values, the working-class uprisings of 1848 incipiently marked the beginnings of a distrust which anticipated its possible defeat.

Therefore, announcing the emergence of human civilisation from ignorance and superstition, the Enlightenment emphasised modernity as a mastery over nature contributing to the growth

of knowledge needed to establish progress in society, governance, ethics, art, and literature. Modernity thus saw the emergence of the nation-state and the triumph of capitalism and industrialisation which created imperial ambitions and the new social and class conflicts. These implications, however, has led to a redefinition of modernity in recent times. Predicated in the Enlightenment, the term has thus been considered as an assertion of European superiority, power and control justifying the notion of Empire.

Modernism, therefore, has a complex relationship with modernity implying a critique and often a denial of the latter. Though acknowledging its association with the general tradition, modernism opposes the rationalist and dominating spirit of Enlightenment modernity as having failed to liberate human society reducing men and women to become subjects of, what Adorno calls, 'instrumental reason'. This tends to divide human society by assuming autocratic control in the imperial projects and in the suppression of the working class. Therefore, the progressive ideas and intentions of modernity became the focus of controversy and criticism in the writing of such thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Karl Marx (1818-1883).

2.4.5 Modernism I: Ideas and Features

Modernism is a movement which involved the thought, art, literature and culture of the period between the end of the nineteenth century and the Second World War. This movement has been generally identified by the development of an individual form and style of expression; this was the consequence of the formal experiments and innovations that characterised the literature of this period. Therefore, art and literature made radical departures from history and tradition redefining thematic concerns and expressive modes thereby assuming the nature of the *avantgarde* or 'advance guard' which denoted an enterprise at the forefront of change and experimentation; a cultural attempt to search for new ways of viewing life and art which included a sense of both the aesthetic and the ideological. The *avantgarde*, therefore, became a prophecy of change and an anticipation of a revolutionary literature of the future.

However, as a movement in art and literature modernism is equally difficult to define for many of those writing during this period were often disinclined to accept this designation. Therefore, the variety and multiple nature of modernism sometimes tend to evade a generalised nomenclature; it resorts to specialised and exclusive movements or schools of aesthetic and literary practice. Moreover, modernism is characterised by contradictory shifts and reversals: there have thus been instances when some of the major

features have been abandoned and the movement has reached a point where it almost turned around upon itself. It is this paradoxical and complex nature which has become a signature of modernism.

The term modernism was retrospectively assigned to this movement in the 1950s in American universities. Therefore there was little consensus regarding the origins and the duration of the movement. In her essay, "Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown" (1924), Virginia Woolf had attempted to give it a date: "On or about December 1910 human nature changed.... All human relations shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is, at the same time, a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature." This dominant sense of social and cultural change is basic to modernism which, in D. H. Lawrence's (1885-1930) novel *Kangaroo* (1923) is given another year of inception together with an apocalyptic suggestion, "It was in 1915 that the old world ended" (qtd. in Malcolm Bradbury 33).

As in the case of the definition, there is a controversy about the beginnings of the movement; further, the international character of modernism gives the movement differing dates in separate countries. Cyril Connolly, however, attempts to give it a generally accepted national identity and a periodicity in the title of his 1965 book, *The Modern Movement: One Hundred Key Books from England, France and America, 1880-1950*. In this work, France is considered the source of Anglo-American modernism: "The French fathered the Modern Movement which slowly moved beyond the Channel and then across the Irish Sea until the Americans finally took it over..." However, for Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, two noted scholars of modernism, 1900 would be more appropriate: "1900 is both more convenient and accurate than Virginia Woolf's 1910", they wrote in *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (1965). Modernism is also marked by a publication-date of the list of representative works – 1922; this year saw the appearance of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, James Joyce's (1882-1941) *Ulysses*, Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod*, Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, Marcel Proust's (1871-1922) *Sodom and Gomorrah*, Rainer Maria Rilke's (1875-1926) *Duino Elegies*, Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956) first play, *Baal* and Eugene O'Neill's (1888-1953) *Anna Christie*. Thus, whereas the term modern is often a general prescription for a new type of writing, modernism becomes a more specialised category separating the 'high' modernism from that which merely featured during this time. This exclusiveness is suggested by the list of representative modernists usually given precedence over the others, namely Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Ezra Pound (1885-1972), Eliot, Joyce,

Lawrence, Woolf, W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) together with those in Europe and America such as, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), Proust, Paul Valery (1871-1945), Andre Gide (1869-1951), Thomas Mann (1875-1955), Franz Kafka (1883-1924), Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), Brecht, Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), Henry James (1843-1916), Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) and William Faulkner (1897-1962).

Modernism is characterised by a disillusionment with contemporary history which, for them, could be described with the phrase used by Eliot as a comment on Joyce's *Ulysses* – an “immense panorama of futility and anarchy”. In fact, this disorder and despair was evident in the incalculable violence, destruction and death perpetrated by the two World Wars. For the modernists, the wars clearly proved the failure of the ideas of reason and progress upheld by the Enlightenment. Modernism, therefore, emerges as a reaction against this earlier movement. A strong sense of historical crisis together with a profound feeling of skepticism and nihilism suggested by a pronounced sense of ‘de-humanism’ seems to mark modernist writing particularly in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, in the poetry of W. H. Auden (1907-1973) and others writing in the 1930s.

This gives modernism a crisis-centered view of reality and, therefore, a tendency to shift the focus of art and literature from an objective, historical and social concern to an exploration of the individual experience, consciousness and memory. This led to a preoccupation with a literature of introspection and alienation specifically in the stream of consciousness novel which redefined the narrative methods of modernist fiction by rejecting the theory of realism which had dominated the novel till this time. Thus modernism is usually defined as literary movement which is based on this opposition to realism. As a result, there was a significant change in the nature and method of literary representation. This involved a shift from the depiction of a material reality, whether natural, or social to the medium and manner of this portrayal. In other words, the focus of literature and art turned away from the representation of the objective world to that of the aesthetic. Modernism is thus distinguished by this strong sense of aesthetic self-consciousness.

Literature is, therefore, often preoccupied with the difficulties and challenges of dealing with language and form. As in the examples of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Andre Gide's *The Immoralist* (1902), novels, deal with the growth of the artist and the problems of writing fiction. In Pirandello's noted plays such as *Six Characters in Search of an Author* or *Henry IV*, the drama actually deals with the making of a play or the self-creation of a character's identity. This engagement with art is given substance by the

modernist compulsion to innovate and experiment with aesthetic tradition and literary form. This implied a sense of ‘de-creation’ evident in the changed use of language, syntax and style. Not only does modernist poetry use ‘*vers libre*’ or free verse, the symbolism and imagery which figured in the poetry of Pound, Eliot and Yeats is often very individualistic and abstract. The structures of poetry and fiction also underwent radical alterations as in the preference for the fragmentary and the random replacing the coherent order of narrative; similarly, simultaneous portrayals and juxtapositions of different ideas and moments of experience contributed to a spatial idea of artistic form. This is best illustrated in the poetry of Pound, Eliot, Yeats, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961) and also in the novels of Woolf, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957).

Influenced by the ideas of the French philosopher, Henri Bergson (1851-1941), modernist writing undertook a revision of the notion of time in their writing. For Bergson, time could be divided into the chronological or clock time which was linear moving through hours, minutes and seconds; opposed to this was Bergson’s theory of time as ‘duration’ which referred to those times and moments in an individual’s life that were significant and valuable. Duration, therefore, is measured in terms of time as experience; of time seasoned in the mind as memory of moment or place. In his book, *Time and Free Will* (1889), Bergson emphasised that facts and events are only the external surface of life which has to be intuitively explored to attain a deeper understanding of reality. Woolf’s novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, which had an earlier title, ‘The Hours’, deals with experiences of the protagonist, Clarissa on a single day in London. While the actual events of that day are simple and innocuous, the thoughts and memories that accompany them constitute the real narrative and meaning of the novel.

One important aspect of modernism is, therefore, its relationship with the city. In his posthumous collection of essays titled, *The Politics of Modernism*, Raymond Williams clearly underscores this link: “It is now clear that there are decisive links between the practices and ideas of the *avantgarde* movements of the twentieth century and then specific conditions and relationships of then twentieth century metropolis” (37). Though this concern with the city began in the nineteenth century, as is evident in William Wordsworth’s (1770-1850) *The Prelude* (1850), it was the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) whose treatment of the city in his writing anticipated the modernist conception of the metropolis. Therefore, the city symbolised the themes of the multitude or the masses and, simultaneously, the experience of solitude and anonymity – again *The Waste Land* stands as an appropriate example. While on the one hand, the city

represents variety, vitality and mobility, on the other, it also suggests alienation, loss and despair. Not only were the cities of modernism like London, Paris, Berlin and, later, New York the spaces of complex urban experiences, they also acquired a new importance as large national territories representing wealth, power, ambition and culture. In this capacity, the modernist city became implicated in the imperialist enterprise of accumulation, domination and control of other forms of knowledge, society and culture (Williams 43-45).

However, modernism was able to find other ideas of form and order that the crisis of history and politics had denied. Therefore, as a counterpoint to the chaos of history, modernists returned to the revival of myth. This mythic tendency had been initiated in the Romantic Movement and, in many discussions, Modernism is often viewed as a continuation of Romanticism. Myth was seen as basic to human societies, consciousness and culture – a form with which primitive men and women tried to understand their world. In fact, in the book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), a German philosopher whose writing was a major influence on modernism, lamented the loss of the mythic consciousness in modern man. In the writing of Yeats, Eliot and Joyce there was thus an attempt to recreate and adapt the old myths to contemporary situations. Importantly, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), a twelve-volume comparative study of different myths, went to influence Eliot's *The Waste Land*; while Joyce in his *Finnegan's Wake* and Proust in his *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927; English, 1922-1931) created individual mythic structures for their novels.

Finally, the modernist self-consciousness with the forms and processes of art was a direct result of its sense of doubt and difficulty regarding the nature and meanings of language. Therefore, the assumption that language was a transparent medium easily and immediately yielding meaning came under suspicion and question. Rather, language often had a tendency to disguise and conceal meaning and, thereby, prevent communication and understanding. Modernism, thus recognised that the relationship between language and meaning was arbitrary and, therefore, ambiguous and uncertain; that, in fact, language did not simply reflect the objective world but was actually a medium with which thoughts and ideas about that world was conceived and created. Therefore, modernist writing reveals an increasing awareness about the fact that instead of expressing ourselves in language by speaking and writing, it is language which tends to speak and write us. This inversion of the traditional view of language becomes a serious and repeated concern in modernist fiction. Joyce's *Ulysses* is thus considered a novel dealing with the problems of language as much as it also portrays the

experiences of the protagonist on a day in June 1904 in the city of Dublin. A similar preoccupation with language and narration is found in the novels of Joseph Conrad and in the work of the American modernists such as, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner.

Modernism, therefore, is not merely a movement in art and literature that was innovative, formally experimental and consciously aesthetic but also a committed attempt to explore a wide, antithetical and complex range of ideas across diverse disciplines and domains of knowledge whose intellectual expanse and sophistication often tend to be intimidating. Yet, the importance and value of modernism lies precisely in this character: thus, this intellectual depth and subtlety is both a difficulty and a challenge; the diversity and complexity both formidable and adventurous.

2.4.6 Modernism II: The Movements

The conceptual map or the series of ideas that developed and shaped Modernism will remain incomplete if sufficient attention is not given to the major contribution made by the art and literary movements that are almost simultaneous with it. Though the development of movements were not a novel occurrence – for there had been several such in the nineteenth century. However, those that consecutively emerged during this time seemed to have a generic difference in terms of their aesthetic nature and intention. Just as we had earlier represented Modernism by a community of writers and their works, the movements, in fact, also constitute the intellectual and aesthetic milestones giving us the main directions to its nature and development.

➤ **Imagism** is believed to have announced the beginnings of English and American Modernism. The term was coined by Ezra Pound to denote a programme in poetic style marked by the use of free verse, a classical sense of precision, clarity and austerity and a concrete expressive method. Imagism originally developed from *Les Imagistes* – a journal created by T. E. Hulme in 1909 in London and approved by Pound, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) and Richard Aldington, its three founding members, in 1912. Two manifestoes of this movement appeared in 1913, namely R.S. Flint's 'Imagisme' and Pound's 'A Few Don'ts for Imagists' whose principles were collected later by Pound in an essay titled, 'A Retrospect' (1918). Imagist poetry was initially published in *Les Imagistes* (1914) and later anthologised in three volumes edited by Amy Lowell called, *Some Imagist Poets (1915-1917)*.

The main principles outlined by Pound for this poetry were:

“1. Direct treatment of the ‘thing’ whether subjective or objective.

2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome [device used by musicians to mark a selected sequence of time]" (Childs 98).

This poetic style was based on Pound's definition of the 'Image' – "an 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Thus Imagism also implied a poetry of the synthesis of thought and feeling that was definitive of modern poetry. The often quoted example of an image is the one taken from Pound's "In a Station of the Metro": "The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/Petals on a wet, black bough" (qtd. in Childs 99). Imagism influenced the poetry of Pound's main disciple, T.S. Eliot both in *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land*. In fact, Eliot's description of the evening in the famous opening lines of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is also cited as representative: "Let us go then, you and I,/ When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherized upon the table" (*Selected Poems*, London: Faber, 1976, 6:1-3). It also featured in the poetry of Lawrence, Joyce, Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939), and the American poets Marianne Moore (1887-1972) and William Carlos Williams.

➤ **Symbolism**, as another important school of modernist poetry, was actually derived from late nineteenth century French poetry, particularly, that of Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Paul Valéry (1871-1945). Their poetry was introduced into England through Arthur Symons critical study, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899). Symons had thus defined symbolism as "a form of expression ... for an unseen reality apprehended by the consciousness". It has, therefore, often been suggested that Modernism was a revival of symbolism. Symbolist writing involved the use of mysticism which turned away from everyday reality and tried to evoke a sensuous and spiritual apprehension of occult hidden behind the material world. Symbolism was a form of aestheticism which believed that a poem was an independent entity having its own meaning and value. W.B. Yeats is considered one of the principal followers of this poetic movement mainly owing to his absorption in Celtic mythology and mysticism. In "Symbolism in Poetry" (1900), Yeats had insisted that "a continuous indefinable symbolism" is "the substance of all style" (qtd. in Roger Fowler, ed. *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 240). Yeats's romanticism utilised rural Ireland's folk traditions as a reaction against urbanisation and materialism. Thus, in the poems of the 1920s such as "Michael Roberts and the Dancer" (1921), "The Tower" (1928) and also later in "Meditation in the Time of Civil War", "The Second Coming" and "Sailing to Byzantium" Yeats created an elaborate symbolical and mythological framework as a defence against the chaos and disillusion of the modern world.

➤ **Impressionism** concerns the form and style of painting by noted European artists of the nineteenth century such as Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Alfred Sisley and Edouard Manet. This implies that Modernism has been considerably influenced by movements in art and painting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In an essay titled, “Impressionisten” (1898), the Austrian poet, Rainer Maria-Rilke (1875-1926) described impressionism as the “pantheism of light”. This form of painting, therefore, emphasised the importance of light and colour in the depiction of nature and the human world. Impressionist painters believed that any act of sight included a halo or haze of light and colour; thus, this style of art explored the effect or play of the ‘atoms’ of light and colour involved in viewing the world.

In literary Impressionism, therefore, the same principle is adopted to suggest a particular quality or nature of an individual temperament as in Oscar Wilde’s poem “Symphony in Yellow”; or, as in the line from Symons’s “Impression” – “The pink and black of silk and lace” – where the colours convey the sensuousness of the fabric and the person wearing it. However, Impressionism seems to have had a more direct connection with the idea of the stream of consciousness technique in fiction which also included the metaphors of ‘atoms’ and ‘halo’ in Woolf’s famous observation in her essay, “Modern Fiction” (1919): “Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; ... Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginnings of consciousness to the end” (*Common Reader*. London: Harcourt Brace, 1973 [1925], 128).

Joseph Conrad, often considered an Impressionist writer, consciously employed this method in his novels particularly, in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) where the unnamed narrator has this observation on Marlow’s method of story-telling: “...Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine” (118).

On November 5, 1910, Roger Fry the founder of the design company, the Omega Workshop, organised an exhibition of paintings of such noted painters as Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne and coined the term ‘Post-Impressionist’ as a title for the collection. This exhibition was a first attempt to introduce England to a radically different form of artistic work which had broken from tradition and realism and promoted a formal experimentation having a strong inclination

towards abstraction. Many English writers were deeply stirred by these qualities in the paintings; in fact, a few histories of literature suggest that Modernism in England had its source in this exhibition which coincided with the year Woolf had fixed as the date for the beginnings of Modernism.

➤ The term **Expressionism** is considered to have been derived from the painting of Van Gogh. However, as a movement it was mainly associated with *avantgarde* literature, painting and cinema in the German-speaking countries between 1910 and 1922. Adopted as a general term in 1911 for painting and literature, it became a critical idea in 1913 to refer to a form of representation dealing dominantly with a sense of crisis. In fact, the Great War was a major influence on this movement and shaped its thought and feeling. Thus, Expressionist writing involves a feeling of anxiety and an opposition towards industrial capitalism that had turned the machine, meant to control nature, against humanity. Consequently, both in painting and in literature, Expressionism is marked by a sense of nihilism, irrationalism, irony and violence. There is, thus a preoccupation with grim tragic themes and situations of suffering, alienation, despair and death. In terms of form, the critic Leonore Ripke-Kuhn described it as a method characterised by “concentration, conciseness, impact, firmly-structured form and the rhetoric of passion” (Bradbury and McFarlane 534). The most noted Expressionist painter was Edvard Munch whose painting, “The Scream” has almost become iconic of this movement.

➤ The English equivalent to Expressionism is said to be a movement called **Vorticism**. This was basically an English response to the various *avantgarde* tendencies on the continent. Its founder was Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) who had published an important, but short lived, journal entitled, *BLAST* in 1914 to announce the Vorticist manifesto. In Germany, Expressionism was duly represented in the plays of Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser; while in fiction Kafka remained its most notable novelist. Apart from Lewis’s own writing, there are few English practitioners of this theme and style; however, Christopher Isherwood’s (1904-86) *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) was an exception. Some scholars have also identified sections of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Woolf’s *The Waves* (1931) to have suggestions of this form.

➤ **Futurism** originated in Italy with the publication of “The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism” in 1909 by the poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) in a newspaper called called *Le Figaro*. This movement, however, was a celebration of the industrial changes and the culture of the machine in the early twentieth century; it was, as Marinetti said, an attempt to exalt “the beauty of speed”. Futurism, thus advocated a complete break with past traditions suggested by a call to destroy libraries and academic

institutions; it glorified war, militarism and the nationalist spirit. Though the movement expressed radical opinions, its politics was basically conservative and reactionary prompting it to become a supporter of fascism. Ironically, World War I brought about an end to the movement as one of its members was killed and Marinetti himself was injured in battle. However, a Russian version of Futurism which developed between 1907 and 1913 in the writing of Velimir Khlebnikov (1885-1922), Alexei Kruchenykh (1886-1968) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930) fared better and had an important influence in shaping a new poetry after the Soviet Revolution. The Russian movement, therefore, did not favour the Italian ‘aesthetics of the machine’; rather it concentrated on experiments with form and language to create a poetry of the future.

➤ Futurism, however, found an heir in a European and American movement known as **Dada** or Dadaism. The origin of this name, ‘Dada’ is uncertain but it is believed to be a Romanian term for affirmation – ‘da, da’ or ‘yes, yes’; it is also the colloquial French for a ‘hobby horse’ or a type of toy for children. Dadaism began in Zurich in 1916, encouraged by the poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), as a form of protest against the massacre and madness of the Great War. Dadaists believed that humanity could be rescued from this crisis through social reforms aimed at changing the quality of life. As in Futurism, Dada writing thus made use of the absurd, the illogical and the irrational in order to shock and attack contemporary society and its violent war industry through what they considered ‘anti-art’. A noted instance of this was the sculpture by Marcel Duchamps entitled, *Fountain* —which was actually a urinal signed, ‘R. Mutt’. Nevertheless, Dada is considered to have anticipated Surrealism, another important modernist movement.

➤ The term **Surrealism** was taken from a review written by the French poet and dramatist Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918): “To characterize my drama, I have used a neologism for which I hope to be forgiven. ... I have coined the adjective ‘Surrealist’ which does not mean symbolical. ... When a man wanted to imitate the action of walking, he created the wheel which does not resemble a leg. He had thus used surrealism without knowing it” (qtd. in Esslin 362). Later, in 1924, the French poet, André Breton (1896-1996) in the First Manifesto of Surrealism announced that this was an attempt to find a “resolution of these two states [of] dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into an absolute reality, a surreality” (qtd. in Childs 121)

Surrealism recommended an exploration of the unconscious in both painting and literature through the use of the techniques of automatic writing and often by seizing random, incoherent, illogical and bizarre images. Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) analyses of dreams in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and his theories dealing with the unconscious were a major influence on

this movement. In painting, Surrealism is usually represented by the work of the Spanish artist, Savador Dali, Joan Miro together with those by the Russian Marc Chagall. Together with Breton, the other French writers who are generally associated with this school of art and writing include, Louis Aragon (1897-1982), Paul Eluard (1895-1952), Philippe Soupault (1897-1990) and Rene Creval (1900-1935). In England, Surrealist poetry found expression in the 1930s in the writing of David Gascoigne. However, earlier examples of this style were found in Eliot's "Morning at the Window" and also in the "Night town" and "Circe" sections of Joyce's *Ulysses*. In fact the hallucinatory war memories of Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway* also forms an important attempt in surrealist writing long before it was officially recognized: "Diagrams, designs, little men and women brandishing sticks for arms with wings ...circles traced round shillings and sixpences – the suns and stars; ...how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes; odes to Time; conversations with Shakespeare; Evans, Evans, Evans – his messages from the dead"(131).

The movements of Modernism, therefore, confirm the innovative, experimental variety of this development in art and literature. The conceptual range and critical engagement of the movements with the growth of knowledge and new ideas in several disciplines and with society, art and culture gave modernism a distinctive position among similar developments in the history of literature. The movements also justify the international character of Modernism and also emphasise that it was not a discrete feature. Recent studies have, therefore, suggested that, far from being singular, there are diverse, different and many Modernisms.

2.4.7 Summing Up

In attempting to deal with the history, nature and meanings of the three terms, Modern, Modernity and Modernism, this unit has tried to address some of the basic ideas, features and concerns of art and literature, mainly of England and briefly of Europe and America, in the first half of the twentieth century. Together with providing explanations of each term individually, it has also analysed the relationships between them. This section thus constitutes an important map of the thought, the movements, the aesthetic and ideological commitments which shaped the art and writing of the Modern Age.

2.4.8 Comprehension Exercises

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Discuss the term Modern in relation to the changes in the nature of publishing and

the relation between the writer and society that occurred in the early twentieth century.

2. Critically analyse the relationship between the term Modernity and the Enlightenment.
3. In what way is Modernism a critique of the Modern and Modernity? Substantiate your answer with examples from your study of modernist texts.
4. Critically consider the major features of Modernism.

Medium-answer Type Questions:

1. Trace the origins and explain the meanings of the term Modern.
2. Analyse the major features of the term Modernity.
3. Attempt an explanation of the tendency to retreat from history which is basic to Modernism.
4. Consider the influence of Imagism or Surrealism or Futurism or Expressionism or Symbolism or Impressionism on modern writing.

Short-answer Type Questions:

1. Explain why the Modern is associated with the idea of the 'new'.
2. Briefly suggest the implications of the Modern social changes that influenced Modernism.
3. In what way is Modernity linked to the imperialist enterprise?
4. Comment on the debate over the fixing of the date for Modernism as a movement in art and culture.
5. What is the implication of the phrase 'aesthetic self-consciousness' in Modernist writing?
6. Write brief notes on any two of the following: a) Vorticism; b) Dadaism; c) Post-Impressionism; d) Surrealism; e) Imagism; f) Symbolism; g) Futurism; h) Expressionism; i) Impressionism

2.4.9 Suggested Reading

- Armstrong, T. *Modernism: A Cultural History*. Polity Press, 2005.
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Unit 5 □ Science and the Modern World

Structure

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2.5.1 Objectives

This unit on ‘Science and the Modern World’, divided into a number of interlinked topics and sub-topics, has the following objectives:

- To acquaint students with the history of emergence of modern natural science through a series of revolutions.

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- To discuss the socio-historical settings of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century developments in science and technology.
 - To explain the distinctiveness of the twentieth century scientific and technological perspectives.
 - To examine relationships between science, technology and European imperialism, and their social and aesthetic impacts.
 - To explore the relationship between science and technology and the Modernist movement in art and culture of the first half of the twentieth century by examining different genres and sub-genres of art and literature.
 - To consider the issue of ethical responsibility towards humanity, as it is reflected in literature and art against the backdrop of the two World Wars.

2.5.2 Introduction: The Modern World and Revolutions in Modern Science

The project of ‘Modernity’, which defines a period in the social and cultural history as specifically ‘Modern,’ is basically a Western project, deriving its impetus from the late-Renaissance and ‘Enlightenment’ philosophy. The emphasis on rational conclusions drawn from empirical assessments of concrete human experiences in the philosophy of Bacon (1561-1626), Descartes (1596-1650), Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke and others breaks up old ‘systems,’ ‘types,’ and ‘absolutes,’ as proposed by Christianity. It also presupposes a new order of reality, involving a constant impulse to renewal with frequent reversals of roles and perspectives. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels noticed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) that the drive to become ‘modern’ had already “drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism” (Marx and Engels, <https://www.columbia.edu/~ey2172/marx.html>, 11). In this revolutionary task to offer a radically novel world-view science and technology were used as the most effective weapons. The growth of modern science and that of modern world are, therefore, directly correlated, and our present understanding of this entire dynamics requires us to look back at the revolutions inaugurating modern science.

The first major revolution in modern science began in as back as 1543 with the publication of *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543). His idea that the earth was a planet in the orbit around the sun challenged the earlier Ptolemaic system of the universe, and was later proved

empirically by Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the first person to use telescope and discover heavenly changes to unsettle the divine absolutism. The Copernican revolution reached its watershed in 1687 with the publication of the British physicist Isaac Newton's (1642-1727) *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. The implications of the above classics in modern science are noted by Janet Radcliffe Richards in the following terms: "Spinning around in an infinite universe is decidedly less comfortable than being enclosed by spheres and angels and God... Where ... was the throne of God? Where was Hell? ... If the Bible was not literally true in its account of heaven and earth, what did that imply for the rest of it?" (9). Copernicus, Galileo and Newton broke down the distinction between the heaven and the earth and brought them into a single explanatory scheme, and the English naturalist Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of evolution in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) destabilised the distinction between human and sub-human. The importance of Darwinian revolution, along with the new science of psychoanalysis, will be discussed in the next unit. The above revolutions paved the way for much more radical scientific theories at the turn of the century and in the first half of the twentieth century, when each branch of natural science was developed into highly complicated study of our 'spinning' and fleeting existence. We shall discuss them in the fourth section of this unit. But, the bridge between Enlightenment rationalism and twentieth century science and technology is found to be constructed by the industrial revolution, which can be further interlinked with two key factors of the modern world: imperial capitalism and modern warfare. This unit tries to show how the intriguing roles played by science and technology in the modern world have left their marks on the most powerful aesthetic movement of the first half of twentieth century, named as 'modernism'.

2.5.3 Industrial Revolution and the Emergence of Scientific Disciplines

2.5.3.1 Industrial Revolution and Applied Science

Students of English literature are well familiar with the following lines of "The Chimney Sweeper" in *Songs of Innocence* (1789) by William Blake (1757-1827) that catch social and psychological impacts of Industrial Revolution in the most striking manner. One of the earliest literary indictments of child labour and industrial pollution, the poem interconnects science/technology – represented by the image of chimney – and human suffering:

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry, 'weep! weep! weep! weep!'.
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep. (Blake 69)

In Blake's apocalyptic reading of the late eighteenth century English society, the death of mother signifies the collapse of an old home, with the father figure turning into a helpless victim of the capitalist labour market. Blake himself is in this sense one of the first moderns to consider the consequences of the application of scientific knowledge by an exploitative socio-economic system. Blake was significantly the contemporary of the first group of the British engineers/mechanics, Bramah (1748-1814), Maudslay (1771-1831), Muir (1806-88), Whitworth (1803-87), Trevithick (1771-1833), I.K. Brunel (1806-59), and the most acclaimed George Stephenson (1781-1848). Under the pressure of the limitless profit-seeking capitalist economy, these people turned the direction of modern science. As J.D. Bernal writes in his *Science in History*, the "growth of the applications of science in the mid nineteenth century was so much more rapid than the growth of science itself that their handling and development fell into hands of practical men" (Bernal 547). Industrial Revolution – a term first used by Friedrich Engels in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written originally in German in 1845, and re-used by the English economic historian Arnold Toynbee (1852–83) to describe Britain's economic development from 1760 to 1840, and was later applied in a more general way – thus superimposed "an evolutionary technical development on the revolutionary innovations" of the last centuries (Bernal 547).

This technological turn involved:

(1) the use of new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel, (2) the use of new energy sources, including both fuels and motive power, such as coal, the steam engine, electricity, petroleum, and the internal-combustion engine, (3) the invention of new machines, such as the spinning jenny and the power loom that permitted increased production with a smaller expenditure of human energy, (4) a new organisation of work known as the factory system, which entailed increased division of labour and specialisation of function, (5) important developments in transportation and communication, including the steam locomotive, steamship, automobile, airplane, telegraph, and radio, and (6) the increasing application of science to industry. These technological changes made possible a tremendously increased use of natural resources and the mass production of manufactured goods. (<https://>

www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution)

Blake's engravings, illustrating his own poetic works, and his use of personal symbols may be seen as a conscious aesthetic rebellion against mechanisation and commercialisation of all forms of human activities.

The major technological innovations associated with the Industrial Revolution manifest the above components: the steam-engine, the railways, the telegraph, and the civil engineering. These innovations changed the European – and, particularly English – living-style forever. Thus, Margaret Hale, the protagonist of Elizabeth Gaskell's (1810-1865) mid-nineteenth century novel on the industrial England, *North and South*, 1854, mourns: "...associations, which ... made her cry upon 'the days that are no more', with ineffable longing" (468). The railways was originally a product of the spread of coal-mining in England, and the great success of running wheels by a steam engine and the discovery of locomotive helped the mining to a great extent. As Bernal notes, the "railway age covered Britain with its network in the [eighteen] thirties and forties and spread to the rest of the world throughout the century. It also led to an enormous increase in the ... civil engineering" (547). We find in Charles Dickens' (1812-1870) sketch of 1860s, "Refreshments for Travellers":

I travel by railroad. I start from the home at seven or eight in the morning, after breakfast hurriedly. What with skimming over the open landscape, what with mining in the damp bowels of the earth, what with banging, booming and shrieking the scores of miles away, I am hungry when I arrive at the 'Refreshment' station where I am expected. (169)

One dominating feature of the Industrial Revolution is then the triumph of the machine, and this is directly related to the study of engineering and metallurgy as two prime branches of Physics and Chemistry, respectively. The evolution of steam-engine at the hands of James Watt (1736-1819) and his followers, on the other hand, contributed to the study of heat energy, besides mechanics. And, to use Bernal's observation again, "[i]t was the coincidence of the advent of railways with [Danish physicist and chemist, Hans Christian] Oersted's [(1777-1851)] discovery of the effects of electric currents on a compass that provided a cheap and foolproof method just when the need was greatest, and ensured the successful invention of the electromagnetic telegraph" (548). In a colony like India, with "the expansion of railways and irrigation works, there was an increasing need for the training of natives as mechanics, plate-layers, drivers, etc." and "so, in 1875, Calcutta got its first School of Apprentices" (Kumar 189). Circulation of news was directly related to commerce, but, in this manner, applied science and technology led to the study of multiple disciplines of theoretical science.

2.5.3.2 Advancement of Scientific Learning

Since the late-eighteenth century scientists in Britain, France, the United States of America and other centres of industrialisation had advocated a radical and liberal outlook. Two most notable names of this movement are the American physicist, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), and the English chemist, Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), who can be considered two founders of disciplines of modern natural science. It was upon Priestley's theorem that the French chemist Antoine Laurent Lavoisier (1743-1794) developed chemistry as a rational and quantitative science. The introduction of telegraph during the later phase of the Industrial Revolution created the requirement for trained electricians and, in connection, technical schools and departments of physics at the universities. The working of the cross-Atlantic cable was possible much later in 1866, thanks to the discovery of the greatest physicist of the late-nineteenth century, William Thomson, Lord Kelvin (1824-1907). Electricity and magnetism were two main scientific preoccupations of the nineteenth century, as evident in the experiments of the British scientists Humphry Davy (1778-1829) and Michael Faraday (1791-1867). In 1831 the British scientist Charles Babbage (1792-1871) established 'The British Association for the Advancement of Science', attended by the English biologist Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) and the Irish physicist John Tyndall (1820-1893). It was on December 17, 1903, Wilbur Wright (1867-1912) and Orville Wright (1871-1948) made four brief flights at Kitty Hawk with their first powered aircraft.

In the course of the nineteenth century chemistry grew as the most prominent scientific discipline because of its use in textile industry. A seminal step in the advancement of chemistry was taken by a weaver and school teacher of Manchester, John Dalton (1766-1844) by introducing the Atomic Theory. Two other "great generalizations stand out as the major contributions of the nineteenth century. One, in the field of physics, was the doctrine of the *conservation of energy*; the other, in the field of biology, was that of *evolution*." The notion of the *conservation of energy* "was inspired by the study of the conservation of coal to power that had already been achieved in practice by the steam-engine from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. It was given a more and more mathematical form and emerged as the science of *thermodynamics*" (Bernal 555). On the other hand, a major achievement of the late-nineteenth century physics is the *electromagnetic theory of light* proposed by Scottish mathematician James Maxwell (1831-1879), and another in the field of chemistry is the Periodic Table of Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev (1834-1907). Nineteenth century thus marked the "winding up of the great scientific drive of the Newtonian period and a preparation for the stormier scientific and political revolution of the twentieth century" (Bernal, 561).

2.5.4 Science and Technology in the Early Twentieth Century

2.5.4.1 *The World of Atomic Theory*

The twentieth century signated both an explosion and a fall of Western culture and civilization. T.S. Eliot's (1888-1965) "The Waste Land", 1922, focuses on the cracked earth on which nothing stands for a long time:

What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violent air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal, (Eliot 233)

Long before Eliot, Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* had predicted that all solid things would melt into the air, and twentieth century science had to deal with the dissolving away of the solid foundations of socio-political and rational ideologies. In this respect "the experience of objectlessness" – to quote a phrase of Russian painter, Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935) – is one of the central effects of new scientific observations (qtd. in Gay 136). On the other hand, the triumph of technology became evident in every aspect of life in the beginning of the twentieth century to affirm how humans had outstripped Nature. Nature became only an object of fleeting memory, profoundly expressed by Edward Thomas (1878-1917) in "Adlestrop", posthumously published in 1920:

Yes. I remember Adlestrop –
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June. ...

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky. (Thomas 117)

In this connection, James McFarlane points out that "[n]ew concepts in science more and more took on the nature of poetic conceits; the crucial advances in science (not merely in the

relatively new field of psychology but also in the more traditional physical sciences) followed the exploitation of the same kind of imaginative, intuitive insight that went towards the making of a poem” (84).

The nineteenth century started with Dalton’s atomic theory, and it ended with that of the British Nobel-laureate physicist John Joseph Thomson’s (1856-1940) – the President of the Royal Society from 1915 to 1920 – discovery that cathode rays were composed of previously unknown negatively charged particles, which are now called electrons. In the field of physics, particularly, continuity had been a central idea, which in the new century was challenged by the discontinuity of atoms suggested in the radioactive and the quantum theories, and finally by the theory of Relativity. It was in December 1895 that the German engineer and physicist W.C. Röntgen (1845-1923) reported the discovery of X-Ray, a new type of radiation that could go through thick screens. The greatest Polish scientist, socialist leader and two-time Nobel-laureate Marie Sk lodowska–Curie (1867-1934) and her French husband Pierre Curie (1859-1906) conducted pioneering research on radioactivity and showed how atoms of elements like polonium and radium emit energy in undreamt of quantity. Radium especially was proved to be so powerful that it shines in dark and inflicts fatal injuries to bodies coming close to it. With the experiments of Ernest Rutherford (1871-1934) and Frederick Soddy (1877-1956) – both British – essential features of radioactive transformations were disclosed. And, these offered certain basic irresolution that could not be explained in terms of the existing theory of physics and chemistry. Max Planck (1858-1947), a German physicist, revolutionised the study of atoms by suggesting that the energy given off by atoms is not continuous but it comes off in pieces. Energy, like matter, is atomic, and this atomicity lies in the curious quantity action. In 1900 Planck calculated the quantum of action, now known as Planck’s constant h . Planck described his theory as a ‘lucky intuition’ but “as time went on physicists recognised ever more clearly that – because Planck’s constant was not zero but had a small but finite value – the microphysical world, the world of atomic dimensions, could not in principle be described by ordinary classical mechanics” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Max-Planck>). The researches of Niels Henrik David Bohr (1885-1962), a Danish physicist and a colleague of J.J. Thomson and Rutherford, made fundamental contributions to the understanding of atomic structure and quantum theory in the first two decades of the twentieth century, for which Bohr received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1922. Bohr’s three works, translated into English, embody his principal thoughts and profoundly influenced the early twentieth century scientific thought: *The Theory of Spectra and Atomic Constitution* (1922), *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (1934), and *The Unity of Knowledge* (1955).

Interlink between science and technology in the early decades of the twentieth century was established in the field of electrical engineering. The generation of high velocity particles

helped to increase the range of electrical transmission, required for high-tension lines mainly in industry. Another significant development was the discovery of the radio-wave by two scientists almost simultaneously at two opposite corners of the globe: Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937), an Italian inventor, who in 1899 flashed the first wireless signal across the English Channel and two years later in 1902 he received the letter “S”, the first trans-Atlantic message from England to America; and Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), one of the founders of modern Indian science. Nuclear splitting was discovered in 1938, mainly through the experiments of the elder daughter of Pierre and Marie Curie, Irène Joliot-Curie (1897-1956), and her husband Frédéric Joliot-Curie (1900-1958) – the couple won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1935, continuing the legacy of the senior Curies. Science and technology in the nineteen thirties and forties took a decisive turn towards the discovery and application of both the nuclear bomb and the nuclear electricity. We would focus on the relation between science and war in the following sections from different perspectives. The use of radioactivity in the medical science, on the other hand, should be appreciated as a much later development, and the journey of Yuri Gagarin, ‘the first man in the space’, began a new era of space technology only in the nineteen sixties. However, the early twentieth century witnessed a great progress in the field of Meteorology, as in 1900, the troposphere was discovered and in 1918 Vilhelm Friman Koren Bjerknes (1862-1951), a Norwegian physicist and meteorologist, discovered the polar-front theory of cyclones. This paved the way for advanced weather forecasting.

The March, 1931 issue of the *Poetry Magazine* includes Don Gordon’s poem, “Atomic Theory”, which ends with the following lines:

Upon bone and blood, upon every atom,
I impress myself as intaglio incised in stone.
Atoms bearing grooves may be touched in space,
May seek known mortise and remembered edge.

I etch my thoughts upon the living wall, I set my seal upon the atoms.
If the impress must tremble in space, if the intaglios blur,
Then far in advance I relinquish the will to endure.
I have laughter for patterns that feed the sidereal winds. (6)

2.5.4.2 Relativity and the Space-Time Continuum

A profound revolution in the theoretical physics was in process that reached an optimum point by the introduction of relativity by another German Albert Einstein (1879-1955), who independently in 1905 “argued that under certain circumstances radiant energy itself seemed

to consist of quanta (light quanta, later called photons), and in 1907 he showed the generality of the quantum hypothesis by using it to interpret the temperature dependence of the specific heats of solids” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Max-Planck>). The Special (1905) and General (1916) theories of Relativity result in an irreversible paradigm shift in our understanding of the physical world by overturning the Newtonian Physics. The Einsteinian Revolution – his equation for matter transformed into energy, $E = MC^2$, and concept of the space-time continuum – can be seen to inaugurate a new world-view, which is also found in the words of the British novelist David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930) from a different perspective in his collection of essays, *A Selection from Phoenix*: “We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and for ever, let us have done with the ugly imperialism of any absolute. There is no absolute good, there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute” (186). In Joseph Conrad’s (1857-1924) *Nostromo* (1904), and William Faulkner’s (1897-1962) *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), same set of events are perceived by different characters, reflecting on the relativity of truth in the modern world.

We may take help of the explanations of Einstein’s theory in *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Simon Blackburn, for a preliminary notion, for this has entirely changed our relationship with the universe:

The assumptions on which Einstein’s special theory of relativity (1905) depends are (i) all inertial frameworks are equivalent for the description of physical phenomena, and (ii) the speed of light in empty space is constant for every observer, regardless of the motion of the observer or the light source. ... As a consequence of the second postulate, no matter how fast she travels, an observer can never overtake a ray of light.... However near her speed approaches to that of light, light still retreats at its classical speed. The consequences are that space, time, and mass become relative to the observer. ... Events deemed simultaneous as measured within one such system will not be simultaneous as measured from the other: time and space thus lose their separate identity, and become parts of a single space-time. (326-327)

In the field of the philosophy of literature, Russian modernist thinker, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) makes seminal contribution in connection to temporal and spatial parameters of literary narrative. Bakhtinian ‘chronotope’ – aesthetic representation of time and space – merges the two parameters into an intersection of time and space. Although abstract thought can be related to time and space as separate entities, defining them apart from the emotions and values attached to them, Bakhtin observes in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* that “living artistic perception (which also of course involves thought, but not abstract thought) makes no such divisions and permits no such segmentation” (243). The blurred boundaries

between documentary, memory, and history in modernist art suggest a new spatiotemporal outlook.

As Mrs Ramsay says in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), by Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), the whole human life consists of “little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach” (<https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2014/10/To-the-Lighthouse-Etext-Edited.pdf> 33). In *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Woolf uses the Big Ben as a means by which the reader and the characters regain a sense of the here and now, a ‘waking up’ from the interior to the exterior reality. The chimes of Big Ben punctuate the novel with reality, bringing the reader and the characters back to exterior time, or the public space. The technologies of the modern world all serve the same function in the stream of consciousness narrative – an effect of new sense of time-space relation in the novels of Woolf and James Joyce (1882-1941). In *Mrs Dalloway*, especially the aeroplane, sky-writing, and the car backfiring represent a London hurtling towards modernity. Henri-Louis Bergson’s (1859-1941) philosophy was also highly influential in the nineteen twenties to suggest that intuition and immediate experience as being more significant than rational science as the basis for understanding reality. The German dramatist and Marxist thinker, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)’s ‘epic theatre’ claims that stage should distance itself from the world around and present itself as a self-conscious spatio-temporal construction. The absurd play, *Waiting for Goddot* (1952), by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), an Irish playwright, uses a single tree, whose abrupt changes form the stage setting. Two characters circle around the tree and they assume that a great distance is being covered by them. The time and space are thus seen as a continuous process. Modernist narrative experiments with time and space in the context of the relativity of experience undermines the certainties and hierarchies, which European imperialism offers.

2.5.5.3 Developments in Biology

Molecular Biology developed as a separate field of study with the contributions from the study of electrons in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, particularly with the experiments of W.T. Astbury (1898-1961), primarily an English Physicist. The Indian scientist J.C. Bose made significant contributions to the study of plants. The study of hormones dates back to 1905, when the term was coined by E.H. Starling (1866-1927), a British physiologist. These studies and the extension of the great French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur’s works helped greatly to form the bio-technology. Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936), a Russian physiologist, developed the concept of the conditioned reflex, that challenged, to a great extent the Western psychoanalysis as centered on the theories of Sigmund Freud

(1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist. Ronald Ross (1857-1932) became the first British Nobel laureate in 1902 for his Calcutta based researches on the transmission of malaria.

2.5.5 Science and Imperialism

2.5.5.1 *Understanding Imperialism*

Marlow, the main narrator of a seminal modernist novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), by Joseph Conrad, a Polish turned British novelist, provides the following observation on the capitalist imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in opposition to European explorations and exploitations of foreign lands in the earlier centuries:

... They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only hard force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on the great scale, and men going at it blind – as is proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. (141)

The transformation of random robbery with violence into the most technologically informed and ideologically organised “conquest of the earth” establishes the multi-layered and long-term relationships between modern imperialism and science. One of the strongest reflections of this entire dynamics could be found in modernist art and literature, mainly because of the fact that the period of modernist art roughly falls between the climax of imperial competition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the post-Second World War national liberation and decolonisation movements in Asia and Africa. The plunder of the colonies around the globe at least since the seventeenth century by the application of physics and mathematics – the two most potent symbols of European travels across the seas are the ship and the compass – had played a crucial role in the transition to industrial states in Europe. Now, following the analysis of Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilych Lenin (1870-1924), it is understood that “the combination of monopolisation and intensified competition ushers in the epoch of imperialism. Among the capitalist countries this generates a tendency towards inter-capitalist war” (Bottomore 254).

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and a series of modernist texts like Ford Madox Ford's (1873-1939) *The Good Soldier* (1915), D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo* (1923), and Edward Morgan Forster's (1879-1970) *A Passage to India* (1924), push the narrative to the fringes

of the European Empire and suggest multiple implications of imperialism. As Fredric Jameson suggests in “Modernism and Imperialism”, imperialism designates both “the rivalry of the various imperial and metropolitan” – that is technologically advanced – “nation states among themselves”, and “the relationship of metropolis” – the heart of the Empire – “to the colony” (155). Science played a pivotal role in setting both the relationships, and the service of science provided to what Lawrence in the afore-mentioned passage calls “ugly imperialism” concerns the question of ethics in terms of the position of science in the modern world.

2.5.5.2 Cartography and Oceanography

Imperialism forcefully imposes histories – or, names in the map according to the imperial plan – on geographies of its colonies, which are henceforth identified as parts of the world. “Cartography, the art and science of graphically representing a geographical area, usually on a flat surface such as a map or chart,” is thus an essential part of the imperial domination (<https://www.britannica.co>). This dynamics is most poignantly articulated again by Marlow in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*:

... when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth ... The glamour’s off ... It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. (142)

The above project is, however, challenged in Conrad’s other novel, *The Secret Agent*, 1907, in which a spy of some foreign country, Adlof Verloc employs his mentally challenged brother-in-law, Stevie, to plant a bomb at Greenwich observatory, and therefore to create a void at the heart of the world-time, being controlled by the British Empire. Cartography, on the other hand, introduced a whole range of applied sciences and technologies: “Few activities relating to the earth’s surface, whether land use planning, property ownership, weather forecasting, road construction, locational analysis, emergency response, forest management, mineral prospecting, navigation – the list is endless – would be practicable without maps” (<https://cca-acc.org/resources/what-is-cartography>). Cartography is also interlinked with the imperial survey of colonised (wo)men and nature to arrive at multiple versions of the evolutionary theory.

The imperial scheme to scale the farthest point of navigation is directly related to the science of oceanography, that is, the knowledge about the seas and oceans. The idea that the continents of the earth had shifted from their original position was first put forward by the German climatologist Alfred Wegener (1880-1930) in 1912. And, as J.D. Bernal notes,

While in the study of the solid crust of the earth it is the structural and historic elements that predominate, in that of the waters and airs it is the dynamic element and the rapidity of change which need to be understood. ... Its development in the early twentieth century was more extensive than spectacular. ... The greatest advances have been made on the edges of the ocean basins, the continental shelf furrowed with sinuous and deep canyons of still unknown origin, which have been studied with the anti-submarine device of the First World War.... The coastal landing operations of the Second World War led to the first really quantitative study of beaches and of waves and currents that serve to form them. (801)

As evident from the above observation, oceanography marks the passage from imperialism to the two great World Wars. Section 9.2.6.7 considers the relationship between science and wars. Oceanography, on the other hand, has centrally contributed to climatology, a chief scientific concern of the late-twentieth and twenty first centuries. Before that let us have a brief overview of the impact of science and technology on the chief modernist art forms.

2.5.6 Impact of Science and Technology on Modernist Painting, Literature and Film

2.5.6.1 *Painting*

The modern world witnessed a series of key developments, connecting art and science. The Kodak Company brought cheaper cameras to the market. This created a crisis for the portrait and landscape painters as the camera provided the most 'lifelike' reproduction of any chosen object. "As a consequence, artists needed to assert an alternative, non-representational approach that differed from that of camera," as Peter Childs writes in *Modernism* (114). The discovery of X-Ray, too, had a major impact on the development of modernist painting, as it changed the perception regarding penetrability. Growing experiments in Chemistry made painting colours much cheaper, and painters now began to practice their art independently without any patronage of rich people. So, someone like Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) could survive and work depending on his meagre earning. As an effect of the social and political revolutions in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century classical art works were exhibited publicly, and the great Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 generated people's art, in collaboration with people's science. High-speed transport system helped the suburban artists to reach cities, and city-based artists to reach the countryside. This helped to form art movements, and also created market for artworks. With an unprecedented expansion of middle class buyers and dealers, painting and sculpture became profitable business, though,

as in case of Gogh, this did not much improve the artist's living condition. Interest in the so-called 'primitive' life and art in European colonies across the seas radically altered the form and content of European painting and sculpture, based on the Greco-Roman model of beauty. Explosion of technology and growing automation also created a deep-seated crisis and anxiety in the artist's mind. The crisis of humanity and unbound violence during wars provoked rebellion among artists. Painting, like science, became interested in catching the molecules rather the whole object, and breaking away from the chronological time and well-coordinated cartography. Theories of light and optical science contributed to the new concept of vision.

In the light of above developments, we may briefly discuss certain key movements of early twentieth century modernist painting. To quote from Peter Child's note on Impressionism in *Modernism*:

The last representational art movement was arguably impressionism, as practised by Renoir, Monet, Degas, Manet and Sisley. Most impressionists shared the general law that all life concerned a vision of beauty: cafes, villages, boulevards, salons, bedrooms and theatres all expressed a joy of life, a wholeness and a radiance. Impressionism was, in many ways, the essence of realism because its aim was to paint a specific object at a specific moment, to capture the effect of light and colour at an instant in time. ... Impressionism's unit of colour was the brushstroke, which was challenged by Georges Seurat (1859-91). More concerned with how vision worked than with the broad impressions created by the effects of light on objects, Seurat [and a group of post-Impressionist artists] wanted to paint the constituent blocks or atoms of seeing. As language could be stripped down to its letters and sounds, painting could also perhaps be reduced to its smallest elements: the molecule or dot. (115)

Post-impressionist drawing derived a lot from chemical studies on colours and optical physics, working on halo and mixing of colours in vision. Expressionism is primarily associated with the works of seminal post-impressionist, Vincent van Gogh, in whose self-portraits the self appears to be trying to escape, to fly away from itself in search of new expressions. "Nothing is small, nothing is great. Inside us are worlds" (qtd. in Childs, 123-24): such is the claim of the most typical expressionist painter, Edvard Munch (1863-1944), who, under the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis, presents self as a battleground. Cubism marked a decisive shift from the representational to the 'abstract' art. Cubist paintings are "nearly all still lifes", and its internal logic is like this:

In terms of the object, art is a two-dimensional medium, but it is usually trying to represent three-dimensional space and, in this, can never be fully faithful to reality. In terms of subject: humans have bifocal vision; the eyes see depths; the individual can move around an object to see it from different directions; the point of focus and the

centre of vision can move between foreground and background as a person's point of interest shifts while scanning over the object. (Childs 117)

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), a French post-Impressionist painter, was influential in the aesthetic development of many twentieth century artists and art movements, especially Cubism. And it was Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), a Spanish painter, who radicalised modern painting to explore its greatest potentials. Picasso and Georges Braque (1882-1963), a French artist, “were intent on making works of art that would not let the viewer forget their distinct essence as human products. They shattered surfaces that in nature belong together and resembled fragmented reality by transforming a curved object ... into some strange geometric contour that resembled virtually nothing ...” (Gay 155). Cubist painting thus offers the viewer a scope to put the fragments together into a recognisable semblance of actuality. The most technology-oriented art movement of the early twentieth century was perhaps Futurism, whose leader Filippo Tomaso Marinetti (1876-1944), a French painter, published the first ‘Futurist Manifesto’ in *Le Figaro* in 1909 and declared: “we affirm that the world’s magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed. ... We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capital” (qtd. in Childs 121). Two main responses to the experiences of war in the field of art were, however, Surrealism, in the works of Luis Buñuel (1900-1983) and Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) of Spain, and Dadaism that emphasised the irrational and absurd as a movement of ‘anti-art’, a phrase by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), a French-American painter. With Duchamp, painting “repudiated entirely what he called retinal art and adopted the geometrical methods of industrial design. It became like the blueprint of a machine, albeit a symbolic one, that embodied his ideas of man, woman, and love” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marcel-Duchamp>). The mingling of science/technology and painting marked a new era of post-modern art.

2.5.6.2 Literature

Virginia Woolf’s depiction of ‘life’ as “a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (qtd. in Poplawski 195) signifies the scientific consciousness of the literary artist. As this entire module is devoted to the analysis of modernist literature, and this unit, too, approaches different aspects of modern science through the lens of literature, we here restrict ourselves from providing any detailed account of literary art of the period. Let us, however, consider very briefly a specific literary genre, called Science Fiction (SF), or Speculative Fiction, at its modernist phase.

In 1818 Mary Shelley's novel about the ethical dilemma associated with creativity and uncontrolled scientific progress, *Frankenstein* inaugurated the genre of modern Science Fiction. The novel is the story of the consequences of scientist Victor Frankenstein's experiment with reanimating human corpses through the use of electro-galvanism. As Tarun K. Saint points out,

The genre's ability to foreground alternative perspectives with respect to key cultural and socio-political issues subsequently came to the fore in works such as *The War of the Worlds* (1897), nineteenth century master of the scientific romance, H.G. Wells's [1866-1946] allegorical tale on colonialism, and Yevgeny Zamyatin's parable of totalitarianism *We* (1924 ...). Zamyatin's masterpiece was in turn one of the inspirations for British author George Orwell's better-known *1984* (1949). (xiv)

Another tradition of the SF genre can be traced back to the works of the French novelist, Jules Verne (1828-1905), whose *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872), exhibits the far-fetched and the unbelievable in a way that inspires the reader's trust. The genre is, therefore, closely interlinked with the binary of utopia and dystopia. In European colonies nationalist aspirations for native progress and freedom were often expressed in the form of SF, as evident in Jagadish Chandra Bose's tale, "Runaway Cyclone" (1896), which is one of the earliest science fictions written in any Indian vernacular (see Ray, *Bengal Renaissance & "After"*).

2.5.6.3 *Film*

Joseph Conrad's preface to his novel, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, includes a declaration that the task of the author is "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see." Ezra Pound (1885-1972), an American modernist poet and theorist, wrote in 1916: "I see, you wish to give people new eyes ..." (both qtd. in Armstrong). This preoccupation with vision in the modernist art is, however, best exercised in the most technologically complex modern art form, film. "Modernist photography – the Vorticist photography of Alvin Langdon Coburn and Man Ray's 'rayographs' for example – typically seeks to foreground the technology of perception. Aerial stereoscopic photography, designed to make objects leap out in exaggerated relief, has been related to Cubism, not simply in their flat planes ... but in an analytic and synthetic approach to vision" (Armstrong 103-104). All these techniques reconfigure the way of looking at an object and they are fully explored by the cinema, which, with a primary object to depict life, derives much of its elements from literary realism. And, as one of the greatest film makers of all times,

Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) notes in *Our Films Their Films* that the “development of [filmic] language” from D.W. Griffith (1875-1948), who in the USA perfected the motion-picture in *A Corner in Wheat* (1909), “to Godard” (1930-), the pioneer of the French new wave film in the nineteen sixties, “is equivalent to that from Chaucer to Joyce in English literature – a matter of 600 years as against 60 in the cinema” (94). In the history of modern film making, Sergei Eisenstein’s (1889-1948) works in Russia are the most significant achievements after Griffith:

Eisenstein’s *Strike*, 1924, and *The Battleship Potemkin*, 1925, move away from the practices of conventional cinema by dealing with historical situations that dramatise human oppression, using characters as representatives of different classes, turning masses into the protagonist, and technically juxtaposing apparently unrelated images and moments with rapid shifts in rhythm. By cutting and editing, placing alternative movement side by side, and thereby reaching new synthesis, such films create ‘dialectic montage’. After the October Revolution of 1917, under Lenin’s leadership and pursuing Gorky’s socialist realism, a new revolutionary use of camera for social analysis developed in Eisenstein, Pudvokin and Dovzhenko (Banerjee and Ray 298-299).

In a parallel development the French ‘poetic realists’ of the nineteen thirties, including Jean Renoir (1894-1979), a major influence on Satyajit Ray, started to use camera for catching simple life of common people. Renoir’s *Rules of Game* (1939), is distinguished by a new application of lens, called ‘deep focus.’ European film took another decisive turn in the nineteen forties at the hands of Italian artists, including Luchino Visconti (1906-1976) and Cezare Zavattini (1902-1989) – an avowed Marxist who scripted *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), directed by Vittorio De Sica (1901-1974), inspiring Satyajit Ray to make *Pather Panchali* (1955). The new technology of photography allowed these artists to inaugurate ‘neo-realist’ cinema and helped the post-colonial cinema to focus on the layered lives of the exploited mass in the post-Second World War period.

2.5.7 Science and Humanity: Wars and Ethical Responsibility

A pioneer of the Bengal Renaissance, a great chemist, an educationist and a social reformer, Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944) retorted against the Western science and technology in the context of the First World War in an essay, “Then and Now”, “The more we come into close contact with different races, in this age of steam and electricity, the more we are rendered vulnerable to onslaught after onslaught” (27). This observation recalls the

master-slave dialectic proposed in one of the foundational philosophical texts of Western modernity, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel suggests the limitation of the master that he “cannot see himself (his self) reflected in those around him whom he reduces to the status of objects; he lives an illusion. The slave, on the other hand, is first shaken by the fear of death which founds slavery, and then forced to recognize that he has his being for another” (Armstrong 135). The final recognition of being subjugated by others on the part of the exploited mass, particularly of the colonies, led in the early twentieth century to consider the role of science and technology in respect of humanity. The outbreak of two great wars of the first half of the century, primarily an outcome of the imperial competition for grabbing the resources around the world, created the fear and anxiety that is reflected in P.C. Ray’s afore mentioned opinion. In spite of P.C. Ray’s passing reservation about inter-racial interactions, the only answer to the series of ‘onslaught’ mentioned by him was to re-establish the relationship between modern scientific development and mankind at a global scale. In the context of the First World War, another thinker, a seminal French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas “undertakes a sustained critique of Western metaphysics and ontology” by invoking “the concept of the Other” and arguing that the freedom of the Self must rest on the demands of the relation with the Other – the exterior, the unknown (Ray, “After” 261). That science could play a pivotal role in crossing the border between the Self and the Other was proved during the Nationalist movement of India in the inter-wars period. In Mulk Raj Anand’s novels, the focus is mainly on the spread of the Gandhian anti-imperialist thought across India by using the modes of modern transport, like railways. As Ulrika Mande comments, modernist technology “enhanced our ability to see, hear, travel, discover, and comprehend, and in the process, they reconfigured our understanding of the self” (33). During the pre-war days Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) had launched a massive experiment at Santiniketan in Bengal of interrelating modern Western science/technology with tradition and humanism: in as early as “1902 the poet was anxious about the condition of educational system in Santiniketan, that due to the lack of money experiments and examination in the disciplines of Physics and Chemistry could not be introduced. But, it was noticed that Botany, Agricultural Science, Meteorology, and Physiology could easily be practiced there” (Ray, *Bengal Renaissance* 35).

In any way, worldwide destruction of humanity in the opening decades of the twentieth century forced one to reconsider the project of Western civilisation and argue for a new humanist outlook. One of the most profound humanist responses to the First World War is found in First World War literature, which is discussed separately in this paper. However, we

may quote from Santanu Das's study on the same literature as relevant to our present discussion:

If First World War writing is seen as a resurrection of the dead, these soldier-writers seem to be evoking moments they had known with the searing immediacy of their bodies. ... It is a great irony that the world's first industrial war, which brutalized the male body on such an enormous scale, also nurtured the most intense of male-bonds. The myth of heroic masculinity fostered through the works of Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling and encouraged through the public school sporting system exploded in the mud and blood of the Western front. A very different order of male experience, one that accommodated fear, vulnerability, support and physical tenderness, sprang up in its place. (136)

The human feelings that Das stresses as countering the brutality of the war, are part of the great legacy of the so-called 'modern' world. The anti-human tendencies of the First World War, on the other hand, were pushed to extremes in the Second World War. The processes of war production and supply, the mobilisation of civilians and the types of weapons employed underwent new levels of specialisation. "The human cost of WW II was truly enormous but is still impossible to measure exactly. ... The lowest figure that is at all plausible is some 40 million dead, but other estimates go as high as 55 million" (Sommerville 242). The experiences of Nazism and Atomic explosions left a deep and permanent scar on the community of mankind, which under the leadership of such mid-century thinkers, like Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland (1866-1944), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), and Rabindranath Tagore, participated in a new struggle of upholding the humanist and internationalist notions of reason and progress in opposition to all forms of totalitarianism.

2.5.8 Summing Up

A series of revolutions in human understanding of the cosmic and the natural worlds since the European Renaissance had contributed to the making of the modern natural science, before the relationship between science and technology, on the one hand, and capital and industry, on the other, took a definite form during the Industrial Revolution in England and Western Europe from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution ensured the unprecedented growth of applied science and technology, but it also helped to the advancement of multiple scientific disciplines. However, the social effects of industrial capitalism in alienating (wo)man from his/her true selves become apparent in the contemporary

literature. A decisive turn in the study of science at the turn of the century corresponded to the conceptual and real-life uncertainties regarding human existence and the world of matter and energy. The early twentieth century Physics and Chemistry were mainly preoccupied with the study of atoms and that of the space-time relativity. The intriguing relationship between science/technology and the European imperialism took a new turn in the twentieth century as the competition among the imperial states led to the outbreak of two consecutive World Wars. The introduction to the modern technologically advanced warfare forced us to review the role of science and technology from the perspective of ethical responsibility of the Self to the Other. This entire dynamics can be best understood through the continuous changes and experiments in the modernist art and its different forms, like literature, painting and cinema.

2.5.9 Comprehension Questions

Long-answer type questions:

1. Estimate the importance of Copernican and Newtonian Revolutions with regard to the growth of modern science.
2. How did the Industrial Revolution help the growth of applied science and advancement of new scientific disciplines?
3. Write a short essay on the significance of the atomic theory and the theory of relativity in changing the framework of human understanding of the world of matter and energy?
4. Discuss multiple aspects of the relationship between science, technology and imperialism.

Middle-length-answer type questions:

1. Write a short note on literary responses to the Industrial Revolution.
2. Briefly discuss the 'space-time continuum'.
3. Write a short note on any one movement in the modernist painting.
4. Write a short note on the genre of science-fiction.
5. Write a short note on the main streams of the modernist film.

Short-length-answer type questions:

1. What are cartography and oceanography?
2. How did Kodak camera change the mode of painting?

3. Name two modernist novels that use multiple narratives.
4. Who were the inventors of the radio?
5. What is Pavlov's theory?
6. Who was the first British Nobel laureate?
7. What was the main motto of Futurism?
8. Who wrote *The Phenomenology of Spirit*?
9. Name three architects of the mid-twentieth century humanist movement.

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Unit 6 □ Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud

Structure

- 2.6.1 Objectives**
- 2.6.2 Introduction: From Anthropocentric to Bio-centric Thought**
- 2.6.3 Charles Darwin’s Career: A Short Sketch**
- 2.6.4 Key issues of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution**
- 2.6.5 Social-Darwinism: Socio-cultural and Literary Impacts**
- 2.6.6 Sigmund Freud’s Career: A Short Sketch**
- 2.6.7 Freud’s Concept of Psychoanalysis, and Its Relevance to Language, Literature and Culture**
- 2.6.8 Summing Up**
- 2.6.9 Comprehension Questions**
- 2.6.10 Suggested Reading**

2.6.1 Objectives

This unit on “Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud” is divided into a number of interlinked topics, and has the following objectives:

- To acquaint the students with the major turn in the Western Thought that forms the philosophical and scientific basis of modernist culture.
- To acquaint the students with the lives and times of two seminal thinkers of Western modernity, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud
- To introduce the key concepts of Darwin and Freud and their relevance in the study of literature and culture.
- To explain the major distortions of Darwin’s theory in the name of Social-Darwinism in relation to culture and politics.
- To introduce psychoanalysis as a tool of understanding language, literature and culture.

2.6.2 Introduction: From Anthropocentric to Bio-centric Thought

One of the finest minds of the early twentieth century Bengal Renaissance and a precursor of Bengali Modernist literature, Sukumar Ray (1887-1923) wrote a series of short essays on various scientific inventions, discoveries, theories and lives of major scientists mainly for child-readers. Such an essay, “Darwin” begins with the following words:

We used to be told when we were children, ‘the ancestors of human beings were monkeys.’ This was also told to us that some learned fellow, named Darwin, had said this. However, Darwin had never said like this. The real concept is that in some ancient time the common ancestor of both human beings and monkeys lived. Both human beings and monkeys come from the same ancestor – but nobody has any idea about the exact time period. (Ray, Sukumar 81; *translated from Bengali*)

The apparently simplistic beginning of Sukumar’s essay not only clarifies one of the central misconceptions regarding Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution – that, as we shall notice later in this unit, has strong political implications – but also rather bluntly posits human beings and monkeys as two interconnected branches of the tree of natural selection. The Copernican Revolution in modern science – referred to in the previous unit of the present module – had shifted the earth along with human beings, and everything revered and rationalised by him/her including God, from the centre of the universe to an orbit. The British naturalist Darwin (1809-1882) displaced human beings from the position of superiority even on the earth by proposing, as Janet Radcliffe Richards writes, “a mechanism by which mindless [Natural] processes might produce the kind of complexity that had previously seemed explicable only in terms of the intentions and power of what Locke called a cognitive Being” (17).

Darwin thus offers an explanation of the organic complexity of the biosphere – which is made up of the parts of our planet where life exists – “as something that just happened over vast periods of time, when simple creatures with no aspirations at all, influenced by nothing but unconscious natural forces, reproduced more of their kind than could survive” (Richards 17). His direction of analysis being from the bottom upwards, focuses on how order and complexity in Nature could come about without any intervention of the ‘conscious’ and ‘developed’ mind or brain. This inaugurates a radically new phase of thinking that exposes the limits of anthropocentric – or, human-centric – thought by disclosing an understructure of wonderful mechanism of simple elements which bring about higher forms of existence. Various expositions of limitations of human ‘purposes’ and ‘goals’ as governed by some understructure of interplaying basic forces and elements radicalise modern thought, as espoused by Darwin’s

immediate contemporary the German social-scientists, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) in case of social evolution, and later the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in his study of individual human being's most private worlds of dream and sexuality. In respect of Freud, especially, the most sustainable concept remains that of the unconscious. Although he gives a new technical meaning to the term, much of his insights come from his vigorous readings of myths, art, poetry, drama and prose-fiction. In this unit we would try to understand some of the basic streams of Darwin and Freud's thought and their cultural implications. The works of these thinkers radically altered the most fundamental interpretations of 'reality' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and initiated the modernist movement in social-thought, science, philosophy, art, literature and culture.

2.6.3 Charles Darwin's Career: A Short Sketch

In the afore-mentioned essay, Sukumar Ray proceeds to note that Darwin in his childhood had a "strange interest in collecting various extraordinary things" from his surroundings and was a "soft-hearted fellow" who could not pursue medical studies and shifted towards natural history (82; *translated from Bengali*). Charles Robert Darwin was born on 12th February, 1809, in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, England. To repeat the *Britannica Ready Reference Encyclopedia* entry:

The grandson of Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood, he studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh and biology at Cambridge. He was recommended as a naturalist on HMS *Beagle*, which was bound on a long scientific survey expedition to South America and South Seas (1831-36). His zoological and geological discoveries on the voyage resulted in numerous important publications and formed the basis of his theories of evolution. Seeing competition between individuals of a single species, he recognized that within a local population the individual bird, for example, with the sharper beak might have a better chance to survive and reproduce and that if such traits were passed on to new generations, they would be predominant in future populations. He saw this natural selection as the mechanism by which advantageous variations were passed on to later generations and less advantageous traits gradually disappeared. He worked on his theory for more than 20 years before publishing it in his famous *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). The book was immediately in great demand, and Darwin's intensely controversial theory was accepted quickly in most scientific circles; most opposition came from religious leaders. Though Darwin's ideas were modified by later developments in genetics and molecular biology, his work remains central to modern

evolutionary theory. His many other important works included *Variations in Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (1868) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). He was buried in Westminster Abbey. (111-112)

Charles Darwin died in Downe, Kent on 19th April, 1882.

2.6.4 Key Issues of Darwin's Theory of Evolution

The American zoologist George Gaylord Simpson (1902-1984) commented in 1966 that “all attempts to answer questions about the nature of human beings and the meaning of life before 1859 had been worthless, and that we should be better off if we ignored them completely” (Richard 4). *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* and *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* carry the unmistakable implication that all conventional beliefs regarding our own nature and destiny require radical reconsideration. They also generate a feeling of smallness within an inscrutable design of Nature, which is beautifully caught by the central narrator of the Polish-British writer Joseph Conrad's (1857-1924) novella, *Heart of Darkness*, 1899: “It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing, that feeling. After all, if you were small, the grimy beetle crawled on – which was just what you wanted it to do” (185).

The theory of evolution is not Darwin's invention; it rather has a long history. Evolution of different beings on the earth had been studied from multiple perspectives before Darwin touched the issue. The eighteenth and early nineteenth century thinkers in this tradition include Baptists Lamarck (1744-1829), Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), Adam Sedgewick (1785-1873), Patrick Matthew (1790-1839), Richard Owen (1804-1892), Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), and Charles Darwin's own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802). Charles Darwin reformulates the earlier thoughts to construct a verifiable scientific theory, whose main theorems may be summarised in the following points:

- Biological types or species have no fixed or static existence; they rather exist in the states of continuous change and flux. This quality seems to be corresponding to the modernist notion of uncertain, insignificant and passing existence that defies any conscious planning as was suggested by the Enlightenment modernity. The helplessness of the modernist subject who fails to rule his/her own life becomes a major literary theme across various contexts, as it is articulated in the American novelist William Faulkner's (1897-1962) 1932 classic, *Light in August*: “Yes I would say Here I am I am tired I am tired of running of having to carry my life like it was a basket

of eggs they all run away. Like there is a rule to catch me by, and to capture me that way would not be like the rule says” (337; *emphasis in the original*). Both internal and external natures are not static. All existences are variable and unstable, just like the experience of carrying a basket of eggs which tend to “run away.”

- All life takes the form of a struggle to exist and reproduce the greatest possible number of offspring, who vary among themselves. To suggest that reproduction and natural selection – explained in the next point – are at the root of the development of all species, including human, is to challenge the Christian belief in unchanging humanity modelled on God’s image. In literature and art, a direct consequence is the spread of naturalism that refutes spirituality and favours environment and heredity. The major exponents of literary Naturalism are the French novelist, Emile Zola (1840-1902) and the American novelist, Jack London (1876-1916). We may, however, quote from D.H. Lawrence’s poem, “Snake,” 1920, to understand the spirit of environmentalism: “He dark enough/ And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken, / And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air,/ so black/ Seeming to lick his lips,/ And looked around like a god...” (Thomas 148).
- Nature culls out those organisms that are less adapted to any given environment, which is again subject to constant changes. Nature allows the organisms, better adapted to an environmental state because of some randomly occurring variations, to survive and flourish. This process is known as the process of natural selection. This is, therefore, a matter of organic variations and selections, and neither “prudent sagacity” nor “deliberation of enormous strength” – to quote two phrases from Conrad’s long-story *Typhoon* (53) – on part of human beings can control the above process.
- The whole process of evolution by natural selection involves an extremely long period of time.

All the above ideas had significant impact on the modernist writers in England and elsewhere.

The English biologist Sir Julian Huxley (1887-1975) in his introduction to *The Origin of Species* pithily explains the importance of Darwin’s key concepts in the following terms:

Why is *The Origin of Species* such a great book? First of all, because it convincingly demonstrates the fact of evolution: it provides a vast and well-chosen body of evidence showing that existing animals and plants cannot have been separately created in their present forms, but must have evolved from earlier forms by slow transformation. And secondly, because the theory of natural selection, which

the *Origin* so fully and so lucidly expounds, provides a mechanism by which such transformation could and would be automatically produced. (11)

Darwin's theory thus negates the possibility of any conscious intervention in the process of natural selection and resultant evolution. When in Ted Hughes' (1930-1998) poem "Hawk Roosting," 1957, the bird asserts, "It took the whole of Creation/ To produce my foot, my each feather" (Thomas 466), it unknowingly gives credit to the process of natural selection.

2.6.5 Social-Darwinism: Socio-cultural and Literary Impacts

In his 1932 science fiction, *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley constructs a totalitarian utopia, in which state-controlled hatcheries would engineer human-embryos and classify bottle-grown babies into certain fixed races according to their preordained social roles. Such misappropriation of Darwin's theory of evolution itself has a long and complex history with multiple crossovers between different social and anthropological thoughts. Darwin's theory, it may be repeated, is specifically concerned with the organic evolution that happens without any conscious planning. This is a non-teleological explanation of the living world. A teleological account presupposes that there must be some *telos*, or goal, of every process, and, therefore, Huxley's above novel is a teleological one. Now, the theory of evolution was used in a variety of purposes and mainly to the purpose of justifying racial and economic hierarchy of an imperial world order of the nineteenth and twentieth century. It was in 1898 *Degeneration*, a book by Max Nordau (1849-1923), a Jewish-Hungarian physician and a follower of the Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), was translated into English. Lombroso's theory foregrounded physically 'abnormal' features of any individual as indicators of inheritors of criminal tendencies. Lombroso assumes the existence of born criminals as a distinct anthropological type, and Nordau associates anarchic desires with primitive peoples, which include the colonised natives of Asia and Africa, considered as savages, as well as marginalised sections of the European societies, consisting of women, working class, jobless poor, disabled, outlaws and others. Joseph Conrad found the theory of degeneration, coupled with the evolutionary issues, useful while writing his novels like *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent*, 1907. The second novel is set in 1886 London as an abode of the Anarchist movement, and depicts degeneracy at the centre of the British Empire.

The theory of Evolution was also conjoined with the English philosopher and biologist Herbert Spencer's (1820-1903) ideas. Spencer originated the expression 'the survival of the fittest' without any consideration of the role of natural selection in his *The Synthetic Philosophy*, 1896. Spencer is remembered as the father of Social Darwinism, used "to justify laissez-faire economics and the minimal state, which were thought to best promote

unfettered competition between individuals and the gradual improvement of society to justify laissez-faire economics and the minimal state, which were thought to best promote unfettered competition between individuals and the gradual improvement of society” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Herbert-Spencer>). Especially in the nineteenth century America Social Darwinism gave birth to the first distinctively American philosophy, Pragmatism. The American philosophers “tested the validity” of human action “by the relative success of the result” (Horton and Edwards 167). Another origin of this tradition is the English economist Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), whose theory that population growth always tends to outrun the supply of food to a community, and, therefore, betterment of a community is impossible without strict limits on reproduction has had a huge impact on modern social thought. Social Darwinism provided one of the most powerful justifications of the Anglo-American imperialism around the globe based on the racial discrimination, as it is most famously expressed by the Indian born English author, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) in his “The Ballad of East and West”(1889): “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the Twain shall meet” (https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_eastwest.htm).

2.6.6 Sigmund Freud’s Career: A Short Sketch

Sigmund Freud was born on 6th May 1856 at Freiberg, Moravia, which was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1873 he was sent to the University of Vienna to study medicine, and did his specialisation in anatomy and physiology. He was appointed a lecturer at the university in neuropathology. In 1886 he went to Paris and started his research in psychoanalysis. On returning to Vienna, he became a private clinical practitioner, specialising in nervous diseases. From 1900 to 1920 he mainly worked on the unconscious, socialisation and morality. Freud was always conscious of his Jewish origin. He supported a much younger Swiss psychoanalyst named Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). Like his contemporary German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920), and the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), and the German scientist Albert Einstein (1879-1955), with whom Freud was closely associated, Freud was deeply affected by the events of the First World War. Freud and Einstein tried together to stop the War and were concerned with what should be done to prevent such War in near future. Freud was not a Communist, but after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924), and the formation of the USSR, Freud admitted that he had always thought that a more equal distribution of social wealth would improve people’s lives and lessen, though not eradicate, aggressiveness and violence. Freud was in touch with the first non-Western psychoanalyst of colonial India,

Girindrasekhar Bose (1887-1953), who in 1922 established the Indian Psychoanalytic Society in Kolkata. In his later career Freud had to deal with the growth of Nazism in the 1930s' Europe, and started working on collective violence. *Civilization and its Discontents* was published in 1930 and *Moses and Monotheism* was published in 1939. In 1938 Freud left Vienna after the city had been occupied by the Nazis. He spent the last year of his life in London. Freud died in London on 23rd September 1939.

2.6.7 Freud's Concept of Psychoanalysis, and Its Relevance to Language, Literature and Culture

In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, published posthumously in 1940, Freud writes, "My interest, after making a long detour through the natural sciences, medicine, and psychotherapy, returned to the cultural problems which had fascinated me long before, when I was a youth scarcely old enough for thinking" (qtd. in Boccock xxv). In spite of Freud's above recognition that study of culture demands the highest level of maturity, his entire oeuvre is marked by a highly complex aesthetic consciousness, and includes serious readings of literature, myth, religion etc. Freud is one of the first modern thinkers to offer an organised study of language as a sign system, and in this way his works anticipate many preoccupations of the late-twentieth century poststructuralist reading of the singularity of art and literature. This stress on the importance of language in psychoanalysis is a legacy left by Freud for his follower the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who is again a major influence on culture studies and literary criticism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. On the other hand, Freud's works involve a thorough study of European aesthetic traditions. For example, the focus on symbols and images in Freudian psychoanalysis can be traced back to Shakespearean plays. Freudian treatment of dream as a storehouse of meaningful signs is also directly influenced by the Romantic concept of imagination, as advocated mainly by German Romantics and the English Romantic poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). In England "writers like May Sinclair, John Rodker and Dorothy Richardson were among the first to read and absorb Freud's work" (Armstrong 73).

"The Ancient Egyptians in the Bible treated dreams as having a meaning which needed interpretations. Joseph had been able to interpret the dreams of the Pharaoh as containing messages, or predictions, about what was going to happen in the future" (Boccock 33). As Freud explains, dreams are made of symbols, which stand for other things and events in a process he calls *displacement*. As dream elements carry multiple meanings that unravel repressed sectors of mind, Freud calls it *condensation*. Therefore, this entire dynamics is

interrelated with language and meaning – two main concerns also of Freud’s immediate contemporary the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). As Lacan points out in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973), Freud reconstructs the study of human psyche in relation to language, and he depends on the imperfections of human communications in order to get into the untraced realms of human mind. In this connection one may recall the realisation of Marlow, the narrator of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: “We live, as we dream – alone. ...” (172).

Freud relates dream sensations to the experience of sexuality. In the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), he provides a much expanded notion of sexuality from the common idea of adult heterosexuality. Significantly, “Freud made unsystematic observations of infants and children” to “develop his understandings of infant sexuality and desires” (Bocock 43). These observations lead to some culturally shocking concepts, like the ‘Oedipal Complex,’ which Freud detects to be most expressively represented in the ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (497/496 BC) and *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. Freud’s study of the attachment between the mother’s body and the son becomes a major theme of modernist literature, as exemplified by Lawrence’s 1913 novel *Sons and Lovers*, and William Somerset Maugham’s (1874-1965) short story “The Kite” (1947). In his controversial novel, *The Rainbow*, 1915, Lawrence deals with sexual energy: “She turned on him blindly and destructively, he became a mad creature, black and electric with fury” (126). Associated with the study of sexuality is the issue of social morality that suppresses all sorts of sexuality except that which serves the aim of socially sanctioned reproduction. So Freud’s concept of the unconscious delves into the repressed wishes and desires that socially regulated consciousness represses and rejects. He introduces three key terms in this regard:

Psychoanalysis is concerned with the repressed material of unconscious or id. This repressed material is not readily recallable into consciousness It is the area from which internal feelings and desires emerge from the ‘instincts’. This area is obscure, and difficult to describe. ... The ego develops as a result of contact with the external world, both physical and socio-cultural, through sense perceptions and through the acquisition of language. Its roots remain in contact with id. The superego stands like a parent in relation to a child compelling the ego to obey. (Bocock 77)

The German Expressionist playwright and poet Iwan Goll (1891-1950) in his play *Methusalem* (1922) names three characters as ‘Id,’ ‘Ego,’ and ‘Superego.’ The stream of consciousness narratives of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939) explore the intriguing interface between the compelling authority of society and the individual subjectivity. Freud’s influence can be found also in the Bengali modernist writings of Jagadish

Gupta (1886-1957), Manik Bandyopadhyay (1908-1956), and many others.

2.6.8 Summing Up

Groundbreaking theories of both Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud displace human beings from their former positions as autonomous self-governing beings, and unravel multiple forces – internal and external – as regulating their physical as well as mental nature. Darwin's theory of evolution considers life in terms of the most elemental and simple beings. Freud, on the other hand, depends on slips and gaps in human communication to find out the uncontrollable but repressed regions of the individual's own subjectivity. Both these thinkers radically change the modernist aesthetics. Although Darwin's theory being focused on the organic world has nothing to do with human civilisation, it has been coupled with many anthropological pseudo-sciences to justify the social power structure. This misinterprets non-teleological aspect of Darwin's concept in terms of teleological ideologies, and leaves a huge impact on the racist and imperialist approaches in art and literature. Freud's treatment of dream, sexuality, language, and unconscious disturbs the moral control of society, and is closely associated with modernist cultural traditions in both the East and the West.

2.6.9 Comprehension Questions

Long-answer Type Questions:

1. Estimate the importance of Nature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century turn in Western scientific and philosophical thinking.
2. How was the theory of evolution re-appropriated to serve the imperial politics and social hierarchy?
3. Write a short essay on the significance of modern psychoanalysis in studying literature?
4. Discuss multiple aspects of Freud's concept of psychoanalysis.

Middle-length-answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.
2. Name the proponents of the evolutionary theory, besides Darwin.
3. How did Darwin's theory challenge the Christian notion of human being?
4. Briefly discuss Freud's career.
5. How do both Darwin and Freud dismantle conventional morality? Explain in your own words.

Short-length-answer Type Questions:

1. What are *displacement* and *condensation*?
2. Name a major post-Freud psychoanalyst.
3. Name a modernist novel that uses both evolutionary theory and psychoanalysis.
4. What is Thomas Malthus' theory?
5. Who is the father of Social Darwinism?
6. Name two Naturalist fiction writers.

2.6.10 Suggested Reading

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Module-3

The Modern Age: Literary Contexts

Unit 7 □ Modern Literature - Poetry

Structure

- 3.7.1 Objectives**
- 3.7.2 Introduction**
- 3.7.3 Edwardian Poetry**
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- 3.7.8 Major Twentieth Century British Poets**
- 3.7.9 Summing Up**
- 3.7.10 Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.7.11 Suggested Reading**

3.7.1 Objectives

This unit will try to introduce various strands of Modern British Poetry to you. It will also historically contextualise the corpus of this poetry and thereby trace the correlation between the various facets of the genre. Moreover, this unit will familiarise you with major poets of the time.

3.7.2 Introduction

While reading the British poetry of the twentieth century, we need to consider various factors such as its historical context, multiple groups of poets having different affiliations, personal orientations of the poets, and their use of language, poetic forms and structures. Given the heterogeneity of styles, forms, and structures of the corpus of modern British poetry, it is difficult to categorise them under a single essentialist rubric. They fall under such categories as Edwardians, Georgians, Modernists, Poets of the Thirties, War Poets and the like. Poets belonging to a particular group shared some common features. For example, major British ‘Modernist’ poets such as Eliot, Pound, and Yeats deal with themes of their own choice and

maintain their own distinctive styles, but at the same time share some fundamental tenets of poetic principles. Ideologically, Modernist poetry demonstrates the “wide panorama of futility and anarchy” through a fragmented, disjointed narrative of human cognition and experience.

Of all the poetic movements taking place during the period, Modernism was the most prominent and, therefore, we need to provide some introductory information about it here. Modernism as a movement stems from a historical conjuncture of different movements—literary, cultural, political, social. It would perhaps be wise to consider modernism as a meta-movement embodying within its fold several micro-movements such as Imagism, Cubism, Futurism and Vorticism (see Module 2, unit 4 for details). The political volatility of the late 19th century caused by the progressive disintegration of the imperial ties, different anti-establishment movements, First World War— all these inform the aesthetic universe of European modernism. The vectors of political and social changes that shaped the aesthetic registers of modernism make it inherently fragmentary, disjointed, and laced it with a nostalgic obsession for mythic temporality. Despite its internal dichotomies and inconsistencies, modernist aesthetics brings to the fore an array of compelling questions that, on one hand, unsettle the core of our existential foundation and, on the other, endow us with a beacon of hope for an illusory brighter tomorrow.

Critics differ about the period of literary modernism. The last decade of the nineteenth century is often considered to be the inaugural phase of modernism in British literature and the beginning of the 1950s is supposed to be its terminal point. However, this historical period is broad and extensive. According to some critics, Modernism began in 1901 after the death of Queen Victoria. It is, however, almost universally acknowledged that the 1920s was the era when “High Modernism” thrived – 1922 being its *annus mirabilis*, with the publication of a number of substantial texts such as Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*, to name a few. We shall discuss Modernism further in later sections.

3.7.3 Edwardian Poetry (1901-1910)

King Edward’s tenure (1901-1910) is termed as Edwardian Period. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 seems to appear as a defining moment in British literature. With King Edward’s ascent to the throne, a new kind of liberalism permeated British culture and literature shared a remarkable affinity with it. Edward’s rise in power begets a far relaxed atmosphere, being influenced by an array of social and cultural changes. Discussions regarding women’s suffrage and the dissemination of education to lower-class children beyond the elementary

level unfolded a new arena of liberal expectations. Edwardian Poetry epitomised the spirit of the times. Henry Newbolt, John Masefield, Thomas Hardy, A.E. Housman, John Davison, and Rupert Brooke were the representative poets of the Edwardian era. What constitutes the fulcrum of Edwardian poetic sensibility is the increasing scepticism about language which led to many formal and aesthetic experimentations. Alongside this, increasing scepticism about the creative imagination comes as a marker of Edwardian poetry. Edwardian poetry's firm articulation of tradition played a pivotal role in shaping the British national and cultural identity. Growing demands for national heritage and the embedding of literature within it contributed to the invention of a tradition that remains the staple of British Literature. Overall, Edwardian poetry comes as a point of departure from the excessively sentimental moralising of Victorian poetry. It shifts the paradigm to another dimension both extending and departing from the values of fin-de-siècle poetic sentiments and sensibilities.

3.7.4 Georgian Poetry

Georgian poetry is the name commonly ascribed to a group of poets who contributed to a series of anthologies titled *Georgian Poetry* (1912–22) edited by Edward Marsh. Marsh gave the title to the series with the hope that the accession of George V in 1910 will herald a new age of great poetry. John Drinkwater, Edmund Blunden, Ralph Hodgson, Edward Thomas, Harold Manroe, Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Walter de la Mare, and A.E. Housman are some of the major Georgian poets. Unlike their contemporaries, the Georgians did not have any specific goal or programme. They moved away from the overtly sentimental Victorian lyrics and opened up a new vista of English poetry that was buoyant, animated, and vibrant. Although it petered out within ten years, its resonances could be felt in the poetry of the later eras, especially in the poets of the thirties. Marsh, the editor of volumes mentioned earlier, considered that poetry should be intelligible, musical, and 'racy' – by 'raciness' he meant intensity of thought and feeling. Rupert Brooke greatly embodied these qualities.

3.7.5 Modernism: A Historical Timeline

Europe was gradually moving away from traditional mindset as new discoveries and inventions were taking place and findings of new researches such as those of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud unsettled the old concepts and ways of thinking. We need to have some idea about these landmark events in order to understand the roots of cultural

modernism. Given below is a time chart that documents the years of such landmark publications and events. This chart is *mainly* focused on events/publications that took place in Europe and England.

Year	Event
1857	<i>Les Fleurs du mal</i> (The Flowers of Evil)
1859	Darwin's <i>On the Origin of Species</i> published.
1867	Matthew Arnold, <i>On the Study of Celtic Literature</i>
1867	Karl Marx, <i>Das Kapital</i> , vol. 1.
1871	Paul Valery was born, "The Drunken Boat" by Rimbaud was published
1872	Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> .
1873	<i>Studies in the History of the Renaissance</i> by Walter Pater published
1884	Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) was introduced.
1890	James Frazer, <i>The Golden Bough</i> (2 vols; 3rd edn in 12 vols (1906–15).
1892	<i>The Book of the Rhymers' Club</i> (a second anthology in 1894).
1893	W.B. Yeats, <i>The Rose</i>
1895	W. B. Yeats, <i>Poems</i> .
1896	<i>The Savoy</i> magazine (Jan.–Dec.).
1897	Lionel Johnson, <i>Ireland and Other Poems</i> ; <i>The Dome</i> magazine founded.
1899	Arthur Symons, <i>The Symbolist Movement in Literature</i>
1899	<i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> by Sigmund Freud published
1900	"The Symbolism of Poetry" by Yeats, Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" was published in <i>The Graphic</i> .

1900	<i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i> by George Santayana published.
1902–3	Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Modern Life.”
1902	John Masefield, <i>Salt-Water Ballads</i> ; Walter de la Mare, <i>Songs of Childhood</i> ; <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> founded.
1903	W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> ; <i>Camera Work</i> magazine founded
1904	Thomas Hardy, <i>The Dynasts</i>
1907	Henri Bergson, <i>Creative Evolution</i>
1908	Ezra Pound arrives in London. <i>English Review</i> periodical founded
1909	Gertrude Stein, <i>Three Lives</i> ; F. T. Marinetti, “The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism”; Poetry Recital Society founded
1910	W. B. Yeats, <i>The Green Helmet and Other Poems</i> ; <i>Crisis</i> magazine founded
1912	Edward Marsh, ed., <i>Georgian Poetry</i> (Vol.1); Ezra Pound coins the term ‘Imagisme’; Pound, <i>Ripostes</i> ; F. T. Marinetti, “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature”; Guillaume Apollinaire, <i>The Cubist Painters</i> ; Robert Delaunay, “Note on the Construction of Reality in Pure Painting”
1913	Robert Frost, <i>A Boy’s Will</i> ; F. S. Flint, “Imagisme”; F. T. Marinetti, “Destruction of Syntax-Wireless Imagination-Words-in-Freedom”; Luigi Russolo, “The Art of Noises: A Futurist Manifesto”.
1914	Amy Lowell, <i>Sword Blades and Poppy Seed</i> ; Mina Loy, “Aphorisms on Futurism”; “Parturition”; Clive Bell, “The Aesthetic Hypothesis”; <i>Blast</i> magazine founded (second and final issue 1915);
1915	T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”; F. S. Flint, “The History of Imagism”. Vorticist exhibition at the Doré Galleries, London.

1916	Hilda Doolittle, <i>Sea Garden</i> ; First Dada performances at the Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich; Tristan Tzara, <i>The First Celestial Adventure of Mr Antipyrine</i> .
1917	T. S. Eliot, <i>Prufrock and Other Observations</i> ; Mina Loy, "Songs to Joannes"; <i>The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English</i> ; <i>Dada</i> magazine founded; Guillaume Apollinaire's <i>The Breasts of Tiresias</i> staged in Paris.
1918	Oswald Spengler, <i>The Decline of the West</i> (Vol.1); Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918"; Enfranchisement of women aged 30 and over in Britain; Declaration of the Weimar Republic.
1919	T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"; H.D., "Notes on Thought and Vision"; <i>The Chapbook</i> magazine (originally the Monthly Chapbook) founded.
1920	<i>The Sacred Wood</i> by T.S Eliot; <i>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</i> by Ezra Pound; <i>The Dial</i> magazine founded; Freud, <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i> .
1922	E. E. Cummings, <i>The Enormous Room</i> ; T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> ; Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> ; James Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i> ; <i>Façade</i> by Edith Sitwell.
1923	T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth"; D. H. Lawrence, <i>Birds, Beasts and Flowers</i> .
1924	André Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism"
1925	T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"; Ezra Pound, <i>A Draft of XVI Cantos</i> ; W. B. Yeats, <i>A Vision</i> .
1927	Wyndham Lewis, <i>Time and Western Man</i> ; Martin Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i> .
1929	André Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism"; Wyndham Lewis, <i>Paleface: The Philosophy of the Melting Pot</i> .

1930	W. H. Auden, <i>Poems</i> (2nd edn, 1933); Samuel Beckett, <i>Whoroscope</i> ; T. S. Eliot, “Ash-Wednesday”.
1931	Gertrude Stein, <i>How to Write</i> .
1932	F. R. Leavis, <i>New Bearings in English Poetry</i> .
1934	T. S. Eliot, <i>After Strange Gods</i> ; Ezra Pound, <i>ABC of Reading</i> .
1935	T. S. Eliot’s <i>Murder in the Cathedral</i> (verse drama).
1937	Picasso, <i>Guernica</i> .
1938	Brian Coffey, <i>Third Person</i> ; Harriet Monroe, <i>A Poet’s Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World</i> ; Ezra Pound, <i>Guide to Kulchur</i> .
1939	W. B. Yeats, <i>Last Poems and Two Plays</i> .
1947	Gertrude Stein, <i>Four in America</i> ; Stein’s <i>The Mother of Us All</i> is performed and published (posthumously).
1948	T. S. Eliot, Nobel Prize for Literature; Ezra Pound, <i>The Pisan Cantos</i> , awarded Bollingen Prize.

3.7.6 Modernist Poetry: Cultural and Historical Context

In the article, “Modernist Poetry in History”, David Ayers regards two major figures – Walter Pater and Charles Baudelaire – as integral to Modernist poetics’ expansion. He argues that Pater’s aestheticism and its successor movement known as ‘Decadence’ represented a departure from the Arnoldian model of adapting to the social situation of art. Pater’s *Studies in History of the Renaissance* (1873) depicts the human mind to be the centre of constant transition and mutability. Pater’s aestheticism creates a “space for pleasure and internal autonomy” (Ayers20). Keeping the Baudelairean figure of the “Dandy” in mind, Ayers observes, “Another consequence is the aesthetic development of the person of the poet himself or herself in terms of lifestyle, the type of the alienated artist” (21). From Ayers’ argument, it becomes clear that the modernist artist, with his/her bohemian cult, becomes intrinsic to the modernist tradition of representation– the bohemian artist both inhabits and confronts the bourgeois value system. The city remains the focal point of both the artists’ bohemian activities and the nucleus of their representation. Tim Armstrong quite compellingly

argues: “Many recent accounts of modernism have begun with the metropolitan centre: Paris in the 1840s, the detached and ironic gaze of the masculine walker, the *flâneur*, and Baudelaire’s essay on ‘The Painter of Modern Life’” (23). He mentions Flaubert, Mallarme, Rimbaud, Laforgue to trace the evolving trajectory of modernist poetry. Regardless of their historical contexts, the stress remains on the “oppositional stance expressed in the aesthetic term and the opening of a rift between bourgeois modernity on the one hand and aesthetic modernity on the other” (Armstrong 23). The divide between the ‘bourgeois’ and the ‘aesthetic’ breaks down the culturally cherished notion of a universally accepted paradigm of Enlightenment modernity. However, this divide remains instrumental to the poetics of modernism and its structure of representation.

The relationship between politics and aesthetics is central in Modernist poetry. Keeping in mind the emergence of new regimes of governance, Micheal Tratner observes:

In the early twentieth century, the political landscape of English-speaking countries, and indeed of the entire world, underwent a remarkable number of quite radical changes. Two new political systems emerged – communism and fascism – and many predicted that one or the other of these systems would take over the entire world. (68)

At this historical conjuncture women of England also gained their voting rights after a sustained movement. Interestingly, the resultant proliferation of voters also resonated with the spurt of the Labour Party activities which aimed at representing the demands of the working-class citizenry. Besides, Irish independence, the rise of Pan-African freedom movements, and the Indian war of independence had an abiding impact on the political topography of England in particular and Europe in general. These changes propelled the envisioning of new cultural forms. Tratner observes:

...The sense of imminent and radical change meant that politics needed to generate images of a new reality, of new cultural forms. Politics itself was driven to reject ‘realism’ because it was necessary to develop policies for governing bodies that had never existed before and which were going to exist in a matter of a few years. Politics became ‘aesthetic’ in the sense of seeking to produce representations of imaginary social structures. (70)

Politics and aesthetics were so closely intertwined in modernist poetry that the sense of this ‘imminent and radical change’ catapulted modernist poetry into the imagination of a veritable dystopia, found in Eliot’s poetics. What emerged in this era is a politics of cultural hybridization/mixture through an effort to transcend the limits of human consciousness to

envision the world order in a new light. This attempt is reflected in the forms and structures of modernist aesthetics. Michael H. Whitworth comments quite succinctly on the form of modernist poetry:

The modernists set a high value on form, and works which they considered “formless,” “shapeless,” or “baggy” they dismissed as not being art. But they were suspicious of form as a straitjacket, as something that would prevent them from expressing their true visions, or prevent them from depicting the actual chaotic nature of the modern world. If we are to understand their form, then we need to go beyond definitions of form that work for conventional rhyming poems. Older definitions of form are useful starting places for new models: for example, we can stretch the analogy of rhyme to cover ideogrammic and mythic method. But to go further we may need to consider other kinds of unity (153).

This departure from the conventional paradigm of form is the hallmark of modernist aesthetics. Whereas in the traditional language and form the thrust is placed on temporality, sequence, and coherence, modernists seek to demonstrate the disruptive flows of time. They break away from the conventional sense of harmony, order, and coherence through poetic representation. Analogous to the matrix of a decentred, diffused, politically turbulent time, modernist poetry offers the template of an aesthetic design that is not apparently “formless”, yet significantly different from the conventional poetic forms.

3.7.7 The Avant-Garde, and Different Modernist Movements

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, modernist poetry was marked by experimentation of various kinds. These experimentations spurred the growth of a phenomenon known as ‘historical avant-garde’. The core features of the historical avant-garde were radical experimentation with the form of art, critical irreverence toward the dominant paradigm of artistic and poetic representation, and the cultivation of an unorthodox attitude to life. The objective of the avant-garde was to push the boundaries of art and thereby cross the divide between life and art. Peter Burger argues that the avant-garde ambition to traverse the divide between life and art was ultimately thwarted by the inherent aestheticism of the institution under bourgeois capitalism. In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Renato Poggioli notes:

An authentic avant-garde can arise only when the concept as we know it (or at least a potential version of it) emerges. It is evident that such a concept (or its equivalent) is present in the Western historical consciousness only in our epoch, with the most remote temporal limits being the various preludes to the romantic experience. (15)

Poggioli, persuasively, draws an analogy between Romanticism and the theory of the Avant-Garde:

On the plane of aesthetic metaphysics, we must examine the doctrines going under the names of the “aesthetic of the dream” and the “poetics of the supernatural,” equally dear to the romantic and the avant-garde artist. There the relationship between symbolists and surrealists, on the one side, and the extreme (particularly the German) romantics, on the other, seems almost that of the disciple to master. (58)

The avant-garde aesthetic, thus, harbours the dream of an extraordinary world different from the debilitating conditions of the ordinary present. This dream of a different world remains inextricably linked with the Modernist envisioning of new world order.

Given below are brief introductions to some schools of art and literature which resorted to artistic innovations and experiments.

Futurism: Futurism was one of the major movements that influenced the art of the modernist aesthetic. The techniques and technologies of modern advertising were central to Filippo Tomasso Marinetti’s *Manifesto of Futurism*, published in 1909. Futurism was largely concerned with the exaltation of speed, and industrial culture. What Futurism adopts is a relentless pursuit of mobility and aggression. The impact that Futurism leaves on modernist poetry can be encapsulated in the following ways:

- The poet must present himself with an “ardour, splendor and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervour of the primordial elements.
- No work without an aesthetic character can be a masterpiece. Poetry thereby needs to entail violence, instrumental to an attack on the unknown forces.

Lawrence Rainey comments that with Futurism “the distinction between poetry and the most ephemeral of commodities, the daily newspaper” got blurred. No wonder, the *Futurist Manifesto* plays a pivotal role in redefining the characteristics of modernist poetry by promoting a poetics of collage and verbal abstraction.

Imagism: Imagism was the brainchild of F.S. Flint, Ezra Pound and T.E. Hulme. Imagists engaged in a debate with the Futurists in terms of the modes and politics of representation. Resolutely departing from the Futurist call of going beyond the “limits of art”, they fixate their attention on the ‘thing’ and its direct treatment. By doing so they promoted minimalism in English poetry. As shown by Paul Peppis, the three dominant strands of imagism are: 1. direct treatment of the ‘image’; 2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation; 3. Regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in

the sequence of a metronome; (32). Ezra Pound's fourteen-word poem "In a Station of Metro" provides an excellent example of an Imagist poem: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd:/Petals on a wet, black bough."

Vorticism: Vorticism was another major aesthetic movement co-founded by Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Henri Gaudier Brezska, and others. The journal *Blast: The Review of the Great English Vortex* edited by Lewis embodied the principles of Vorticism. This was originally advertised as containing "Discussion of Cubism, Futurism, Imagisme": it is these three prior movements that most influenced Vorticism. With its bright pink cover and bold-faced type, *Blast* (1914) adopted the style of Futurism, combining with it the jagged geometry and multi-perspectival approach of Cubism. Various manifestoes written in an aphoristic style hovering between aesthetic criticism, agitprop, and wry humour fill the pages of *The Blast*. As Peppis argues, the poems of *Blast*

...present Lewis's boisterous declarations and arguments, by turns antagonistic, esoteric, hilarious and obscure in visually striking form: nearly newspaper-sized pages, covered with black block letters, composed to maximise visual impact and explore language as a visual medium and the printed page as compositional field. (34)

Thus, *Blast* plays a pivotal role in taking literary and aesthetic experimentation to the level where poetry can seamlessly be integrated with the banal, the everyday and the mundane spheres of life. By absorbing the non-poetic into the poetic form and discourse *Blast* contributes immensely to the interdisciplinarity of modern poetry.

Poets of Thirties or Auden Group

In the 1930s a group of poets emerged on the literary scene with a resolute commitment to left-wing politics. They belonged to a generation that had been school children during the First World War. They derived knowledge about the horrors and brutalities of the war by reading the poems of Owen, Sassoon, and Brooke.

The poets of the thirties are noticeably different in style and approach from the poetry of the 1920s. Unlike Eliot, the poetry of the Auden group explores the relationship between the private world and the public world to show how they remain implicated within each other. W.H. Auden during this period uses form and language to communicate a more social perspective on the modern world. As a result, his poetry is more accessible and more popular. However, both Auden and Eliot share the same poetic quest for meaning instrumental in the ordering of a world that was falling apart.

Although W.H. Auden's poetic voice was powerful and influential throughout the 1930s, many other writers responded to the events of that decade with equal dedication and fervor. They also considered 'this' and 'in our time', and their writing fused the private and public worlds, attempting to win a wider readership. A number of these poets were called the Auden Group because they shared a style and viewpoint similar to W.H. Auden. The most important members of this group were Louis MacNeice, C. Day Lewis, and Stephen Spender. Despite the heterogeneity, their poetry is marked by a focus on social themes and on the use of clear, ordinary language.

Their rejection of poetry as an auto-telic medium was linked with their criticism of the fascist worldview. Their fight against Fascism not only revolved around the Spanish Civil War but extended to sympathy for Marxism and the celebration of the achievements of the Russian revolution. With the shift of focus from the mythical tradition to social and political commitment, the poets of the Thirties departed from the experimental art and style of early modernist poetry. This reaction against esoteric poetry and recondite allusions resulted in an engagement in the immediate and insistent problems. We can mention in this respect Auden's *Poems* (1930), Spender's *Poems* (1932), and C. Day Lewis's *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933). In the anthology *New Signatures* (1932), Michael Roberts clearly rejected the traditions set in the Pound-Eliot era. In 1933, Geoffrey Grigson founded a poetry magazine, *New Verse*. It foregrounded contemporary speech and actual socio-political issues in poetry. The concern for contemporary events was reinforced by the need for intelligibility and wider readership, and the poets reverted to more traditional syntax, meters, and forms like the sonnet, the heroic couplet, *terza rima*, and so on.

Movement Poetry:

The term movement literature was coined by J.D. Scott. In *The Spectators* (1954), he referred to the literature of the 1950s to indicate a shift in the poetic paradigm. Movement poetry featured poets like Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, John Wain, DJ Enright, and Robert Conquest. The cultural context of the movement poetry was the Second World War that had a pivotal role in the further disintegration of social relations which showed considerable signs of collapse in the 1920s. Repudiating both the experimental pyrotechnics of Avant-Garde poetry and the metaphorical abstractions of new-romantic poetic sentiment practised by Dylan Thomas, movement poetry revels in a poetic tradition that is ironical, nostalgic, and mundane. Through incisive use of realism, movement poets forged a distinct cultural identity that was at odds with the broad, cosmopolitan identity of early twentieth-century poetry. On the other hand, in movement literature, European sympathies were predominantly brushed aside as

intellectually pretentious and hollow. It cultivated a sense of cultural insularity. Remaining restricted predominantly to university-going male urban elites, movement literature, despite its penchant for the English tradition, could not expand its scope. However, with its razor-sharp depiction of reality, it ushered in a new kind of literature marked by cynicism, disillusionment, and anger. Two anthologies were produced during this phase: Enright's *Poets of the 1950s* (1955) and Conquest's *New Lines* (1956). While Amis attained some success as part of the group with his poetry, he fortified his recognition through his novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954).

3.7.8 Major Twentieth Century British Poets

W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

Of the triumvirate of modernist poets, W.B. Yeats remains a unique figure representing both romanticism and modernism. Born a generation before Eliot and Pound, Yeats, through his poetry, evocatively brings to the fore the shifts and transitions in modernist poetry. Unlike the works of other modernists, the poetry of Yeats, as stated before, represents a romantic fervor to such an extent that he is often hailed as 'the last romantic.'

Yeats' Irish upbringing and his association with the Irish freedom struggle lent a political import to his poetry. His deep-rooted interest in mysticism and search for indigenous myths and folklores shaped his poetic world and brought his readers in close touch with the lost world of Irish culture and civilization. Owing to his inextricable association with Irish politics, his poetry also remains charged with political undertones.

The aesthetic development of Yeats is usually divided into three phases. In the first phase, his poetry remains marked by a self-conscious romantic charm. His affinity with Celtic twilight and Irish nationalism remains aligned with the envisioning of a utopian Ireland. His poetry collection *The Rose* (1893) unravels the search for an idyllic landscape of his dream. It also records his aesthetic quest for a unifying, self-sustaining world order. A key poem in this phase is "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" which resonates with the urge for a journey to the "Lake of Innisfree" where he can discover the "deep heart's core".

The second phase was dedicated to Irish nationalism. The quest for a sublime, dream-like Irish landscape yields to growing disillusionment with the changing nature of Irish politics. His increasing awareness of the violent turn in Irish politics is recorded in "Easter 1916", where he uses the birth of a "terrible beauty" as a refrain. The refrain with a blurring of the ontological contraries highlights the overcoming of dualities that informs the poetic philosophy

of late Yeats. Yeats' "The Second Coming" (1921) encapsulates his vision of death and dissolution. It also envisions the onset of a gigantic force to restore the order that has fallen apart.

In the third phase, Yeats turns more philosophical and introspective. Between the First World War and 1930, Yeats published *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stairs* (1929). In two famous Byzantium poems, Yeats' expresses a strong desire to travel to the world of art and poetry, overcoming the strains of death, decay, and decrepitude. Through the adept use of images like the gyres, winding stairs, and spinning top, Yeats conjures up an elaborate symbolic design. The symbolism of Yeats goes beyond the law of dialectical temporality to create a self-reflexive order where his aesthetics and politics converge.

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965):

In Modernist poetry, the impact of T.S. Eliot was so enduring that the Modern age was often hailed as the age of Eliot. Eliot reigns as a towering figure in the age not merely as a poet but also as an essayist, critic, and dramatist. The eclecticism of his genius is testified by his belonging to multiple literary and cultural traditions. In an era that was steadfastly preoccupied with the new forms of subjectivity, poetic forms, and the meanings of tradition, Eliot lent a cosmopolitan character to British poetry by imbuing it with the cultural values drawn from various parts of the world.

Eliot was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1888 in a family which firmly believed in unitarian Christian doctrine. His grandfather William Greenleaf Eliot had come to St. Louis to establish a Unitarian church. His father was a businessman. Interestingly, Eliot seemed to have inherited the legacy of writing poetry from his mother, a social worker who used to write poetry. One of the major tropes that haunt Eliot's poetry recurrently is the trope of failure. In a recent biography of Eliot, Craig Raine argues that Eliot derives this theme of 'buried life' from Mathew Arnold. Eliot's poetics is marked by a painful realisation of the growing incapacity to realise the full scope of human emotions.

Raine observes, "Eliot is also a modernist, with a commitment to a classicist position. He is, therefore, skeptical about emotion, about strong emotion, as an obvious good in itself" (xx). In his poetic theory of impersonality, Eliot dwells on the necessity of maintaining an impersonal aesthetics of poetry. Going against the grain of Romantic individuation of the self, Eliot, in his essay "Tradition and Individual Talent," argues that poetry does not offer a reflection of human personality but an escape from it. He also considers the role of the poet

as instrumental to the growth and dissemination of a tradition that is adequately equipped with the 'historical sense'.

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" published in 1915 was Eliot's first claim to fame. The 'love song' was a sarcastic take on the romantic tradition of love lyrics. Eliot subverted the idea of a blissful romantic evening by envisioning the evening as diseased – a "patient etherized upon a table." The idea of love was supplanted with a rigorous invocation of the image of a narcissistic, insular bald man, full of doubts and self-scrutiny. *The Waste Land* (1922) is Eliot's magnum opus. It unravels the vignettes of a dystopian world shattered and left in jeopardy after the First World War. In this poem, Eliot draws on multiple cultural traditions to show how the entire world is plagued by these vicissitudes of loss and disharmony. The final section of the poem offers a solution to the prevailing scenario of crisis by invoking the necessity of *Datta* (To Give/Bounty), *Dayaddham* (Compassion), *Damayata* (Self-restraint). The search for inner peace (*Shantih*) in Eliot remains inextricably linked with the aesthetic quest for a narrative closure that *The Waste Land* lacks throughout. If *The Waste Land* is about a quest for peace in a world gone haywire, in *Four Quartets* (1936), Eliot turns more introspective to comment on the value and purpose of human existence. Subsequent to his conversion to Anglicanism in 1927, Eliot shares his musings on time and religion in *The Four Quartets* (1936-1942).

Ezra Pound (1885-1972):

In the book *Pound Era*, Hugh Kenner repudiated the culturally cherished idea of reading the modern age as an 'age of Eliot'. While Eliot and Yeats extended the scope and rubrics of Modernist poetry through their poetic outputs, Ezra Pound spurred the movements that go into the making of a modernist poetic cannon. The two major movements that Ezra Pound remains associated with are Imagism and Vorticism. Born in Idaho, Ezra Pound turned out to be a cultural impresario of the era.

In *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly* (1920), Pound experiments with the formal and aesthetic designs of the poem. Quite like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*, he deploys the technique of collage in the composition. The Cantos, written over a period of 50 years, exerted an enormous influence over contemporary and later poets such as H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Richard Aldington, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olson, and Robert Lowell. Despite his own literary output, Pound is perhaps best-known as the editor of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* (1922), which is dedicated to Pound who is called 'il miglior fabbro' ('the better craftsman').

Pound also became interested in politics and economics, specifically C.H. Douglas's theory of Social Credit Economics, which he encountered while working under Alfred Orage for the journal, *The New Age*. Pound moved to Rapallo, Italy, in the 1920s, and, under the impression that Italian leader Benito Mussolini would implement Douglasite economic reforms, supported Italian fascism. Remaining in Italy during World War II, Pound repeatedly appeared on Rome Radio, issuing statements critical of United States involvement in the war. As a result, he was arrested during the Allied liberation of Italy in 1945. During his internment in Italy, he wrote *Pisan Cantos*. This won the Library of Congress's Bollingen Prize in 1949, while he was being tried for treason in the United States. Pound pleaded insanity to escape the charges, and was institutionalised at St Elizabeth's mental hospital in Washington, DC, for 12 years. After his pardon and release in 1958, Pound returned to Italy, where he died in 1972. Although both his fascist associations and antisemitism have made Pound a controversial figure, he remains a seminal force in the creation of Modernist aesthetics.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Although relatively lesser known as a poet, Thomas Hardy remains one of the influential figures in the field of Modern poetry. He thrived predominantly in the Edwardian era. From 1898 to 1928, Hardy published eight volumes of poetry. The entire body of work bears testimony to his poetic flair. *The Dynast*, a closet drama written by Hardy, unravels his visions of 'evolutionary meliorism.' In the wake of the Boer war, he wrote many poems using the vantage point of the soldiers. Apart from his novels, his *Wessex Poems*, a collection of 51 poems, set against the compelling backdrop of Dorset, contours the imaginary topography of Wessex. Hardy adopted a modern style in his poetry that intertwined poetic convention and tradition. Analogous to his novels, his poetry is also marked by a sense of fatalism. In his war poems like "Drummer Hodge", and "In Time of the Breaking of Nations," Hardy uses visceral imagery, and colloquial speech. As a poet Hardy influenced the poets of his following generation like Robert Frost, W.H. Auden, and Philip Larkin.

Gertrude Stein (1874-1946):

One of the lesser known Modernist poets, Gertrude Stein was known for pervasive experimentation with the language and poetic genre. In *Tender Buttons* (1914), Stein deploys her unconventional poetic method to describe everyday objects, estranging them from reality in a manner analogous to Cubism. A consistent engagement with repetitive words and soundscapes militates against, and contributes to, the continuities and discontinuities of meanings in her poetics. In *The Autobiography of Alice. B. Toklas* (1933), Stein adopts the persona of Alice to narrate her own autobiographical experiences. Stein's repetitive style is

often considered to be emblematic of postmodernist art forms.

Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957):

As a co-founder of *Blast* manifesto, and thereby the Vorticist movement, Wyndham Lewis remains one of the catalytic figures behind the Modernist poetic movement. His foray into the literary world started with his essays published in *The English Review* edited by Ford Madox Ford in 1909. Till dissension with Roger Fry in 1913, Lewis was part of the Omega workshop dedicated to the exhibition of the artworks by painters. After having a rift with Fry, Lewis decided to create his distinctly English movement Vorticism with Ezra Pound, Brzeska, Jacob Epstein and others. His first novel *Tarr*, a specimen of formal and artistic experimentation, was published in 1918. His other notable works include *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *Time and Western Man* (1927), *The Childermass* (1928), *The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (1927), and *The Apes of God* (1930).

Edith Sitwell (1887-1964):

Edith Sitwell was one of the prominent British female poets of the modern era. Sitwell's early work was often experimental, full of melodies, striking conceits, new rhythms, and private allusions. Sitwell published poetry continuously from 1913, some of it abstract and set to music. Her first book, *The Mother and Other Poems* was published in 1915. Her claim to fame was *Wheels*, an anthology edited by Sitwell and her brother. In this anthology, she and her brothers spearheaded a spirited revolt against the prevailing conventions of Georgian poetry. The notoriety sought by the Sitwells in their artistic battles may, at the time, had obscured the originality of her talent. The visual sensibility and verbal music of her early poetry, *Clowns' Houses* (1918), *Bucolic Comedies* (1923), and *The Sleeping Beauty* (1924), in which she conjured up a world of beautiful objects, and unfamiliar images, revealed the influence of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. In *Façade* (1922), her stress on the value of sound in poetry comes to the foreground. Her later works include *Street Songs* (1942), *Green Song* (1944), *Song of the Cold* (1945), *Gardeners and Astronomers* (1953), and *The Outcasts* (1962).

Mina Loy (1882-1966):

Mina Loy, originally Mina Lowy, was another famous British Modernist woman poet. Influenced by the Futurist Movement, Loy advanced Feminist poetics. Between 1914 and 1917, Loy's poetry was published in *Little Magazines*. In 1915, she published love songs for the modernist journal *Others*. *Lunar Baedeker*, a collection of poems published in 1923, is one of her major poetry collections. Loy explores feminine subjectivity through her poetry.

Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

As a poet, Dylan Thomas was pioneering in restoring a romantic charm to English poetry. Published in 1934, Thomas' first volume garnered a widespread reputation. Strikingly different from his predecessors, Thomas' poetry went through romantic revivalism. Despite the ostensible similarities, it was quite different from the cautious romanticism of Yeats. Often his poetic world opens a phantasmagoric vision, influenced by a surreal disposition. Thomas's choice of phrases is original. He sees smoke coming from chimneys as if it made tuneful sounds; the grass is so hot that it is as if it were on fire; the sun shines all day long – 'all the sun long'. Words like green are used both literally and non-literally, exploiting connotations of youth, happiness, and innocence. The ending to "Fern Hill" is especially poignant, linking the innocence of youth with an inevitable death while asserting the importance of the self through poetry. Departing from the social commitment of the poets of the thirties, Dylan Thomas thus brings a "Neo-romantic" poetic tradition to British poetry.

Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

Born in 1922, Philip Larkin ushered in a poetic paradigm that was largely anti-romantic. A strong distaste for figurative language marks the poetry of Larkin. However, an influence of Yeats is discernible in his early collection *The North Ship* (1946). *The Less Deceived* (1955) filled with morbid cynicism seems to give Larkin his poetic reputation. What remains unique about Larkin is a juxtaposition between a highly structured yet flexible literary style. The *Whitsun Weddings* (1964) also expresses the deep-rooted pessimism of Larkin's poetic sentiment. The collection comprising 32 poems is ostensibly about a train journey through the vast swathes of the idyllic countryside. Interrupted by the cacophony of the wedding parties, the persona finally meditates on the philosophical meaning of the journey of life where "a sense of falling permeates".

3.7.9 Summing Up

In this unit, we have discussed several topics pertinent to modern British poetry. Besides Edwardian and Georgian poetry and poets of the Thirties, we have also analysed the poems of select modernist poets. The historical and cultural background of the emergence of Modernism was discussed. Modernism which was by far the most influential literary movement of the period unfurls a wide panorama of futility and anarchy. An image of fragmentation with enduring changes in the social and political structures dominates the corpus of modernist poetry. Various forms of social and moral disintegration inform the aesthetic

contour of the poetic corpus. As an informed reader now, you can get down to the task of reading the twentieth century British poetry.

3.7.10 Comprehension Exercises

Essay Type Questions:

- Write an essay on the various aspects of Modernist Poetry.
- Write a critical note on any two major poets of Modernism.
- Trace the relationship between Modernist politics and aesthetics.
- Comment on the relationship between Modernist poetry and the Avant-Garde.
- Write a critical note on Imagism, Futurism, and Vorticism, evaluating their roles in Modernist poetry.

Mid-length Questions:

- Write a critical note on Edwardian Poetry.
- Write a short note on Georgian Poetry
- How did the poets of the '30s depart from the prevalent Modernist poetic paradigms?
- Write a critical note on the year 1922 as the culmination of High Modernism.

Short Answer Type Questions:

- Who edited *Blast*?
- Name any two major poetic contributions by Ezra Pound.
- Who coined the term “Movement Literature” ?
- Who was the editor of *Georgian Poetry*?

3.7.11 Suggested Reading

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Unit 8 □ Literature of the First World War

Structure

- 3.8.1 Objectives
- 3.8.2 Introduction
- 3.8.3 Why Poetry?
- 3.8.4 Major War Poets
- 3.8.5 War Memoirs
- 3.8.6 Novels of the First World War
- 3.8.7 Summing Up
- 3.8.8 Comprehension Exercises
- 3.8.9 Suggested Readings

3.8.1 Objectives

This unit seeks to examine the impact of the First World War on British Literature. In the earlier module, we have already discussed the multiple contexts of modernist literature. However, the impact of the First World War on British literature was so enduring that it needs to be considered separately. In this unit, we will discuss several aspects of the war and how it impacted British literature in the Modern era. Although the focus remains mainly on poetry owing to the abundance of poetic outputs, there are some significant instances of war memoirs and novels that emerged at that point in time that documented the impact of the war in multiple ways.

3.8.2 Introduction

Thomas Laqueur comments, “If the Great War did not actually give birth to Modernism it powerfully mobilised elements of a prewar cultural crisis and gave it a new, self-conscious definition predicated on rupture” (qtd. in Palmer and Minogue 227). From Lacquer’s comment, what becomes evident is the relationship between World War I and British Modernism. World War I had a decisive impact on the literature and culture of that era. In the earlier module, it has been discussed how modernity and modernism celebrate the poetics of rupture and disruption. This unit is going to offer a more direct and tangible impact of the

war and how its sense of horror and devastation had influenced generations of poets. World War I was one of the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century.

The foundations of human faith which showed some potent signs of collapse during the first half of the century received their death blows after the First World War (1914-18). The horrifying experiences of the trenches exhorted a group of writers to recount their experiences about the war. Consequently, memories and experiences of the trenches inform the literature of the war period. Intriguingly, the mode of narrating the experiences of the war remains deeply personal—reflexive of a perennial fight that the author/poet undergoes internally to record the brutalities of war. Literature of the war, thus, apart from literalising the experiences of war, treats it figuratively, as a psychological mechanism of coping with the destruction wrought by World War I. In his introduction to *British and Irish War Poetry*, Tim Kendall observes:

The term ‘war poetry’ has become so familiar that its internal tensions often go unnoticed. Yet it seems hard to imagine two human activities more unlike each other than experiencing a war and writing a poem. One suggests destruction, the other creation; one chaos, the other order; one pain, the other pleasure. War poetry accommodates binary oppositions, most notably life and death: if poetry is, as Louis MacNeice claims, ‘always positive’, so that even ‘a poem in praise of suicide is an act of homage to life’, then a war poem must be at war with itself, its affirming flame illuminating a dark subject-matter. (1)

From Kendall’s observations, it becomes explicit how War poetry is marked by an internal tension of experiencing war and writing a poem. The modes of experientiality and writing get juxtaposed in the composition of a poem. Because of this divergence of experience, memory plays an instrumental role in shaping the characteristics of War poetry.

3.8.3 Why Poetry

Poetry achieved considerable pre-eminence among the literary forms of World War I. Questions might arise as to what propelled poetry to reach centre stage in depicting a reality that was crude and traumatic. In the previous unit, it has already been described how poetry, within the singularity of its scope and objective, could offer flexibility to accommodate multiple voices. Furthermore, the poetic form showed a considerable amount of breadth and scope to be used and adopted in various ways by the English poets. Secondly, from the early nineteenth century onwards British poetry achieved a national character. Despite its formal and aesthetic

experimentations, Modernism remains embedded in the cultural matrix of tradition. In keeping with the law of tradition, poetry was considered to be the most sanctified art form to express the ‘pity’ of war. Kendall argues:

During the First World War, poetry became established as the barometer for the nation’s values: the greater the civilization, the greater its poetic heritage. That choice was wisely made because, as Owen implied, poetry was the art in which Britain could confidently claim supremacy over its enemies. The composer-poet Ivor Gurney might freely confess his indebtedness to a German musical tradition, but he insisted—not entirely seriously—that Germany ‘never had nor never would produce poets’. That supposed flaw was considered by more unforgiving critics, such as the anthologist E. B. Osborn, to be a devastating exposure of ethical failings. Whereas British soldier poetry nobly demonstrated ‘the complete absence of the note of hatred for a most hateful enemy’, German poets betrayed their savagery, being moved ‘more by hatred for other people’s countries than by love of their own’. (1)

Kendall’s observation is telling because it points toward the presence of multiple traditions of War poetry. This unit focuses predominantly on the British Literature composed in the wake of World War I.

The historical moment of 1914 offers insights into the evolving nature of poetry which enabled an interface rather than a distinction between different ideas. It was an era of manifestos and pronouncements with little magazines asserting their presence. The Imagist with their fixation on a new kind of poetic sensibility altered the character of British poetry. At the same time the *English Review* and the *Poetry Review* pre-war, as well as Harriet Monroe’s *American Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, published Imagist poets alongside poets the Imagists were reacting against. The era was marked by a transatlantic cultural exchange. Ezra Pound emerged as its major exponent. Harold Monroe was the publisher of both Pound’s *Des Imagistes* and the Georgian anthologies. Monroe became the cultural impresario of the times. Poets who passed through the doors of Monroe’s *Poetry Bookshop* included Lascelles Abercrombie, Rupert Brooke, Robert Frost, Wilfrid Gibson, Amy Lowell, Charlotte Mew, Wilfred Owen, Pound, Siegfried Sassoon, and Yeats. Meanwhile Isaac Rosenberg, for example, corresponded from the Front with both Laurence Binyon and Monroe. Poetry, then, was not highly demarcated as the war entered its first year: this was still a small and in certain ways a remarkably open creative world. Understandably, despite its segregation from mainstream High Modernist poetry, the poets of the World War I like Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Isaac Rosenberg remained implicated within a common literary tradition.

3.8.4 Major War Poets

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918): Born near Oswestry and growing up in Birkenhead and Shrewsbury, Wilfred Owen was one of the major poets to record the ‘futility’ and ‘pity’ of the War. His obsession with Keats was so enduring that it lasted even in the trenches.

Tantalisingly missing the opportunity of a scholarship to London University, Owen funded his studies by spending sixteen months from October 1911 as lay assistant to a vicar near Reading. However, his dissatisfaction grew as he found himself compelled to choose between a life of ‘imagination, physical sensation, aesthetic philosophy’ and what seemed to him like a narrow and doctrinaire Christianity. Although the religious pursuit was not completely abandoned, nevertheless his literary sensibilities made its ways for a seamless coalescence. While Owen was acting as a private tutor in southwest France, the war was declared. His letters, although censored by his brother before publication, bear testimony to Owen’s two years in France and his pursuit of aesthetic life more freely than at home. His friendship with the poet Laurent Tailhade opened new avenues of French literature, and the stylistic changes in Owen’s poetry bore a reflection of that.

Owen’s first encounter with the War was vicarious and poignant. Observing surgical operations at a military hospital, he wrote about it by telling depictions (with sketches) to his brother and explained that “I deliberately tell you all this to educate you to the actualities of the war”. His journey back to England in the summer of 1915 exposed him to the horror of recruitment campaigns. During the protracted process of training, Owen used to attend readings at Harold Monro’s Poetry Bookshop and seek advice about his poems. Owen eventually arrived in the trenches of the Western Front as a second lieutenant of the Manchester Regiment, in the acrimonious cold of January 1917. Within days he got deluged by a series of bombardments, cooped up with his men in an old German dugout; later that month, one of them froze to death. Owen drew on these experiences a year later in “The Sentry”, “Futility”, and “Exposure”.

Owen’s metamorphosis into a war poet, however, was initiated by particular circumstances. In March, Owen collapsed into a pit after a severe concussion; the following month, several days after experiencing the ‘extraordinary exultation’ of going over the top, he was blown into the air by a shell and landed amid the charred residual body parts of a fellow officer whose corpse had been excavated by the blast. Owen was hospitalised in May and sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh for further treatment. In August 1917, he met Siegfried Sassoon, and the most important literary friendship of the War began.

Sassoon’s example gave Owen license to make the subject matter of his experiences: “Nothing like [Sassoon’s] trench life sketches has ever been written,” Owen recounted to his

mother, and he found the older poet's work 'perfectly truthfully descriptive of war'. Despite several attempts of imitation, Owen realised that his strengths did not inhere in satire. As a result, he considered it to be more judicious to blend Keatsian sensuousness with the petrifying realities of the war. From September 1917 the poems came quickly: "Anthem for Doomed Youth", "Disabled" and "Dulce et Decorum Est" were all Craiglockhart poems, with Sassoon on hand as an adviser. During this time, Owen published one of his own poems in *The Hydra*, the hospital magazine of which he edited several issues. It was the first of only five poems to appear in his lifetime.

Owen's poetic sensibility finds itself fraught between the triad of evangelical fervor, sensuous romantic beauty, and the appalling realities of the war. Even before he met Sassoon, he was quite skeptical of the religious interpretation of the War. Seeing through the ploy of linking politics with religion, in his letters, he argues how Christianity was incompatible with patriotism, "Christ is literally in no man's land." Sassoon introduced a political dimension to Owen's incipient radicalism, averring that the War had changed from one of 'defence and liberation' to 'a war of aggression and conquest'. Sassoon believed—unlike most soldiers at the time and most historians subsequently—that a negotiated truce was possible, and that the politicians were deliberately protracting the War.

Because of Sassoon, Owen met Robert Graves. On leave after Craiglockhart, his movement in London literary society, meeting with H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett gave him considerable fame as a poet. Before Christmas, he rejoined the Manchester Regiment in Scarborough, and the following March was transferred to Ripon. By this time, his poetry achieved a new form: self-reflexive poetry of experience. He was able to straddle between two rival philosophies: Keats's insistence that poetry should have no palpable design on the reader, and the tendency that Owen detected in Sassoon to turn poetry into 'a mere vehicle of propaganda'. At Scarborough and Ripon, Owen revised his work (such as "Miners" and "Strange Meeting") and experimented with para rhyme. He returned to France in September 1918. On 4 November, a week before the Armistice, Owen was killed while helping his men to cross the Sambre and Oise Canal. Owen's "Strange Meeting" records the self-subversive onslaughts and brutalities of war in unequivocal terms:

I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . . ("Strange Meeting")

Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967): Born in Kent and educated at Marlborough and Cambridge, Sassoon was mainly engaged with his favourite pursuits: hunting and cricket. He was a private poet. However, it was because of Edward Marsh that Sassoon's poetry came into prominence. Also, Sassoon met Rupert Brooke through Edward Marsh. He joined the Sussex Yeomanry on the day that Britain declared war on Germany. In the following May, he was deported to the Royal Welch Fusiliers. This had an abiding influence on his poetry. In November 1915 he began the first of his important literary friendships, with one of his fellow officers of the regiment, Robert Graves.

Although Sassoon's relationship with Graves would degenerate into bitterness after the War, nevertheless, during the heydays he ascribed him the credit for his poetic flair. Graves had seen action, and had tried to write realistically about his experiences; Sassoon's poetry, by contrast, had seemed to be chiefly illusory, quite an extension of the fin-de-siècle literary sensibility. From 1916, a shift in his poetic style became perceptible with the publication of poems brutally critical of warfare. After the death of David Thomas—a friend from Cambridge days, with whom he was in love—Sassoon finally saw fighting in March and was awarded the Military Cross for rescuing an injured soldier under heavy fire. This was the first glimpse of 'Mad Jack' Sassoon: he swore that 'since they shot [David] I would gladly stick a bayonet into a German by daylight'. The next month, after attending a lecture on the use of the bayonet, Sassoon imagined exactly that in "The Kiss". The poem encapsulated divided feelings about the War, which he found "beautiful or terrifying, or both . . . I had no idea I should enjoy it so much."

It was less often the realities of war that exasperated Sassoon than the complacency, ignorance, and jingoism that he encountered on leave. *The Old Huntsman* (1917) embodied enough of these denunciations, but Sassoon by now considered himself a pacifist, in June 1917 wrote his "Declaration" against the conduct of the war as "an act of wilful defiance of military authority." Sassoon argued that a negotiated peace was available and that the 'fighting men' were being sacrificed by politicians for whom the War had become an opportunity for conquest, not liberation. He was pained by the callous indifference with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of the agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize'. In July he sent the "Declaration" to his commanding officer, stating that he would refuse any further military duties. A medical board determined that Sassoon was suffering from a nervous breakdown, and sent him to Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh. There, in August, he met Wilfred Owen.

Sassoon's friendship with Owen proved far more efficacious to the younger poet. As mentor and editor, Sassoon ushered in Owen's metamorphosis as a poet and taught him how

to write realistically about wars: “I am sure he will be a very good poet someday”, Sassoon wrote to Graves about Owen in November 1917. Sassoon’s relationship with W. H. R. Rivers, the psychiatrist who treated him and became a father figure, was also notable. A paper by Rivers on the treatment of shell shock gave Sassoon the title for his poem “Repression of War Experience”, and while at Craiglockhart under Rivers’s aegis, he composed *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*.

After a lot of insistence, Sassoon was declared fit in late November. He rejoined his regiment—as part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force—in February 1918. Rupert Hart-Davis has argued that “the First World War turned [Sassoon] from a versifier into a poet”. His autobiographical works include *The Memoirs of George Sherston*, 3 vols. (1928–36), and *Siegfried’s Journey*, 3 vols. (1945), and more of his poems were published as *Collected Poems* (1947) and *The Path to Peace* (1960).

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915): Brooke was indubitably the most influential and renowned of the soldier-poets during the War. Although ostensibly projected as a naïve voice, patriotic and innocent. Brooke knew more than most of his contemporaries about war, having been present at the siege and fall of Antwerp. His *1914* (1915) is comprised of five sonnets. They constitute Brooke’s ardent appeal to a nation which he did not yet realise “what we’re in for, and what great sacrifices—active or passive—everyone must make”. Of all the soldier-poets, Brooke alone had gained a literary reputation even before the War. He was educated at Rugby and King’s College, Cambridge, where he read Classics. However, his penchant for English literature, especially Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and primarily because of the strength of his dissertation on John Webster, he was appointed to a fellowship at King’s in 1913.

Brooke’s strong inclination to friendship brought into his orbit Winston Churchill, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Frances Cornford, the Asquiths, and poets such as Wilfrid Gibson and Edward Thomas. He was also a relentless traveller: he spent the first few months of 1911 in Munich, in the unfulfilled aspiration of brushing up his German, and returned to Germany twice before the War; and a year of travel beginning in May 1913 saw visits to Canada, the United States, and the South Pacific.

During his affair with a woman in Tahiti, he produced some of his finest poetry. The complexity of Brooke’s relationships with women—he was always passionately in love with several at the same time—spurred regular crises in his mental health. Early in 1912, he suffered what his Harley Street doctor described as a ‘severe mental breakdown’. The War offered a distraction: “If Armageddon is on, I suppose one should be there.” Because of his friendship with Winston Churchill, Brooke was granted a commission in a new unit of

Churchill's own devising. He reported the effects of what he considered to have been 'one of the greatest crimes in history, "Hundreds of thousands of refugees, their goods on barrows and hand-carts and perambulators and wagons . . . the old men mostly weeping, the women with hard-drawn faces, the children playing or crying or sleeping. That's what Belgium is now: the country where three civilians have been killed to every one soldier."

Writing the first of his famous sonnets back in England later that month, Brooke was conscious that, although 'incessant mechanical slaughter' had begun, Prussian militarism must be defeated. Brooke joined the RND's Hood battalion that November, and in February 1915 his division set sail for the Dardanelles. Like his friend Patrick Shaw Stewart, he was delighted at the prospect of fighting near the plains of Troy. But the ambition was not fulfilled. Brooke became ill in April and died on St George's Day having contracted septicemia from a mosquito bite. In death, Brooke became an icon, leaving every soldier-poet of any significance with the task of confronting his legacy. His major poems include "The Dead", "Fragment", "Jealousy", "Peace", and "Tiare Tahiti".

Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918): Born in 1890 to a poor Jewish family, Rosenberg emerged as one of the most notable war poets. His father had fled Lithuania four years before to escape conscription into the Russian army. The Rosenbergs spoke little English and enjoyed few if any social advantages: Isaac's father eked out a living as a pedlar. It was supplemented through his mother's sewing and embroidery. When Rosenberg was seven, his family moved from Bristol to East London, and at 14 he left school to become an apprentice to an engraver.

During his formative years leading to the development of the war, Rosenberg oscillated between poetry and painting. However, in 1915 leaving his earlier vocation, he concentrated more on poetry. In the same year, Rosenberg was enlisted in the Bantam Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment. Rosenberg was an unlikely soldier. Sharing his family's pacifist ideals and lacking any feelings of patriotism, he argued from the outset that war was 'against all [his] principles of justice', and that he 'would be doing the most criminal thing a man can do'.

Rosenberg considered 'Break of Day in the Trenches' to be 'as simple as ordinary talk', but he acknowledged that he could be obscure, much against his own desire for "Simple Poetry that is where an interesting complexity of ideas is retained in tone – ascribing right value to the overwhelming idea so that it is understandable and still ungraspable." The economy of expression sometimes slipped into mannerism and became an impediment to understanding. Yet Rosenberg's best poems create a disturbing phantasmagoria. When Rosenberg complained that Walt Whitman's diction was 'so diffused', he was criticising a writer who, in this respect, worked at the opposite pole. In January 1918 Rosenberg described his conditions in lines to

Edward Marsh, some of which the military censor saw fit to delete. His famous poems include: “A Worm Fed on the Heart of Corinth”, “Break of Day in the Trenches”, “August 1914”, “Louse Hunting”, “From France”, “Returning, we hear Larks” etc.

Edward Thomas (1878-1917): Edward Thomas was another significant contributor to the field of War poetry. Although he never directly wrote from trenches, his poems remain replete with the images of the devastation wrought by the war. His work prefers to show the effects of war on the home front among familiar landscapes: the fallen tree unmoved, the flowers unpicked. In doing so, it sets itself in opposition to the kind of war poetry that Thomas deplored, the worst of which was written “for an audience: there is more in it of the shouting of rhetorician, reciter, or politician than of the talk of friends and lovers.” His major poetry includes: “Adlestrop”, “As the Team’s Head Brass”, “The Brook”, “The Cherry Trees”, “Cock-crow”, “The Combe” etc.

Other War Poets: Other important poets whom we could not include here due to the paucity of space are: Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, Arthur Grame West, Ivor Gurney, Wilfred Gibson and Mary Boden. Either through a retrospective account of the poignancy of war or by dwelling on it, these poets offered their reflections on the war and its relentless devastation. In general, British War poetry departs significantly from the culturally cherished apotheosis of war and unveils how it contributes to a colossal wastage of resources both human and otherwise.

3.8.5 War Memoirs

Apart from poetry, we come across a handful of novels and memoirs responding to the war directly or tangentially. Most of them compellingly engage with the atrocities of the war critiquing the heinous war relentlessly. Notwithstanding this general outlook of bitterness, there were some texts that, with their avowedly nationalistic sentiments, defended the war. In this section, we will discuss the memoirs written during this period. Paul Edwards comments that the “The genre, “memoir,” is an odd one, encompassing simple chronicles and more elaborate, analytic, or poetically structured accounts. Those First World War memoirs that have become canonical in literary studies have, not surprisingly, been the more structured work of poets’ (15).

In Retreat by Herbert Read (1919): This is a short memoir containing the exacerbating details of the war. Initially, Read’s attempt to publish it encountered a lukewarm and passive response from the publishers. The general aversion to publishing anything ‘bleak’ made it difficult for Read to bring out his stories pertaining to the retreat of the British fifth army at St. Quentin.

Read's memoir foregrounds the trench experiences with unvarnished candor. It does not sensationalise the war and its attendant traumas. Nor does it offer any interpretation to the events. The presence of sheer objectivity in the rendering of events keeps it untarnished by any personal prejudices. It delves deeper into the trench and demonstrates how the trench as a space remains fraught with discrimination at myriad levels:

Read makes the constant concern with food and sleep a prominent theme, and (particularly through food) establishes one of the contrasts that will pervade later memoirs – here, that between the comradeship of the men at the Front and the selfish, pampered complacency of those (staff, politicians, profiteers, and journalists) who grow fat on the spoils of war. (Edwards 16)

Disenchantment by C.E. Montague: While Read's account offers a subjective rendering of the experiences related to war, in Montague's memoir, an analytical perspective is recorded. *Disenchantment* not only records the growing scepticism about the war but also dwells on the various aspects of Englishness that were torn asunder due to this war. It depicts how the war had unsettled the promise of a better nation and contributed to cultural and social degenerations. Instances of conflict between superiors and their underlings, between different classes, inform Montague's narrative. The narrative also records its lament over the decline of the British dominion over the nations and shows the irreversible changes the empire had undergone during this phase. Montague endorses the revival of Boy Scout resolutions which talked about "To get down to work, whoever else idles; to tell no lies, whoever else may thrive on their use; to keep fit, and the beast in you down". However, a lurking sense of disenchantment and cynicism runs deeply in the text, pointing towards a point of no redemption.

Undertones of War (1928) by Edmund Blunden: Blunden's memoir was written in Japan. While commenting on the memoir of Blunden, Edward succinctly comments:

Blunden's is virtually a "modernist" stance, his modernism is, like that of other Georgian poets compelled to represent war and destruction, adopted through force of circumstance rather than aesthetic predilection. It doesn't come naturally to him so that on a level of form the book obeys the unwelcome imperatives of the experience it records. Romance is forced to accommodate a grim realism, just as the idyllic pastoral arcadia of France and Flanders is knocked to pieces by high explosives (20).

In his autobiographical account, Blunden records his experiences as an infantry subaltern in France and Flanders. Set in a pastoral landscape, the text in its unsentimental prose style

records the senses of heroism and cynicism found in the officers. It portrays how the pastoral landscape of pre-war France had been ravaged by the World War. Blunden's sustained engagement with the war helps him retrieve his literary forces and renew the stylistic antiquarianism expressing a repulsive attitude towards war.

A Passionate Prodigality (1933) by Guy Chapman: Guy Chapman's memoir is replete with flashes of the memory of the war. First published in 1933, it documents the realities of the World War I in terms of their shared plight and pleasure. Chapman was part of the 13th Battalion in the Royal Fusiliers in France, Belgium, and Germany from 1914 to 1920. Through an evocative presentation of memories, Chapman's *A Passionate Prodigality* explores how a new space of solidarity was generated by the war. Despite the crippling realities, the war created a new sense of belonging, leading to the expansion of the self. Chapman's memoir is important because it departs from the conventional ways of looking at the war and shows although the war was dehumanising and brutal, it was not totally devoid of human touch.

The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston: In this trilogy, Siegfried Sassoon adopts a fictional persona in order to camouflage his identity. The use of this defamiliarising technique sets it apart from the other objective accounts of the war. It is published in three volumes in 1928, 1930, and 1936 respectively. The experiences of the great war are given a coherent narrative form with the use of this masquerade. However, this masquerade falls off in the final book. The memoirs of Sassoon are interesting because of their experimentation with the narrative in which the personal and the political intersect. The deliberate projection of a constructed self augments the narrative tension by offering a new perspective on the war.

3.8.6 Novels of the First World War

Alongside the memoirs and the letters, the World War I appears as a constant motif in different novels. Novelists like Liam O'Flaherty, A.D. Gristwood, A.P. Herbert, and Stephen Crane engage with the themes of war in myriad ways. Either the war novels express strong resistance to war and its associated brutality, or they narrate glorious accounts of heroism and human resilience, demonstrating how it prompted newer struggles for belonging.

Return of the Brute (1929): Liam O'Flaherty's *Return of the Brute* (1929) narrates the story of what happens to a group of soldiers who are sent into no man's land during the war. Getting lost, they battle with each other for survival. It shows how the war led to trauma degenerating humanity down to the level of atrophy.

The Prussian Officer (1914) by D.H. Lawrence: The first narrative in the collection is “The Prussian Officer”, which tells of a Captain and his orderly. Frittering away his youth gambling, the captain has been left with only his military career. In spite of being in so many relationships, he remains single. His young orderly gets involved in a relationship with a young woman, which generates sexual tension between the captain and his orderly. Being isolated in a forest during manoeuvres, the orderly avenges the misdemeanor of the captain by killing him. However, suddenly he finds himself in a daze seemingly due both to the pain of the bruises and thirst. The orderly eventually succumbs and the corpses of the two men lay side by side.

The Somme (1919) by A.D. Gristwood: Gristwood worked as a poor accountant in the Killing Field of Flanders in late 1915. Through the journalistic portrayal of the experiences of the trenches, Gristwood’s *The Somme* (1927) expresses its revulsion toward the war. It documents the quotidian realities of the war laying bare all the sordid details with meticulous and unrelenting attention: the daily pounding, the stink and trauma of living under the gun and the bomb and gas attacks, a twenty-four hour seven-days-a-week thirty-days-a-month job of being a muck soldier, and so on.

The Secret Battle by A.P. Herbert: Published in 1919, this novel derives its materials from Herbert’s experiences as a junior infantry officer. Referring to the experiences of Gallipoli, Herbert, in this novel, through a starkly simple narrative, presents the psychological upheaval of the war. As the title suggests, the secret is not merely about the battle fought outside the trenches, it is also about an inner battle that the young officer Henry Penrose, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes. It is one of the first novels to refer to the Gallipoli campaign in 1915 and 1916. In this campaign, the entente powers Britain, France, and Russia, sought to enervate the Ottoman empire, by taking control of the Ottoman straits.

Regeneration (1991) by Pat Barker: *Regeneration* (1991) by Pat Barker is a historical fiction about the psychological impacts of the World War I. While other narratives document the emotional turmoil of the soldiers who fight in the trenches, Barker’s novel stretches itself to dwell on the psychological traumas of the doctors who treat the patients. The novel derives from the experiences of the First World War and draws extensively on the characters like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and W.H.R. Rivers who excelled in the treatment of Post-traumatic stress disorder.

Other Novels: Other novels like *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916), Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), Lansdale Hodson’s *Grey Dawn-Red Night* (1929), *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall, *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* by Katherine Ann Porter, *Return of the Soldier* by Rebecca West either

set against the background of the First World War or refer to significantly.

3.8.7 Summing Up

To sum up, the impact of World War I on English Literature has been instrumental because not only did it unsettle the value-system of civilisation but also changed the psychological reception of war in literature. Whereas previously war was valorised as a conduit of nationalistic power and glory, the kinds of literature of the First World War demythologise war to portray it more as a decimator than a preserver of humane values.

3.8.8 Suggested Questions

Long Questions

1. Evaluate the Poetry of World War I with reference to two major poets.
2. Consider critically the contribution of Wilfred Owen in the context of World War I.
3. How did Isaac Rosenberg and Rupert Brooke re-define the canon of War poetry?
4. Write a note on the memoirs of the First World War.

Middle-length Questions

1. Write a critical note on any First World War novelist.
2. Write a note on the narrative strategies adopted by Siegfried Sassoon in his memoir?

Short Questions

1. Who wrote *Disenchantment*?
2. Which world war novel refers to Gallipoli campaign?
3. Who wrote *The Red Badge of Courage*?

3.8.9 Suggested Reading

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Unit 9 □ Women's Writing: 1900-1945

Structure

- 3.9.1 Objectives**
- 3.9.2 Introduction**
- 3.9.3 British Women Writers, Technology and the Sciences**
 - 3.9.3.1 Unified Theories of Science and Spirituality - Marie Corelli & Constance Naden**
 - 3.9.3.2 Psychological Aesthetics, Stream of Consciousness and Shell Shock**
- 3.9.4 Exemplary Intermodernists**
- 3.9.5. Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Modernism**
- 3.9.6 The Feminine Middlebrow Novel**
- 3.9.7 Women and Comedy**
- 3.9.8 Women's Historical Novel**
- 3.9.9 Golden Age of Crime Fiction**
- 3.9.10 Women in Poetry, Drama and Journalism**
- 3.9.11 Women Writing the War and the Empire**
- 3.9.12 Summing Up**
- 3.9.13 Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.9.14 Suggested Reading**

3.9.1 Objectives

In this Unit we shall focus on:

- the construct of the New Woman and the factors that led to the rise of the suffragette movement.
- an extensive survey of the women writers.

3.9.2 Introduction

This unit deals with the years between 1900 and 1940. It examines how women's writing during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century gave a distinctive voice to the

challenges posed by a rapidly industrialising society and how they responded to the opportunities in shaping the contemporary culture. It was a period of revolutionary transformation. World War I marked a tremendous breaking point in European politics and thought. Revolutionary hopes and unknown fears set these turn-of-the-century years apart from both mid-Victorian and wartime England, and they constitute a coherent historical episode in women's writing. Gender politics had much to do with this. For women's writing, the turn of the twentieth century has long been recognised as a significant historical period – the sense of continuities was as obvious as that of the ruptures. The public response to the term 'New Women' was most often cynical – when, in 1894, it was publicly adopted, *Punch*, the British periodical known for its satiric humor and caricatures, exploded with jokes. ['The New Woman' was a feminist ideal that emerged in the late 19th century and had a profound impact on writers well into the 20th century. In 1894, the Irish writer Sarah Grand (1854-1943) used the term 'new woman' in an influential article, to refer to independent women seeking radical changes. The English writer Ouida (Maria Louisa Rame) used the term as the title of a follow-up article.] Many women writers, however, called themselves 'new', although retaining traditional views on issues such as marriage. Suffrage's most visible leaders, the Pankhursts, called a halt to the movement with the onset of World War I. The suffrage worker became the war worker, and her writing turned to war. Many suffrage workers continued to devote themselves to 'the cause' during the war (1914-1918). Women authors continued to write. When the suffrage movement's leaders and many followers found it logical to shift their energies to the war effort, their contributions during and after the war proved their worth all the more clearly. In 1918, the first women's suffrage bill had passed, giving women of over thirty the right to vote. Not until the end of World War I did the feeling of change set in.

Women during the period were pivotal actants and objects of concern. They reappeared repeatedly as beckoning and threatening figures across the discourses, from the arts through the popular press to the sciences, producing a 'crisis in masculinity'. There were constant demands for voting rights of women. The assertion was clear and loud: 'Women are Half the People / We Demand a Voice in Deciding the Taxes' before the Sovereign State recognised that 'The People Not the Commons Must Decide the Taxes'. For the people (half of them women), taxation without representation was tyranny. Twentieth-century historians of turn-of-the-century Britain (the years roughly spanning 1880 to World War I) including figures such as Eric Hobsbawm, Gareth Stedman Jones, and cultural critic Raymond Williams, summed up this period as one of "extreme turbulence" (Eileen Sypher's coinage, see p. 4 in Sypher's book). Politically, socially, economically women were participating in various arenas. In Williams' words, it was "a new phase of our history" (Williams 121). Suffrage had already been gained in New Zealand in 1893 and a decade later was won in Australia in 1902. Then

in 1903 the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the more militant 'suffragettes' in the UK, was born. New print technologies had emerged mid-century, and linotype was invented in 1884. Combined with W.E. Forster's Education Act in 1871, these changes made possible both an elevation in the status of women writers and a boom in women's writing.

Due to the anonymity of women writers, masculine gender coding, and twentieth-century scholars' failure to research women's contributions in this arena, women writers' prolific critical writing on literature had gone largely unrecognised. We may associate the 1880s and 1890s with 'New Woman' fictions. Critic Marysa Demoor indeed notes that "poetry was, by the end of the century, almost entirely women's province, with quite successful writers like August Webster, Mathilde Blind, Edith Nesbit, and Rosamund Marriott Watson (alias 'Graham Tomson') articulating their opinions in the *Athenaeum* pages" [Demoor observes this in *Their Fair Share: Women, Power and Criticism in 'The Athenaeum', from Millicent Garrett Fawcett to Katherine Mansfield, 1870–1920* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000). The extract is cited in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1880-1920*, vol. 7 edited by A. Holly Laird, p.6]. Interestingly, it was equally the domain of lesser-known New Women reviewers. As in Carlyle's famous designation of the 'modern hero' as 'the man of letters', the turn-of-the-century woman writer was, more often than not, genre-crossing 'woman of letters'. She was well equipped to enter the lists of vital, revitalising struggle in and through writing, no matter how little recognised or financially supported she might be. It was in the medium of print that the earliest British sexual movements were fought, through fiction, poetry, and non-fiction: battles that occurred predominantly through indirection rather than explicit argument.

3.9.3 British Women Writers, Technology and the Sciences

Women's use of modern technologies, especially media technologies, deeply troubled late Victorian and early twentieth-century society as it became conflated with middle-class women's rapidly changing role as they entered the workforce in greater numbers and insisted on their rights to full citizenship in terms of property and enfranchisement. Their writing resonates with those changes in content and form.

3.9.3.1 Unified Theories of Science and Spirituality – Marie Corelli & Constance Naden

In 1824, thermodynamics began to assume its modern form with the publication of French physicist and military engineer Sadi Carnot's *Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire* (1824). This laid the groundwork for the four laws of thermodynamics and connected

understanding of heat, temperature, electricity, and energy. Borrowing heavily from this work, prolific and popular novelist Marie Corelli (1855–1924) grounded her fictional universe in a spiritual form of ether, electricity, and magnetism that not only structures interpersonal relationships and aesthetics but also explains the divine through the laws of thermodynamics. Corelli dissolves the boundaries between the creative, the scientific, and the spiritual, telling her readers in the prologue to *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) that “The prophecies of the poet, the dreams of the philosopher and scientist, are being daily realized ...the marvels of learning and science that are hourly accomplished among us” (Marie Corelli, *A Romance of Two Worlds*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1916, p. 5. Qtd. in Laird, Holly, A. ed. *The History of British Women’s Writing, 1880-1920*, vol 7, p. 64). In the ‘Electric Creed’ chapter of *A Romance of Two Worlds* Corelli collapses the differences between spiritual, biological, and physical energy, and, in so doing, creates a unified spiritual field theory. Corelli develops this schema across her twenty-five novels and four short-story collections published from 1888 and 1925 (as testimony to their extraordinary popularity, nine novels were adapted into films during the early twentieth century). That so many late Victorian and Edwardian readers found these theories compelling suggests the extent to which the British popular imagination desired resolution of the growing gulf between the propositions of faith and science; women writers responded by using their novels, and not just non-fiction, to think through modern problems, from matters of faith to personal relationships, in terms of scientific principles.

In the work of Constance Naden (1858–1889), we find a different approach to unifying science and spirituality. Naden studied science, art, and languages at the Midlands Institute and biology, chemistry, geology, physics, and zoology at the Mason College of Science where she was awarded prizes for her work. She is best known today for her four-poems, “Evolutional Erotics” (1887), which includes “Scientific Wooing,” “The New Orthodoxy,” “Natural Selection,” and “Solomon Redivivus,” and for her exploration of Robert Lewins’ theory of Hylo-Idealism. The latter argues that, while nothing exists beyond the material world, idealism is still essential for the individual’s interior conception of that world. As Marian Thain notes, Naden was unusual among her contemporaries for publishing academic papers in science as well as volumes of poetry, doing so under different pseudonyms.

3.9.3.2 Psychological Aesthetics, Stream of Consciousness and Shell Shock

At the end of the nineteenth century, we find women writers particularly interested in interrogating the expert status of psychologists, both by taking that position themselves and by

showing the limits of these experts' therapeutic treatments in addressing each individual's unique reality. Developing such ideas, the psychological aesthetics of Vernon Lee (1856–1935) and Kit Anstruther-Thomson (1857–1921) investigated, as Lee describes it in *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics* (1913), “Beauty not in as much as existing in certain objects and processes, but rather as calling forth (and being called forth by) a particular group of mental activities and habits” (Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913, p. 1. Qtd. in Laird, *The History of British Women's Writing, 1880-1920*, vol 7, p. 66). In practice, psychological aesthetics of Anstruther-Thomson entailed enactment of the effects of art upon their bodies for two separate female audiences, East End working-class girls and the more aristocratic lesbian elite. Lee first formulated psychological aesthetics after witnessing Anstruther-Thomson's physiological aesthetic responses and reading William James's *Principles on Psychology* (1890), a pivotal text in the development of this social science that enumerates four key methods: analysis, introspection, experiment, and comparison.

Psychology acted further as a major force in women's writing through its relationships, first, to modern stream-of-consciousness narrative and, second, to wartime depictions of shell shock. As Sally Mitchell notes in her biographical essay on modernist novelist Dorothy Richardson, “The term “stream of consciousness”, adapted from psychology, was first applied by May Sinclair (1863–1946) to literature in a 1918 review of Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs, Backwater, and Honeycomb*” (Laird 66). Richardson (1873–1957) used the technique to explore her autobiographical heroine Miriam Henderson's mental quest, her inner life-path, in her epic multivolume (13 vols) novel sequence *Pilgrimage*, which she wrote throughout her life. Psychology figures equally in modernist women writers' representation of shell shock, as they sought to portray what we now call post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) endured by soldiers returning from World War I and its effects on their families and communities. Turn-of-the-century historians have long noted the reapplication of one of the most frequent Victorian diagnoses offered for women's various anxieties – of ‘hysteria’ – to men, after soldiers returned from the war in persistent states of mental distress. But it is amnesia that Rebecca West's (1892-1983) first novel, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) chronicles. It is witnessed in the portrayal of Captain Chris Baldry, an upper-class gentleman, whose illness manifests selective memory loss such that he believes himself still to be in a relationship with his early love, the working-class Margaret. He no longer recalled his difficult marriage to the upper-class Kitty and the loss of their son. In troubling the divide between the healthy and the ill, *The Return of the Soldier* questions the need to define that boundary as well as

psychology's definitions. The novel asks us to consider how the concept and practice of 'health' enact forms of social control and, by extension, how the application of science more generally happens within a contested social field in which conventional social institutions and existing power structures are ultimately maintained. For West and many of her contemporaries, psychology provided a conceptual gateway to narrating the specificity of women's experiences even while they resisted the discipline's pathologising of difference and elevation of normality.

3.9.4 Exemplary Intermodernists

The time period of the Intermodernists designates the interwar, wartime, and immediately postwar years. It thus offers itself as a 'new' historical period – one that separates certain years from the accepted periods of Modernism and Postmodernism. Intermodernism, like any other movement category such as Romanticism or Modernism, is clearly, ideological. It is important *not* to define Intermodernism primarily or only as a period, since all efforts of periodisation are open to critique for being arbitrary. On the contrary, Intermodernism, like Modernism, is a category that alludes to a period, a style, and the historical conditions of modernity. Intermodernism should therefore be thought of as a *kind of writing* (as an aesthetic category), a *social formation* (an institutional, materialist category), and an expression of *shared values* (an ideological category). Above all, Intermodernism should be functional, providing scholars with a literary-critical compass, analytical tool, or useful guidepost for finding and valuing vital figures and cultural forms that disappear in discussions of Modernism or Postmodernism. While there are many women writers whose novels, short stories, and journalistic prose invite analysis in terms of Intermodernism, Stevie Smith (1902–1971), Inez Holden (1903–1974), Betty Miller (1910–1965), and Naomi Mitchison (1897–1999) are exemplary figures. This selection of authors is based on their historical positioning, favoured genres and styles, and dominant thematic and ideological concerns. These four women writers achieved critical and popular success for their fictions, and in Smith's case, poetry, during the interwar years; they continued to write and publish through the Second World War and attracted the attention of feminist scholars.

Stevie Smith: She is a true exponent of the Intermodernist movement, bridging the 1930s and 1940s, peacetime and wartime, poetry and fiction. Her first novel subsequently published by Jonathan Cape was *Novel on Yellow Paper* (1936). This work was an almost instant success and made the reclusive Smith a *cause célèbre*. It featured an ebullient first-person narrator named Pompey Casmilus, a thinly disguised version of the then unknown author. It

describes contemporary life for a spinster secretary who by day works in a publishing office, by night attends parties. When she is not visiting friends in the country on weekends, she remains with her beloved Lion Aunt in her decidedly unfashionable, lower-middle-class north London suburb of Bottle Green. To Smith's delight and profit, the public and Cape wanted more. She promised and produced a second novel, *Over the Frontier* (1938), but closer to her heart, perhaps, was the acceptance of her first volume of poems, *A Good Time Was Had by All* (1937), which Cape published. This volume of poems, like all volumes to follow, was illustrated with Smith's doodles, which more than her plotless first novel marked her out as an eccentric among contemporary British writers. The same year that *Over the Frontier* came out, Smith published her second illustrated volume of poems, *Tender Only to One* (1938), again with Cape. In contrast to *Over the Frontier*, her poems were not engaged with contemporary politics, the tragedies of anti-Semitism, or impending war. Instead, they pursued themes, forms, and rhymes that earned Smith comparison to William Blake, Mother Goose, and other children's writers. Smith's fame as a poet did not come until the 1960s. Smith captured the climate of privation, desperation, and heroism beautifully in her third novel titled *The Holiday* (1949).

Inez Holden: Best remembered for her documentary writing of the war years, especially the novel *Night Shift* (1941), she is the only British woman writer to have published fiction translated into C.K. Ogden's experimental language, Basic English. Ogden notes in his preface to the volume, *Death in High Society* (1934), that Holden's stories had appeared originally in *The Sketch*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Nash's*, and the *Evening Standard*, and he describes them as "representative of an important part of the reading material on which the value of Basic English for general purposes has to be tested."

Betty Miller: Betty Miller is best known to critics for *On the Side of the Angels* (1945), a home-front novel about the psychological and domestic trauma of militarism as it corrodes the values of civilians. Her protagonist is a gentle young mother named Honor Carmichael, who is married to a small-town doctor. The height of her public recognition followed her publication of a biography of Robert Browning (1952), which won her a place in the Royal Society of Literature and a commission to edit a volume of unpublished letters from Elizabeth Barrett to Mary Russell Mitford.

Naomi Mitchison: Mitchison was the writer of more than 90 books in her lifetime, across a multitude of genres. She authored many historical novels, *The Conquered* (1923), *Cloud Cuckoo Land* (1925). Her best work is thought to be *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931). In 1932, Mitchison was commissioned by Victor Gollancz to edit a

guidebook for children. Mitchison's edited book, *An Outline for Boys and Girls and Their Parents*, included several distinguished contributors, including W.H. Auden, Richard Hughes, Gerald Heard, and Olaf Stapledon. Undoubtedly her most controversial work, *We Have Been Warned*, was published in 1935, based on her experience of a journey to the Soviet Union. In it she explored sexual behaviour, including rape and abortion. The book was rejected by various publishers. She approached first her friend Victor Gollancz, who flatly turned her down, observing that "publication of the book would cause a real outcry." The book was extensively rewritten to make it more acceptable to publishers and was still subject to censorship. On publication it was universally despised for its depiction of rape, free love and abortion that "alienated readers on the left and horrified those on the political right."

3.9.5 Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Modernism

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is considered to be one of the most important modernist authors and a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness narrative technique along with James Joyce (1882-1941). Her literary approach was non-linear, fragmentary and impressionistic. History for Woolf is the sense of the present in its variations and dynamic living. For that reason, her narrative was more exploratory than descriptive. The conventional episodic structure is conspicuous by its absence in her novels. Her fiction instead follows a patternless depiction, taking unexpected twists and turns, while investigating the grey areas of experience. Likewise, dialogues and statements are mixed with other forms of expression such as monologue, daydreaming and fantasy. They lack cogency and appear anarchic. Sharply critical of logic and rational projection, Virginia Woolf experiments with images, pauses and sudden breaks. This is the preferred stance of modernist writing, rejecting viewpoints rooted in history. Woolf combined creative expression with the prevailing ideas. She is best known for her novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929).

3.9.6 The Feminine Middlebrow Novel

The term 'middlebrow' is first recorded in 1924. The fact that the period of the 1920s was apparently in need of the concepts of 'the person of average or moderate cultural attainments' and the cultural phenomenon 'claiming to be or regarded as only moderately

intellectual' tells us a great deal about the cultural politics of the day. The middlebrow as a concept is one that is entirely dependent on readers, and on the development of a particular sort of reading culture in the interwar years. A number of institutions emerged in those years which created both a new sort of readership for fiction and a culture of snobbery. One of the most important institutions was the private lending library, which underwent a massive programme of expansion during and after the First World War. The Boots Booklovers' libraries, in particular, with their comfortable country-house-style furnishings and innovative lending system, soon acquired an iconic status as suppliers of books to the middle-class readers. Boots' librarians were trained to treat books as commodities and to offer their subscribers more of what they liked. The library appears repeatedly in the fiction of the period as a site of intense social judgements. Another key institution in establishing a middlebrow reading culture was the book club, large commercial institutions which offered their own editions of newly published books at hugely reduced rates. The most influential was the American Book-of-the-Month Club, which was founded in 1926. It boasted of the many literary reputations it had been responsible for establishing in American literature. In Britain it was imitated by the Book Society (started 1927), the Book Guild (1930), and many others which followed the same model.

The class dimension that inflected all contemporary understanding of the 'battle of the brows' is most clearly revealed in Virginia Woolf's famous essay 'Middlebrow', written in 1932 in the form of an unsent letter to the *New Statesman* and finally published in 1942 in the posthumous collection *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. Another work that can be mentioned under this category is Rachel Ferguson's (1892-1957) novel *The Brontës Went to Woolworths* (1931). E. Arnot Robertson (1903-1961) is another middlebrow novelist who demonstrates a painfully acute response to class in her novel *Cullum* (1928). Elizabeth Bowen's (1899-1973) *The Death of the Heart* (1938) contains one of the most lyrical accounts of the pleasures of the newly leisured new middle class.

3.9.7 Women and Comedy

Until very recently, the central preoccupation of feminist critics and researchers working on twentieth-century literary culture has been to ensure that women's contributions to Modernism are taken 'seriously'. This meant that much of the pleasure and playfulness associated with women's writing as well as the significant social, sexual, and psychological insights that emerge from the relationship between women and comedy in this period have

been strategically overlooked. First published in 1885, Kate Sanborn's (1839-1917) critical anthology, *The Wit of Women* responded to an ongoing debate in *The Critic* relating to the contested existence of a female sense of humour. The first significant overview of women's comic writing of the early twentieth century appears in 1934 with the publication of Martha Bensley Bruere (1879-1953) and Mary Ritter Beard's (1876-1958) *Laughing Their Way: Women's Humor in America*. British women's relationship to comedy has been historicised, albeit obliquely, through the prominent role of propagandist humour in the early years of the British suffrage movement. Until the introduction of direct action, campaigners for the vote had courted attention largely through appeals to the comic sensibility of their supporters and, notably, the public's desire to laugh at a staid and inflexible political authority. Through satirical commentary, visual and lyrical lampooning, caricature, punning, gendered wordplay, specially commissioned comic plays, and ironic stereotyping of both themselves and their anti-suffrage opponents, large numbers of articulate, well educated women were openly engaged in comic performance and production for political ends. In the United States a tradition of suffrage humour set the tone for what was to become an alternative Golden Age in American journalism. Writers, columnists, and commentators including Heterodites (Heterodoxy was the name adopted by a feminist debating group in Greenwich Village, New York in early 20th century. It was notable for providing a forum for the development of more radical conceptions of feminism than the suffrage and women's club movements of the time. Members of the group were referred to as Heterodites) Alice Duer Miller (1874-1942) and Florence Seabury (1881-1951), as well as the legendary figures of Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), Edna Ferber (1885-1968), and Anita Loos (188-1981), perfected a brand of social satire, sexual parody, and easy cynicism that came to define these women as world-weary veterans of the 'war between the sexes'; their acerbic, tightly observed musings on marriage and motherhood, suburban domesticity, suffrage, and the sexual double standard became instantly recognisable points of cultural reference and provided the *New Yorker*, the *Washington Post*, *Harper's*, and the *New Republic* (all important dailies and weeklies in UK and USA) with a high profile female perspective throughout the interwar years.

3.9.8 Women's Historical Novel

Despite critical proclamations of the death of the historical novel at the end of the nineteenth century, the years between 1900 and 1940 are extraordinarily rich in innovative historical fiction by women and mark a critical turning point in the development of the genre.

While women had been writing historical fictions since the eighteenth century [well before Scott claimed in the opening of *Waverley* (1814) to have invented a new genre], it is in the interwar period that women writers most energetically reinvented the historical novel. The genre took new directions which include the classical novels of Naomi Mitchison (1897-1999), the popular romances of Georgette Heyer (1902-1974), the Welsh-set historical novels of Margiad Evans (1909-1958) and Hilda Vaughan (1892-1985), the modernist historical fictions of Mary Butts (1890-1973), and the socialist feminist novels of Sylvia Townsend Warner (1893-1978).

The reinvigoration of historical fiction by women writers in the 1920s is closely related to historical changes in the position of women, including women's new status as enfranchised citizens, the aftermath of the First World War, and the opening up of university education to female students. During the 'Great War', the "mass of people became, for the first time, active citizens." For women who moved into the public world by taking jobs vacated by men during the war and gained – at least partially – the voting rights in 1918, this sense of entering into history as active citizens was particularly intense. This new historical sensibility can be compared with that resulting from the French Revolution and the revolutionary wars, to which Lukács (1885-1971; Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary historian, critic and aesthete) attributes the emergence of the 'classical historical novel' as a genre. The European scale of these events, he argued, "for the first time made history a *mass experience*," allowing "men [*sic*] to comprehend their existence as something historically conditioned." In early twentieth-century Britain this sense of being part of history extended for the first time to the new *woman* citizen exercising her voting rights. These years also saw the emergence of the first generation of university educated women, many of whom studied history or English. While some of these women (such as Eileen Power, Margaret Murray, and Jane Harrison) continued their work within the universities, others turned to fiction outside the academy. University-educated writers of historical fiction include Rose Macaulay (1881-1958), Hilda Reid (1898-1982), Margaret Kennedy (1896-1967), Margaret Irwin (1889-1967), D.K. Broster (1877-1950), and Phyllis Bentley (1894-1977). As Anthea Trodd argues, "Feminism created a demand for information about the lives of women in history and a need to understand how they lived." The Equal Franchise Act of 1928 intensified interest in women's history with the publication of books like Ray Strachey's (1887-1940) *The Cause* (1928) that took stock of the gains made by the women's movement. But by the mid-1930s histories like Winifred Holtby's (1898-1935) *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (1934), written under the shadow of Fascism and the probability of another war, were keenly aware of a backlash, as Holtby put it, "not

only against feminism, but against democracy, liberty, and reason, against international co-operation and political tolerance.” Alongside such factual accounts, women writers turned to fiction to fill the lacunae in recorded history and re-imagine history from a female point of view. Moreover, far from being merely nostalgic or escapist, historical fiction was frequently used as a cover under which women writers could write about allegedly ‘male’ subjects, such as war or politics, and explore taboo issues around sexuality and gendered identity.

3.9.9 Golden Age of Crime Fiction

In the category of crime fiction women writers dominate – Agatha Christie (1890–1976), Ngaio Marsh (1895–1982), Margery Allingham (1904–1966), Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957), Gladys Mitchell (1901–1983), Elizabeth Mackintosh (Josephine Tey) (1896–1952). Their careers began in the interwar years, and they were immensely popular during this period. The first four are often dubbed as the ‘queens of crime’ in the history of Britain’s crime fiction. Allingham and Mitchell experienced some decades of obscurity after their death, but Christie, Marsh, Sayers, and Tey remained defiantly in print, and were acknowledged collectively and individually as innovators of twentieth- and twenty-first-century British crime writing. Christie’s uninterrupted presence on the stage and in the cinema has kept her work in the public eye since the inception of her career. For all of the other writers too, their work was adapted for television in high-quality, high-profile series starring major actors. They have provided the plots for feeding the seemingly endless appetite of modern film and television audiences for historical drama. Their reincarnation as ‘heritage’ authors, often – and with justice – interpreted by critics as both pandering to and constructing an airbrushed, insular, class-bound view of Britain and its history, should not obscure their originality or their influence as writers. Their unbroken lineage is represented on these same shelves by later generations of celebrated women mystery writers – P.D. James (1920-2014), Ruth Rendell (1930-2015), and Sarah Waters (1966-present) – who regularly pay tribute to their formidable talents and originality.

Julian Symons is among the first of many critics to argue that while crime fiction may highlight the instability of social relations ‘for half a century from 1890 onwards,’ what ‘crime literature offered its readers’ was a reassuring world in which those who tried to disturb the established order were always discovered and punished (24). Yet in this fictional world almost all of the players are suspects, and almost none is without some form of transgressive behaviour or desires. This hardly suggests a society at peace with itself. Rather than mythologising settled, traditional communities, little changed by time, the settings and plots of crime fiction in the interwar years imagined a restless, mobile population; part of the productive vigour of the period is a society on the move.

3.9.10 Women in Poetry, Drama and Journalism

In the field of poetry, Fleur Adcock's seminal *The Faber Book of Twentieth-Century Women's Poetry* (1987) brought to prominence poets who showed intellectual 'wit', such as Charlotte Mew (1869–1928), Anna Wickham (1884–1947), Frances Cornford (1886–1960), Elizabeth Daryush (1887–1975), Stevie Smith (1902–1971), E.J. Scovell (1886–1961), and the American-born H.D. (1886–1961).

In the field of drama both male and female playwrights had been involved in producing patriotic plays during and immediately after the First World War: Mrs Horace Porter and George Bidder's *Patriotic Pence* (1917) falls into this category, as do the one-act plays of Rudolf Besier and Sybil Spottiswoode (the xenophobic *Kultur at Home*, 1916), Mrs Arthur Hankey (*A House-Warming in War Time*, 1917), and Gertrude Jennings (*Waiting for the Bus*, 1919). Women certainly did tackle front-line drama, and explore political themes, even if they did not go as far as their male counterparts, whose work was sometimes banned for its forthrightness in depicting the savagery of war. They used their work to comment on the moral ambiguities of war and the dangers of mechanised violence.

Women's journalism from 1900 to 1940 can be divided into two broad areas: (1) feminist periodical publishing, and (2) the more commercially oriented journalism of 'women's pages' and popular women's magazines. The origins of a feminist periodical press in Britain can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth-century women's movement and in particular the founding of the *English Woman's Journal* by Barbara Leigh Smith (1827-1891) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925), leading figures in the Langham Place Circle [Langham Place group (*act.* 1857–1866), brought together a small number of determined middle-class women to campaign on a variety of fronts for the improvement of the situation of women. In identifying their own needs, they also began to define a cautious liberal feminist politics, which in negotiating the tensions of class and gender bequeathed a legacy of moderation and respectability to the next feminist generation. The group took its name from the office of the *English Woman's Journal*, launched in 1858, and established in December 1859 at 19 Langham Place, London.] This genre expanded, with the rise of consumer culture, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, years which also saw the development of the 'woman's page' in regular newspapers to attract female readers. These two areas of women's journalism may at first appear to represent the 'radical' and 'conservative' end of the spectrum respectively. Yet women writers who contributed to feminist periodicals also worked in the expanding women's magazine market.

3.9.11 Women Writing the War and the Empire

Women's wartime writing is inevitably shaped by their gendered subjectivity, but while women may be homogenised by gender, they are equally rendered separate by discourses of class, region, race, and religion. Catherine Reilly's *Chaos of the Night: Poetry and Verse of the Second World War* (1984) and Jenny Hartley's *Hearts Undefeated: Women's Writing of the Second World War* (1994) are two important anthologies which enlists the names of women writers of this time. A more conventional idea of war work formed the basis of much women's documentary writing. Monica Dickens (1915-1992) comically recounted her experiences as a nurse in *One Pair of Feet* (1942), while Inez Holden's (1903-1974) *Night Shift* (1941) exposed a complex factory subculture, where working men and women survive at the limits of economic security. Daphne du Maurier's (1907-1989) *Frenchman Creek* (1941) is another such example of war writing.

Women's literary engagement with empire between 1900 and 1940 coincides with their enfranchisement as imperial subjects (many women having won the voting rights in Britain and the white dominions by 1928) and with the greater social freedom to venture abroad enabled by cruise operators and air travel. Such emancipation, however, often produced complex and contradictory responses to nation and empire. Margery Perham (1895-1982) toured West Africa to report on colonial rule in Nigeria, and Gertrude Bell's (1868-1926) extensive travels established her as an authority on the Middle East. Born in Dominica, Jean Rhys (1890-1979) travelled to England in 1907, only to feel, like her protagonist Anna Morgan in *Voyage in the Dark* (1934). In 1908 Katherine Mansfield's (1888-1923) desire for social freedom beyond the white settler community had taken her from her native New Zealand to the British metropole. Elspeth Huxley, (1907-1997) who returned to Britain in 1925, having been brought up in Kenya since 1913, is another writer who blends nostalgia for a colonial childhood with a historical consciousness of colonialism. Freya Stark (1893-1993) was another English woman able to 'see through the eyes of the Other' and anticipate the problems of the post-war era.

3.9.12 Summing Up

In this Unit we have looked at the construct of the New Woman and what led to the rise of the suffragette movement. We have attempted an extensive survey of the women writers according to the themes under which they wrote: technology and science, inter-

modernists, novel, comedy, crime fiction, poetry, drama, journalism. Along with the established genres we have also tried to survey very briefly the world of the women writers during the World Wars, and look at how they responded to the contemporary situations through their writings.

3.9.13 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type

1. Discuss the contribution of Marie Corelli and Constance Naden with reference to the unified theories of science and spirituality.
2. Write a brief note on the Intermodernists.
3. “The years between 1900 and 1940 are extraordinarily rich in innovative historical fiction by women and mark a critical turning point in the development of the genre.” – How would you assess this statement?
4. What is the Feminine Middlebrow novel? Who were its main contributors?

Medium Length Answers

1. How did women contribute to writing about the war and the empire?
2. Who were the significant women figures in comedy during this time?
3. How does Virginia Woolf’s writing uphold the aesthetics of modernism?
4. Discuss how the study of psychology affected women’s writing during this time.

Short Answer Type

1. What are the two broad areas into which women’s journalism can be divided between 1900 and 1940?
2. Who were the significant figures of the period in the field of poetry?
3. Who were the significant figures of the period in the field of drama?
4. How did the new women change to suffragists?

3.9.14 Suggested Reading

Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1975.

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Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder*. Pan, 1994.

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Williams, Raymond. *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence*. Oxford University Press, 1970.

Unit 10 □ Modern Literature—Fiction

Structure

- 3.10.1 Objectives**
- 3.10.2 Introduction**
- 3.10.3 Historical Background**
- 3.10.4 Major British Novelists**
- 3.10.5 Other Novelists**
- 3.10.6 Campus Novelists**
- 3.10.7 Angry Young Novelists**
- 3.10.8 Summing Up**
- 3.10.9 Comprehension Exercises**
- 3.10.10 Suggested Readings**

3.10.1 Objectives

This unit will try to

- develop an understanding of the historical, social and intellectual context of the modern literary fiction,
- to provide a literary survey of the age to familiarise the learners with the writers of this period and their works,
- to take up a detailed study of select writers of this age and their important works,
- finally, to ensure that the learners understand the themes, preoccupations, modes of execution and theoretical perspectives of the fictional works of this period.

3.10.2 Introduction

Modernism in British literature began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continued to inform the aesthetics, sensibility, philosophy, form, and structure of the literary output of much of the twentieth century. In this unit, we will specifically deal with the fictional works written mainly during the first half of the twentieth century, and study some of the major

writers and their works. It is also important to note here that while this era became synonymous with leading modernists such as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence, it also simultaneously saw the popularity of novelists who did not belong to the modernist tradition, such as, Rudyard Kipling, H.G. Wells, John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennet, G.K. Chesterton and others.

How were the writers of this period different from those that came before them? What kind of lasting impact did they leave on subsequent generations of writers? These are some of the questions that the learners will be able to answer at the end of this unit.

3.10.3 Historical Background

The seismic shift that modernism brought about in the literature of the period reflected larger changes in the social, intellectual, moral and psychological lives of the people. As the calm stability of the Victorian age drew to a close, the public grappled with crisis of faith brought about by various factors, namely, emergence of Darwinian theories of evolution, the re-thinking of economic and societal structures in the wake of socio-economic theories of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, the explorations of the subconscious by Sigmund Freud, further development of science and technology, and rise of the feminist movements. In the world of political events, the violence and destruction of World War I further hurtled the public towards a sense of confusion and rootlessness. In the absence of guiding forces of either religion or trusted political leadership, the sense of being set adrift in a meaningless world became the prevalent mood of the day. Figures of authority were questioned, and the omniscient authorial voice of the Victorian novel was no exception to this. As fiction moved from the certainty of the Victorian age towards the inevitable confusion of modernism, the themes, preoccupations, structures, syntaxes, the basic foundations of what was thought to constitute a novel, began to shift. Virginia Woolf, in her 1925 essay “Modern Fiction”, rejected the notion of constraints of plot, structure and chronology that convention dictated writers of fiction must follow:

...if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically

arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning to the end. (160)

In her strident rejection of the established form of fiction, Woolf was echoing the sentiments of the major figures associated with Modern fiction – Henry James declared the coming of a new “self –consciousness” to the art of fiction. His brother, William James popularised the term “stream of consciousness” in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1893) where he spoke of “consciousness as an uninterrupted ‘flow’: a ‘river’ or a ‘stream’ are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let’s call it the stream of thought, consciousness, or subjective life” (239). This “interior monologue” or “stream of consciousness” – whatever one may choose to call it – expressed itself in the pages of modern fiction and necessitated structural, linguistic, syntactical or typographical innovations, as evidenced in its extreme form in the works of James Joyce.

Activity for Learners:

- Enumerate, in a tabular form, the major ways in which the works of modern fiction writers differed from those of the Victorian ones.
- Consult relevant sources to gather information about Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx.
- Go back to the unit on “Modern, Modernity and Modernism” (Module 2 Unit 4), and write down a short note on how the meanings of these terms differ.

3.10.4 Major British Novelists

Henry James: Born in an affluent, intellectually inclined American family, Henry James (1843 –1916) found the fertile soil for his creativity in the rich cultural heritage of England and continental Europe. A cosmopolitan by upbringing and temperament, his works encompass both the continent of his birth and that of his adoption. His career as a novelist has been divided into three phases by literary historians. In his first phase, he explored what he called the “international situation” – the interaction and interplay between the cultures of Europe and America through depiction of American characters who travel to Europe. Some of the important works of this phase are *Roderick Hudson* (1875), *The American* (1877), *The Europeans* (1878) and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), the last being his crowning achievement of this period.

The second phase of his career saw him turn towards more complex social problems beyond the restricted scope of his earlier phase, and was marked by the disillusionment that lack of commercial success brought about in him. *The Bostonians* (1886), *The Princess Casamassima* (1886) and *The Tragic Muse* (1890) are significant works from this period when he also tried his hand at writing plays, though with little success.

However, his experience in writing plays gave him a strong foothold in the third phase when his novels grew more and more dialogue oriented. In his highly technical works of this period, such as, *The Awkward Age* (1899), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), *The Golden Bowl* (1904), we find him concentrating intensely on particular social or psychological aspects rather than retaining the more spread-out ambits of his earlier novels.

- **Joseph Conrad:** Josef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzenioski (1857-1924), later simplified to Joseph Conrad, was a Polish who learnt French in his childhood and English much later in life. He spent his youth working as a sailor, gathering experiences of exotic locations and inscrutable men, all of which provided the raw material for his works. The expatriate sailor-turned-novelist drew vivid pictures of darkly beautiful, yet mysterious and thrilling landscapes which mirrored the darkness, guilt and confusion resident in man. His first two novels *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), set against the context of Dutch-Malayan history, came at a time when exploration of exotic unknown parts in fiction and non-fiction was taking a hold on the readers' imagination. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897) was his next important work which was followed by his greatest shorter novels, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Typhoon* (1902). He continued with themes of betrayal and shame, and their psychological impacts on man through works like *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostramo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), *Under Western Eyes* (1911), *Chance* (1913), *Victory* (1915) and *The Shadow Line* (1919), while also experimenting with newer narrative techniques.

- **E.M. Forster:** E.M. Forster (1879-1970) was a member of the Bloomsbury Group, an association of like-minded intellectuals, philosophers, writers and artists of the early twentieth century of which Virginia Woolf was also a part. The group considered itself to be the vanguard of literary, philosophical and cultural sensibility of the day. Forster's novels juxtapose different social and cultural classes to analyse similarities, differences and inherent hypocrisies or prejudices, while exploring the inner lives of characters. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *Room with a View* (1908) draw largely from Forster's experiences of

living in Italy. Much like Henry James, Forster continued exploring the “international situation” through *Howard’s End* (1910), which depicts German and English cultural exchange through the story of two families from the two different cultures. His *The Longest Journey* (1907) was largely autobiographical. *A Passage to India* (1924), one of his most successful works, draws from his experiences of visiting India. The novel is exceptional in the sense that it departs from an exoticised portrayal of India, which was common in the works of English writers of the day, and is sympathetic to the Indian point of view as it explores racial tensions and dilemmas against the backdrop of an unjust colonial rule. *Maurice*, originally written in 1913 -14 though published posthumously in 1971, was Forster’s ode to homosexual love.

➤ **Virginia Woolf:** In the true spirit of modernism, Virginia Woolf (1882 –1941) sought to express through her fiction not stories or plots or objective impressions, but rather the subjective experience of the mind of an individual as it concentrates on a particular moment of a particular day, life being a conglomeration of many such moments of epiphany put together. With the feminist movement on the rise in the early twentieth century, Woolf argued for the need of establishing a canon of forgotten or ignored female writers, and centralised the feminine vision in her own works. Her fiction flows with a poetic aesthetic along “stream of consciousness”, going back and forth in time and conveying images as it imprints upon the mind.

The Voyage Out (1915) was her first novel. It was followed by *Jacob’s Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). These works form the core of her life’s work and are her seminal contributions to modernism. *Mrs Dalloway* explores the consciousness of a hostess over a period of seventeen hours in London as she prepares to throw a party later that day – her memory travels back and forth through time, picking up on a point in the present to travel back to a point in the past. Her consciousness runs parallel to that of Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked veteran of the War, though the two never meet. The day concludes with Mrs. Dalloway hearing of Smith’s suicide at her party and feeling a kindred soul in him despite never having met him. *To the Lighthouse*, similarly, fixates on two points of times, an evening and a morning set ten years apart, with Mrs Ramsay’s character being based on Woolf’s own mother. Her experimentation with stream of consciousness found its culmination in *The Waves*, which explores inter-weaving consciousness through individual soliloquies of six characters. *Orlando* (1928) was Woolf’s experimentation with

androgyny and was inspired by her relationship with Vita Sackville – West. *The Years* (1936) was less experimental in nature, as was her final novel *Between the Acts* (1941), published before her death through suicide in 1941.

➤ **James Joyce:** James Joyce (1882 –1941), the towering figure of modernism, was born in Dublin, Ireland, and spent his adult life in a self-imposed exile in Trieste, Zurich, Rome and Paris. However, it was in the particularity of Dublin that he continued to see the universality of life and it was Dublin that greatly informed his novelistic vision. Joyce’s upbringing in a Roman Catholic financially insecure Irish family led the way to a wandering adulthood and though he returned to Dublin on a few occasions after he left for continental Europe, his fiction lays out the topography of the city with startling accuracy. Joyce found initial recognition from his collection of short stories called *Dubliners* (1914). His first novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) developed from a manuscript he had named *Stephen Hero*. Through the protagonist Stephen Daedalus, who serves as an alter ego for the writer himself and recurs in his next novel as well, Joyce traces his own childhood, youth, relationship with his father and religion, and growth of his artistic self. The entire novel is perceived through the consciousness of Daedalus and experiments with narrative techniques that are more fully explored in his later works.

Ulysses (1922) lies at the heart of Joyce’s artistic output and explores a single day, 16th June, 1904, through the consciousnesses of Stephen Dedalus, the young writer-intellectual, Leopold Bloom, an advertising agent of Jewish birth and Molly Bloom, his wife. The novel parallels Homer’s epic of the same name – while Leopold Bloom represents the figure of Ulysses, Dedalus represents that of Telemachus and Molly Bloom, Penelope. For Joyce, the Homeric Ulysses stood for a complete man – wise, courageous, adventurous, resourceful, a son, a father, and a husband. The wanderings of the Jewish Bloom and of Joyce himself find echoes in the figure of Ulysses, the symbol for eternal wandering. Joyce makes use of typographical innovations and neologisms to convey the streams of thought of the characters – there are pages which run without punctuations and capitalisations to convey the uninterrupted flow of thoughts.

As difficult a read as *Ulysses* is, his next work *Finnegan’s Wake* (1939), is even more so, to the extent that it eludes a coherent plot summary, a fact that marks it as the perfect culmination of the modernist sensibility and approach towards writing fiction. In it, Joyce explores the limits of techniques and narrative modes, throwing it open to multiple, ambiguous interpretations.

➤ **D.H. Lawrence:** Born in a mining town to a miner father and a forceful educated mother, David Herbert Lawrence (1885–1930) rose beyond the limitations of his birth to become one of most important writers of the age. Another exponent of modernism to have spent most of life in a self-imposed exile, Lawrence’s works faced censorship and ban at home on charges of obscenity. His works explored neuroses, the subconscious and psychosis, at a time when Freud’s psychoanalysis was also gaining ground. His frank portrayal of sexuality, especially women’s sexuality, led to him being accused of pornography by many critics of his time. He began his career as a novelist with *The White Peacock* (1911) and *The Trespasser* (1912). His next work, *Sons and Lovers* (1913) was a thinly veiled autobiography that delved into Oedipal strains of his own relationship with his mother, while serving as a “Condition of England” novel with its portrayal of the author’s lived experience of growing up in a working class family of a dreary mining town. He continued with the theme of an apocalyptic chaotic world and eventual individual regeneration through *The Rainbow* (1915) and its sequel, *Women in Love* (1920). The sheer force of his personality continued to stamp his works like *The Lost Girl* (1920), *Aaron’s Rod* (1922), *Kangaroo* (1923), *The Boy in the Bush* (1924), *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928).

Activities for Learners:

- Try to analyse why so many of the modern novelists chose to live in “self-imposed exiles.” What societal constraints do you think they were battling?
- Read the essay “Modern Fiction” by Virginia Woolf. Place the novels we have discussed here in the context of the essay.
- Prepare a list of novelists discussed so far in this unit. Maintain the chronological order of the appearance of the novelists.
- Prepare a list of the novelists of the first half of the twentieth century not discussed at all in this unit.

3.10.5 Other Novelists

- ❖ **George Orwell:** Socialist by political inclination and patriotically British, George Orwell (1903-1950), was essentially a political writer who sought to transform his political observations into art. His most important fictions *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) are critiques of dictatorial regimes,

while his first work, *Burmese Days* (1934) draws from his experiences of working as a police officer in Burma. Some of his other works are *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936) and *Coming Up for Air* (1939).

- ❖ **William Golding:** William Golding's (1911-1993) *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) is his most important work, and it belongs to the late modern period. It uses the adventure story framework of a group of resourceful boys stranded in a deserted island to convey the post-war realisation of how far into evil man is capable of going. Some of his other works are *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1959), *The Spire* (1964), *The Pyramid* (1967), *Rites of Passage* (1980), *Close Quarters* (1987) and *Fire Down Below* (1989).

3.10.6 Campus Novelists

The 1950s saw the emergence of the trend of campus novels – novels written by writers who had first-hand experiences of working and living in university campuses. These novels often used satire and parody to expose class hierarchies and academic corruption. The protagonists were often bumbling, absurd characters attempting to make their way through the academic world. Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* (1952), Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975) are some examples of this genre.

3.10.7 Angry Young Novelists

The 1950s also saw the emergence of the figure of the Angry Young Man in novels and plays, a representative of the educated young man of lower or working class origins, of the post-war disillusioned generation suffering from lack of opportunities in an intrinsically classist society. John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) and Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) are some examples of this genre.

3.10.8 Summing Up

This unit has discussed select novelists of the first half of twentieth century. There were some distinct groups of novelists such as Campus Novelists and Angry Young Novelists, but by far the most notable group was that of the Modernist Novelists. Modernist literature sought to bring about a radical change from the earlier forms – the fiction produced emphasised subjectivism and internal consciousness rather than external plot elements. It perceived the post-war human existence as fragmentary and chaotic, all amounting to nothing. The existential crisis that stared human beings in the face was something to be lamented. When modernism gave way to postmodernism, the latter continued along the same themes, but instead of lamenting the ruin of mankind and emptiness of existence, it took a rather playful and celebratory attitude towards it.

3.10.9 Comprehension Exercises

Broad Questions:

1. Discuss the main features of the modernist novel with examples from representative texts.
2. Discuss the influence of James Joyce on the British modernist novels.

Mid-length Questions:

1. Write a short note on the literary style of Virginia Woolf.
2. Discuss briefly how D.H. Lawrence's working-class background shaped his fiction.

Short Answer Questions:

1. Name some of Joseph Conrad's works that draw from his experiences as a sailor.
2. What are campus novels? Give some examples.
3. Who are the Angry Young Novelists?

Module-4

Literature of the Modern Age: Poetry

Unit 11 □ W. B. Yeats: Poems—“Easter 1916”, “An Acre of Grass”

Structure

- 4.11.1 Objectives**
- 4.11.2 Introduction**
- 4.11.3 W. B. Yeats – A Bio-Brief**
- 4.11.4 “Easter 1916”**
- 4.11.5 Critical Analysis**
- 4.11.6 “An Acre of Grass”**
- 4.11.7 Critical Analysis**
- 4.11.8 Summing Up**
- 4.11.9 Comprehension Exercises**
- 4.11.10 Suggested Reading**

3.11.1 Objectives

This unit will introduce you to some aspects of Modernism in general and specifically acquaint you with modernism in English Poetry. It is important to understand such expressions as these terms signify literary concepts and techniques which powerfully characterise the great poems written by Yeats, one of the greatest poets of the modern period. The key elements of these poems are experimentation, anti-realism, individualism and a stress on the cerebral rather than emotive aspects. Indeed, the poet’s vision is all-important, however much it cut him off from society or the scientific concerns of the day. The two poems in this Unit will give you a representative picture of how wide indeed the canvas of Modernism can be. In the sustained historiography of English literature that we are offering you through these Core Courses, it will also be of interest to see how the poetry of Yeats combines traces of Romanticism and Victorianisms even as he heralds the onset of modernism in English poetry.

4.11.2 Introduction

As you know from the earlier Units of this Course in general, the term ‘modernism’ generally covers the creative output of artists and thinkers who saw traditional approaches to

the arts, architecture, literature, religion, social organisation (and even life itself) as being outdated in the light of the new economic, social and political circumstances of a society that was by now fully industrialised. Not that modernism categorically defied religion or shunned all the beliefs and ideas associated with the Enlightenment; it would be more accurate to view modernism as a tendency to question, and strive for alternatives to the convictions of the preceding age. The past was now to be seen and treated as different from the modern era, and its axioms and undisputed authorities held up for revision and enquiry.

In this unit we shall discuss mainly two particular poems of Yeats who is hailed both as a modernist and a romantic. He started his literary career as a romantic poet and gradually evolved into a modernist poet. When Yeats began publishing poetry in the 1880s, his poems had a lyrical sense, romantic style, and they focused primarily on love, longing and loss – all infused with the spirit of Irish myths. His early writing follows the footsteps of romantic verse, utilising conventional rhyme schemes, lyrical metric patterns, and poetic structures. Although it lacks the serious note of his later writings, his early poetry is still sophisticated and popular. He then gradually evolved as a modernist poet. Now, there are several factors which contributed to his poetic evolution: firstly, his interest in mysticism and the occult urged him to explore spiritually and philosophically complex subjects. Yeats' frustrated romantic relationship with Maud Gonne dashed his hopes, this defeat in love made his poetry cynical. Thus, for Yeats, changes and developments in the private domain primarily played an important part in signalling his evolution as a modernist poet.

Moreover, his concern with Irish subjects evolved as he became more and more involved in nationalist political causes. Yeats therefore shifted his focus from myth and folklore to contemporary Irish politics. He united the personal, political and mystical concerns in an intense and visionary artistic whole. Finally, Yeats was a witness to the changing face of literary culture in the early twentieth century. As a result, he picked up some of the styles and conventions of the modernist poets. One such is the apocalyptic or catastrophic vision, which is common among all modernists. The modernists experimented with verse forms, the breakdown of the traditional form, the dislocation of that progression and aggressively engaged with contemporary politics, challenged poetic conventions and the literary tradition at large. The use of disparate images in modernist poetry builds up an emotional pattern which replaces the form of a traditional poem. The discontinuous syntax gives such a poem the look of a jigsaw puzzle. These influences caused his poetry to become darker, edgier, and more philosophical. His poetry changed its course, there is a shift in style and tone over the course of his long poetic career.

4.11.3 W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) – A Bio-Brief

William Butler Yeats was born on 13 June, 1865 at ‘Georgeville’, Sandymour Avenue, Dublin. His father, John Butler Yeats, was a lawyer by training and an artist by profession. He was a sceptic who believed in the supremacy of personality and intellect. He exalted art and poetry, claiming that “a work of art is the social act of a solitary man.” The poet’s mother, Susan Pollexfen, on the other hand, was a quiet, self-effacing person, who shared a deep bond with the world of nature and peasant life which she had found at Sligo in her childhood. The family frequently shifted residence owing to financial constraints and Yeats’ childhood was spent largely in London, Dublin and Howth, with frequent visit to Sligo, his mother’s home. Yeats studied at Godolphin School, Hammersmith England and then went on to High School at Dublin. After completing school, Yeats joined the Metropolitan School of Art at Dublin where he became acquainted with George Russel (AE), who spurred his interest in mystical studies, much to the dismay of his rationalist father. In 1885, Yeats became a founder member of the Dublin Hermetic Society. He evolved a religion of his own: “I had made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition, of a garden of stories, and of personages, and of emotions, inseparable from their first expression, passed on from generation to generation by poets and painters with some help from philosophers and theologians.”

In 1885, Yeats met John O’ Leary, a Fenian leader of native Catholic stock who, for Yeats, embodied the spirit of “indomitable Irishry.” While the family were settled at Bedford Park, Yeats met Maud Gonne, said to be one of the most beautiful women of her time in Ireland, and fell in love with her. She was fiercely devoted to the cause of Irish liberation and inspired by her, Yeats wrote his play *The Countess Cathleen*. Meanwhile, Yeats’s esoteric and literary interests continued unabated and he became a member of Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society. Later he became initiated into the ‘Order of the Golden Dawn.’ In 1891, Yeats became a member of The Rhymers’ Club and met Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and others. Earlier, Yeats had made the acquaintance of William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, and Oscar Wilde, leading literary figures of the late nineteenth-century. In 1893, Yeats brought out an edition of *The Works of William Blake* in collaboration with Edwin Ellis. He shared rooms with Arthur Symons in ‘Woburn Building’, who introduced him to the works of French symbolist poets. Yeats’s love for Maud Gonne, his involvement in Irish politics and his interest in occult studies occupied him simultaneously. Yeats established the Irish Literary Society in England and the National Literary Society in Dublin with John O’Leary as President. Yeats’s meeting with Lady Gregory in 1896 is of particular importance

in his literary career. His visits to her home at Coole Park offered him the opportunity to delve deep into the folk-culture of Ireland and form ideas about establishing an Irish Theatre. His meeting with John Middleton Synge proved to be extremely propitious for both. Yeats urged Synge to visit Aran Islands to learn about Irish peasant life. In 1902, Yeats became President of Irish National Dramatic Society, and the famous Abbey Theatre at Dublin was established in 1904. Maud Gonne, who consistently refused Yeats's repeated proposals of marriage, married Major John MacBride in 1903. After the Easter Rising in 1916 Maud Gonne's husband was executed and Yeats once again renewed his proposal of marriage which she again turned down. With her permission, he proposed to her daughter Iseult Gonne, who also refused. In 1917, Yeats got married to George Hyde-Lees and set up house at Ballylee Tower. His wife's power of automatic writing spurred him on to compose *A Vision* which contains his 'system' of arranging history in terms of 'gyres' (conceived as inter-penetrating double cones), where, after every two thousand years, subjective and objective phases alternate. It places human personality according to the twenty-eight phases of the moon, representing different stages of subjectivity and objectivity.

In 1922 Yeats became a member of the Irish Senate which he attended faithfully. In 1923, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. He continued writing extensively up to his death in 1939. He went on several lecture tours to America and regularly delivered radio talks for the B.B.C. His interest in philosophy led him to a study of the "Upanishads" which he translated into English in collaboration with Purohit Swami. He had earlier met Rabindranath Tagore and wrote an introduction to the English *Gitanjali* and it was around that time that he also met and made friends with the young Ezra Pound.

Yeats has left a record of his life, describing it in "What comes oftenest into my memory", which he wrote in parts over several years and which is collectively called *Autobiographies*. Yeats's letters are also important documents of his literary career and highlight his concern with the politics, literature and philosophy of his time. He is the most representative Anglo-Irish poet, who is also the link between Romantic and Modern Poetry. *The Celtic Twilight*, projecting the cause of Irish Cultural Revival, is a product of his early years while *A Vision* is that of his late years. The distinctive quality of Yeats's achievement lies in his assimilation of diverse attitudes, ideas and poetic modes which mark the transition between nineteenth and early twentieth-century poetry. He would claim to be the "last Romantic" and yet be as modern as Ezra Pound exhorted him to be. All his life he sought for that "unity of being" whereby he could resolve the dichotomies of private and public experiences, emotion and intellect, youth and age, the material and the spiritual worlds, through symbols, masks and

images. And when he felt he could, perhaps, no longer call forth his images and symbols, he would turn to “where all the ladders start./In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart”.

Yeats died on 28 January, 1939 leaving behind a vast collection of poetry, prose and drama. He had written his own epitaph in September, 1938 in the poem “Under Ben Bulbin”:

Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!

4.11.4 “Easter, 1916”: The Text

Easter, 1916

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman’s days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers,

When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our winged horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:

The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse —
Mac Donagh and Mac Bride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

4.11.5 Critical Analysis

“Easter 1916” was composed in September 1916 when the poet was staying in France with Maud Gonne. It was first circulated privately and was later printed in the *New Statesman* in 1920. Finally, it was published in the volume of poems entitled *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. The poem has a clearly political background and represents an important phase in

Yeats's poetic consciousness. It was written in response to the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. The rebellion was organised by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B) in protest against the failure of the English Government in solving the problem of Home Rule in Ireland. In April, 1912, a moderate Home Rule Bill had been introduced which was opposed by a section of Irish Protestants aided by the Conservatives. Before a solution could be reached, the outbreak of World War I put an end to the proceedings. The I.R.B. did not have any faith in English promises and on Easter Monday, 1916, they stormed, the centre of Dublin and occupied all the important offices, including the G.P.O. The siege had been planned in complete secrecy and took everyone by surprise.

The coup continued till the 29th of April. However, lack of sufficient arms led to military failure. Between 3rd and 12th May, fifteen of the leaders were executed after court-martial. Among those executed were Pearse, MacDonagh, Plunkett, John MacBride and James Connolly. And, as Yeats termed it, "a terrible beauty" was born out of this sacrifice.

In his poem, "September 1913", Yeats had bemoaned that

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone

It's with O'Leary in the grave.

But, now in 1916, Yeats feels that "tragic dignity has returned to Ireland". This is a recurrent theme in the poems which follow "Easter, 1916" – namely, "Sixteen Dead Men", "The Rose Tree" and "On a Political Prisoner". The poet was filled with a sense of tragedy and in a letter to Lady Gregory dated 11 May, 1916, he wrote:

The Dublin tragedy has been a great sorrow and anxiety. Cosgrave, who I saw a few months ago in connection with the Municipal Gallery project and found our best supporter has got many years' imprisonment and to-day I see that an old friend Henry Dixon – unless there are two of the name – who began with me the whole work of the literary movement has been shot in a barrack yard without any trial of any kind. I have little doubt there have been many miscarriages of justice.

Later, in the same letter, he continues:

I am trying to write a poem on the men executed – 'terrible beauty has been born again.' If the English Conservative Party had made a declaration that they did not intend to rescind the Home Rule Bill there would have been no Rebellion. I had no idea that any public event would so deeply move me – and I am very despondent

about the future.

Yeats was filled with a sense of waste and wondered if he “could have done anything to turn those young men in some other direction.” He wondered if it was “needless death after all”. At the same time, he was overwhelmed by the transformation in Irish Politics that was wrought by the ‘blood-sacrifice’ of these brave men.

Stanza 1: Yeats outlines his relationship with the men executed after the Rising. They were “vivid faces” for him. Before the Rising, they were ordinary people, with whom he exchanged “polite, meaningless words”. Sometimes he even derived fun by relating “a mocking tale” or making “a gibe” at them at the club, “being certain” that they and he lived in the same valueless, empty world where “motley is worn”. But the Easter Rising brought about a transformation – “All changed, changed utterly.” And the most striking discovery about the Rising for the poet was that “a terrible beauty is born”. It is “terrible” because the rebels knew that death was sure if they failed. The “beauty” lay in the courting of the sacrifice, in the spirit of patriotism. It is a “terrible beauty” because the beauty of their sacrifice is mingled with their knowledge of imminent death.’

L. 1: “them” — the revolutionaries

L. 4: “eighteenth-century houses”—typical Dublin houses built of granite.

L.12: “club”—an Art Club in Dublin of which Yeats was a member.

L.14: “Motley”—a fool’s or clown’s dress.

Stanza 2: Yeats gives a brief but penetrating sketch of some of the revolutionaries whom he knew personally. First, he mentions Constance Gore-Booth who was married to Count Casimir Markiewicz. Yeats knew both the sisters Constance and Eva Gore-Booth whom he had visited at their ancestral home in Lissadell in 1894. Yeats recalls Constance’s fine qualities when “young and beautiful” — she was one of the best horse-women in Ireland. But, then as she became involved in politics, “her voice grew shrill” as she spent “her nights in argument.” After the Rising, she was sentenced to death, which was later commuted and she was finally released. Yeats is filled with a sense of waste in the sacrifice of noble natures for fanatic idealism. He is pained by the ignorance of those who sacrificed their lives (“in ignorant good-will”). In another poem about Constance, “On a Political Prisoner” he refers to her as “Blind and leader of the blind”.

Yeats next mentions Pearse — “this man had kept a school.” Pearse was the founder of St. Enda’s School for Boys at Rathfarnham. He was the Commandant General and President of the Provisional Government in Easter Week, during the Rising. He was said to have stated

that “blood must be shed in every generation.” After Pearse, Yeats mentions Thomas MacDonagh as “this other, his helper and friend”. MacDonagh was a Professor of Literature at the University College, Dublin. He was also a poet and dramatist and “might have won fame in the end”. “This other man” whom Yeats had “dreamed” of as ‘a drunken, vainglorious lout’ refers to John MacBride, Maud Gonne’s husband. Yeats had a poor opinion of him and felt that “he had done most bitter wrong” to someone who was “near” the poet’s heart, referring to Maud Gonne. MacBride had allegedly ill-treated her and they were separated. Yet, after the Rising, MacBride becomes a heroic figure and Yeats “numbers” him “in the song”. He, too, has moved beyond the “casual comedy” of mundane, everyday life and “has been changed in his turn,/Transformed utterly”.

L . 17: That woman’ — Constance Gore-Booth (1868-1927)

L. 23: “harriers”—hounds used in hunting.

L . 24: “This man”—Patrick Pearse (1879-1916)

L . 26: “This other”—Thomas MacDonagh (1878 - 1916).

L . 31: “This other man”—Major John MacBride (1865 -1916).

L . 33: “Most bitter wrong”—break-up of MacBride’s marriage to Maud Gonne

L . 34: “Some who are near my heart” —Maud Gonne and her children

Stanza 3. Yeats uses the symbol of a stone to signify those who dedicate their lives to a single purpose ignoring all other dimensions in life. Their “hearts with one purpose alone” seem “enchanted” or turned to “a stone” by some magic spell which obstructs the natural flow of life (“to trouble the living stream”). “The horse that comes from the road”. The riders, the birds”—all change “[m]inute by minute”. So, do “the long-legged moor-hens” and “moor-cocks” also, and they move with the flux of life. But, those people who cut themselves off from the multifariousness of existence and devote themselves to a single cause become as fixed and as hard as “stone”. The poet uses natural details to suggest the vitality and flux of life from which fanatics are cut off.

L . 1: ‘Hearts’ — hearts of fanatic revolutionaries.

L . 3: ‘enchanted to a ‘stone’ —turned into a stone, becoming hard-hearted and resistant to love and life.

Stanza 4: Here Yeats wonders whether the sacrifice was necessary after all. He is trying to seek justification for the Easter Rising and analyse his own response to it. Yeats begins with a reference to Maud Gonne whose “too long a sacrifice” had made “a stone of the heart.” Her long service to the revolutionary cause had made her indifferent to the other aspects of life. Yeats wonders if that is enough for fulfilment. But “that is Heaven’s part,” that is beyond

human count. The ordinary man's part is to recall the names of those who have sacrificed their lives for such causes "to murmur name upon name,/ As a mother names her child." The tender image of a mother and child indicates Yeats's personal feeling of sorrow for those who died after the Rising— "when sleep at last has come/On limbs that had run wild." For the revolutionaries, it is not "night fall" but death, synonymous with "sleep". And Yeats asks if it was "needless death, after all" because England might yet have kept "faith regarding its promise of Home-Rule in Ireland. But the revolutionaries did not think so and were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Ireland and "we know their dream; enough /To know they dreamed and are dead." There is yet some doubt in Yeats's mind about the justification of the Rising and he wonders if an "excess of love", had not blurred their reason, "bewildered them till they died". But the sacrifice has been made and Yeats ends his poem with a reiteration of his admiration for those men who sacrificed their lives for their nation – MacDonagh, MacBride, Connolly and Pearse. They will be remembered whenever and wherever "green is worn", referring to the revolutionary songs of the time, green being the colour of shamrocks, the national emblem of Ireland. And, out of the sacrifice of so many valued lives, "a terrible beauty is born".

4.11.6 "An Acre of Grass": The Text

An Acre of Grass

Picture and book remain,

An acre of green grass

For air and exercise,

Now strength of body goes;

Midnight, an old house

Where nothing stirs but a mouse.

My temptation is quiet.

Here at life's end

Neither loose imagination,

Nor the mill of the mind

Consuming its rag and bone,

Can make the truth known.

Grant me an old man's frenzy,
Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till Truth obeyed his call;

A mind Michael Angelo knew
That can pierce the clouds,
Or inspired by frenzy
Shake the dead in their shrouds;
Forgotten else by mankind,
An old man's eagle mind.

4.11.7 Critical Analysis

'An Acre of Grass' was written in November, 1936, when Yeats was seventy-one. It was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* and in *The London Mercury* in April, 1938. It is included in the collection, *Last Poems*. "An Acre of Grass" deals with the theme of old age, a recurrent motif in a number of poems written during his last years. "Are You Content", "The Apparitions", "Why Should Not Old Men Be Mad", "A Prayer for Old Age", and "The Circus Animals' Desertion" are some such poems written on the theme of age and decrepitude. In these poems, Yeats attempts to revert to the basic, elemental passions of life, shorn of all embellishment. The poet had worked through his mature years to achieve this degree of simplicity when he could reach down to "where all the ladders start, / In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart". In "An Acre of Grass", Yeats prays for "an old man's frenzy" to spur him on in the search for truth. The poet had anticipated this situation in an essay written in 1917:

A poet when he is growing old, will ask himself if he cannot keep his mask and his vision without new bitterness, new disappointment. Could he if he would, knowing how frail his vigour from his youth up, copy Landor who lived loving and hating, ridiculous and unconquered, into extreme old age, all lost but the favour of his Muses.

Stanza 1: Yeats begins the poem with a list of the few possessions he still has: / “picture”, “book” and “an acre of green grass/For air and exercise”. He is old and his “strength of body goes.” He is in his “old house,” the house at Rathfarnham which he had taken on lease for thirteen years. A sense of immediacy, of reality is evoked by the poet’s mention of the time “midnight”, when the whole house is quiet, “[w]here nothing stirs but a mouse”. It could also be a hint of old-age sleeplessness.

L.5: ‘an old house’ — “Riversdale”, Rathfarnham, Dublin, leased for thirteen years.

Stanza 2: Yeats is reflecting on this restful life of picture, book and ‘an acre of green grass.’ “My temptation is quiet”, but has he been able to turn this idea into poetry.” At life’s end,” that is, in old age, “neither loose imagination/Nor the mill of the mind” after “consuming its rag and bone” “can make the truth known.” Yeats feels that the bits of imagination are not enough. And surely the mind that has denied the body will not do.

L.1 ‘temptation’ — yearning for active life and for old times spent at Coole Park, as he wrote in a letter to Mrs. Olivia Shakespeare, dated 25 July, 1932: “At first I was unhappy, for everything made me remember the great rooms and the great trees of Coole, my home for nearly forty years, but now that the pictures are up I feel more content.”

L. 2: “at life’s end”—in old age.

L. 2: “rag and bone”—flesh.

Stanza 3: Yeats realises that only frenzy can save him from this uncreative quiet. And it is only the old that can gear up that frenzy. He invokes two famous frenzied figures from Shakespeare, Timon and Lear, the former noted for his rage and the latter for his madness, and both utterly wronged. Yeats next calls forth the name of William Blake, an early Romantic poet-philosopher, whose original theories about the Universe and profound poetry fascinated him throughout. Blake was a visionary who worked out his own concept of religion till he arrived at truth— “Till Truth obeyed his call”.

L.1: “An old man’s frenzy”—possibly drawn from Nietzsche’s quotation of Plato – ‘All the greatest benefits of Greece have sprung from madness.’

L.3: Timon and Lear – characters in Shakespeare’s plays, *Timon of Athens* and *King Lear*.

L.4: William Blake (1757-1827), poet and engraver.

Stanza 4: Yeats is craving for “a mind Michael Angelo knew”, that is, for the creative energy associated with the painter-poet. “That can pierce the clouds” is a reference to Michael Angelo’s ‘Creation’ Series painted on the Sistine ceiling. And “shake the dead in their shrouds” is a reference to his ‘Last Judgement’ painted on the altar wall of the same Chapel in the Vatican. Piercing the clouds and shaking the dead in their shrouds are, therefore, also symbolic of the range of creativity that frenzy alone can produce, an old man’s frenzy. It is that he now needs, “an old man’s eagle mind”, else he will be forgotten.

L.1: Michael Angelo: Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), Italian painter sculptor and poet.

L.6: “an old man’s eagle mind” perhaps refers to Nietzsche’s “The Dawn of Day,” where he speaks of the genius in men, whose minds, like winged beings, separate themselves from their character and temperament and “rise far above them”.

When Yeats wrote “Easter 1916”, he had already shed his “coat” of “old mythologies” which he had used in his early poetry. Even after he had evolved a more mature style, he would use symbol and metaphor while writing on public issues, as in “No Second Troy” or “The Second Coming”. But in “Easter 1916”, he uses a direct, colloquial style which is at the same time full of passionate intensity. He uses the “stone” symbol to express his misgivings about fanatical devotion to a single cause which leads to so much blood-shed. And he can also question directly in everyday speech, “was it needless death after all?” Yet, he retains that elevated tone appropriate for the occasion where all are “transformed utterly” and “a terrible beauty is born.”

In “An Acre of Grass”, Yeats has moved further towards a style which is even more direct and hard-hitting and at the same time, intensely passionate. It is a characteristic poem of his last years where metaphor, image, symbol and direct speech combine powerfully. His style is terse and rich in allusion. His inclusion of literary associations (“Timon and Lear”, Blake, Michael Angelo) gives his metaphors and images a specific context and identity. His language is divested of Romantic glamour even while expressing a craving for “frenzy” or inspiration, as he prays for “an old man’s eagle mind”. In both these poems, Yeats aimed at suitable styles that would properly address the themes.

4.11.8 Summing Up

Both the poems we have discussed in this unit are examples of deviation from the norm,

or from usual reader expectations, both are ruthless in their rejection of the past, and are iconoclastic in nature. The world is seen through the artist's inner feelings and mental states. The themes and vantage points are chosen to question the conventional use of myth and unconscious forces rather than motivations of conventional plot. The poems are open-ended and offer scope for fresh interpretations.

4.11.9 Comprehension Questions

Long Answer-type Questions

- a) Analyse Yeats's response to the Easter Rising of 1916, as revealed in the poem, "Easter, 1916".
- b) Write a critical appreciation of the poem, "An Acre of Grass".

Medium Answer-type Questions

- a) What was the poet's attitude towards the Revolutionaries before the Rising?
- b) Why does Yeats question whether "it was needless death after all"?
- c) What does the "Stone" signify in the poem "Easter 1916"?
- d) What picture does the poet paint of his present condition in the poem, "An Acre of Grass" ?
- e) Why does the poet pray for "An old man's frenzy"?

3. Short Answer-type Questions

- a) Who is referred to as the "woman" who "rode to harriers" when "young and beautiful"?
- b) Who "kept a school" and who was his "helper"?
- c) What was the "most bitter wrong" that "this other man" had committed?
- d) What is meant by "England may keep faith"?
- f) Who are 'Timon' and 'Lear'?
- g) Why is Michael Angelo mentioned?
- h) What should make the poet "forgotten else by mankind"?
- i) What can make the poet remember?

Unit 12 □ T. S. Eliot: Poems — “Preludes”; “Marina”

Structure

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4.12.8 Glossary

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4.12.10 Comprehension Exercises

4.12.11 Suggested Reading

4.12.1 Objectives

This unit will attempt to introduce you to T.S. Eliot, one of the major poet-critics of the twentieth century British literature. It places Eliot in the milieu of the early 20th century to show how the dynamic changes occurring at multiple levels of experience, in both America and Europe, influenced the shaping of his poetic genius, and how this in turn shaped the aesthetic ethos called “Modern/ism”. The two poems selected in your course, namely “Preludes” and “Marina,” have been critically analysed to reflect the evolution of Eliot, the poet, from an irrepressible radical young man with a declared mission, to one of the most sensitive perceivers of poetic norms.

4.12.2 Introduction

In this unit you will often find such expressions as image, imagist, objective correlative, imaginative, symbolic and mysticism. It is important to understand them precisely as most of

these terms signify literary concepts and techniques which powerfully characterise the great poems written by the greatest poets of the early twentieth century – Yeats, Eliot and Pound. The other features of their experimental poetry are indirection, suggestion and allusion. The medium of expression is, of course, expressive use of language but language used in evocative ways which, when first employed, appeared strikingly different from those of the Victorian and Romantic poets. New ways of sharp, severe and compressed poetic utterance were devised partly because late nineteenth century modes of expression had grown increasingly trite, less precise, more cumbrously ornate and partly because these poets felt that western urban civilisation of the early twentieth century with all its bewildering complexities, dislocations and self-destructive violence (as witnessed chiefly in the 1914-18 War) clearly outgrew old form of poetry and demanded both new visions and new techniques. The poetic persona still needed to take a stand or play a role (as the speaker does in ‘Preludes’), still needed, as Yeats explained presenting the poet’s case, ‘like Milton, Shakespeare, Shelley, vast sentiments, generalizations supported by tradition’. In the greatest poems of the period (Yeats’s “Among School Children”, “The Second Coming”, “Easter 1916”, Eliot’s “The Waste Land”, “Marina” and Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberly”) the poets achieved, like the old masters, vitality, range and variety as they handled the symbolist imagist techniques and developed a variety of poetic personae with a complete mastery in carefully crafted masterpieces.

T.S Eliot’s short poems show an incremental development of the poet’s modernist thought. “Prufrock,” as “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is more commonly called, was published in June 1915 in *Poetry*; “Preludes,” “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” in *Blast* in July 1915, and “Portrait of a Lady” in *Others* in September 1915. When he was in London Ezra Pound introduced him to a literary group which included Wyndham Lewis, H.D., Richard Aldington, Harriet Weaves, and Ford Maddox Ford. Further, he became acquainted with the ‘Bloomsbury group’, the avant-garde artists, and set out to ‘make it new’ in accordance with Pound’s prescription. This period, significantly known as the ‘modernist’ period, saw the break-up of the old patterns. This new poetry is anti-representational, anti-narrative, disjunctive, discontinuous and choppy. Its counterparts are cubist painting and cinematic montage. Eliot was never officially an Imagist, but his poetry is a distillation of imagism. Deliberate discontinuance of the linear narration of any discussion or paraphrasable matter is a distinctive feature of Modernist art. In Eliot’s poetry we hear an individual speaking, the whole man speaking and then a century speaking.

4.12.3 Thomas Stearns Eliot

4.12.3.1 The Early Days

Eliot was born in 1865, in St. Louis, Missouri (U.S.A.) in a conservative household of entrepreneurs, devoted to the tenets of Christianity called Unitarianism. The family was dominated by the patriarchal figure of his grand father, William Greenleaf Eliot. His father, Henry Ware Eliot and mother, Charlotte Champes Eliot were guided by the spirit of the senior Mr. Eliot but were not as severe in their dedication to the Unitarian faith. Eliot's grandfather and the other pioneers of the European settlers in America preferred a creed in which there was no conflict between man's material and spiritual pursuits and in fact, the Unitarians often justified pure material intentions as aspects of duty and responsibility to the community. While the uneasy alliance between the craving for material gain and the desire for spiritual welfare was suited to the early days of the opening up of the New World, as time progressed, the ethos tended to generate an attitude of decadence, which disturbed the young Eliot. He was not a stranger to the subtleties of human sensibilities because Charlotte Eliot was something of a poet herself and under her influence her young son knew there was more to life than justifying pure materialism as communal duty. In his days as a student in the Milton Academy and later as a young undergraduate at the Department of Philosophy in Harvard, he came across contemporary society in the affluent as well as impoverished sections of contemporary Boston and noted that everywhere men and women simply went through the motions of life without any vital emotional and spiritual responses to the act of living.

The times in which Eliot was growing up saw the world being increasingly guided by the physical sciences instead of the biological sciences, and inert matter was assuming great importance. Age-old institutions like the Church and traditional value systems based on belief were being seriously challenged by emphatic importance on science and technology. If unprecedented advances in science and technology weakened the position of supremacy of the human mind over matter, the World War I drove the proverbial final nail in the coffin of man's dwindling self-esteem.

In Harvard at this time there was the inevitable backlash at the spiritual vulnerability and Eliot's teachers like Prof. Irving Babbitt and Prof. George Santayana initiated the young man's intellectual development to aggravate an already disturbed emotional state. Eliot's study of Philosophy took off from this early guidance. The chief concern of the Harvard Philosophers was the defence of religious and spiritual values against the challenge of Darwinism and the

reconciliation of these with the new scientific materialism of the times. Among the philosophers whom Eliot studied, F.H. Bradley's approach seemed to offer the ideal middle path. Bradley identified the plane of immediate experience as the source of all noumenal responses, and therefore created a system where the dignity of the subject was preserved without denying the status of the objective world. Though Bradley conceived of an 'Absolute' where all contradictions would be resolved, yet his philosophy emphasised the tension between the subject and the object rather than the hypothetical 'Absolute'.

4.12.3.2. The European Influence

Another important experience, which formed Eliot's intellectual reaction against the contemporary dehumanization, was the young man's growing interest in French Literature. As a student of philosophy Eliot was interested in Henri Bergson's concept of Time but it was Baudelaire's poetry, with its ability to convey disturbed emotional states in terms of urban imagery and tone that took him further into French literature. The next milestone in the moulding of Eliot was his reading of Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, in the library of the Harvard Union and this book acquainted him with the creative efforts of Stéphané Mallarmé and Jules Laforgue. The aspiring poet noted that the poetry of these nineteenth century French Symbolists showed an economy of expression and an uncompromising effort to make transparent the texture. But expression needed the right amount of dilution to improve upon its communicability. And here Eliot's role model was the Italian poet of the Middle Ages, Dante Alighieri. The influence of Dante of course went far deeper than serving to improve the poetic idiom. The infusion of belief into a medium that Dante so effortlessly achieved argued a sincerity of belief, which left an indelible impression on one who encountered a generation plagued by splintered consciousness.

4.12.3.3. Reaction against Georgian Poetry: Eliot, Hulme, and Pound

The early poetry of T.S. Eliot was at one level severe criticism of late Victorian and Georgian Poetry. In this poetry, intent upon creating idyllic worlds of pastoral beauty or sentiments rather than sharp, empirical feelings, Eliot saw an artistic parallel of the spiritual apathy, the shying away from real experience and true feelings that pervaded contemporary civilisations. Inevitably Eliot would see in the Georgian mindset a legacy of the absolute concept of selfhood of generations of humanistic thinking, and hence this school of poetry became a convenient target for releasing the new understandings of the living experience. Eliot in America was treading the same path in his crusade against the Georgians as T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound were doing in Britain.

Eliot's contention that poetry could refrain from indulging in sentimental rendition so that it could entail an "escape" from personality is fundamentally in agreement with T.E.Hulme's argument that human progression is governed by "discontinuity" as opposed to the humanistic belief in continuity, which rules out any attempt at self-analysis and self-criticism. The suggestive, unfocussed content of Georgian poetry certainly, called for a change even on purely aesthetic grounds. But the need became an intense demand for a spiritual revolution as well because the creative impulse coincided with the urge of the 20th century to probe the causes of its emotional disturbance.

On the purely creative level the way to arrive at the core of truly felt emotion was to evolve effectively sharp imagery. Eliot developed a system of imagery he later termed "objective correlative". He defined it in his essay on "Hamlet" as: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." In this connection one also recalls Pound's rediscovery of the image and the vital role which, according to him, imagery plays in the development of poem:

An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.... It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.

Pound's prescription is similar to the efforts of the Imagist school of poetry, which dominated English and American poetry in the early part of the 20th century. Its main exponent Ezra Pound developed an aesthetic creed upon the philosophy of T.E.Hulme. Hulme felt that the only way of presenting the perception of the splintered consciousness or "discontinuity" was to fashion images with precision as if they were chiselled out of alabaster. Eliot's Laforgian imagery taken from all walks of life, economic and sensual in character, drew admiration from Ezra Pound across the Atlantic and he announced that the young American had "modernized" himself on his own.

T.S. Eliot was a poet who lived his life in his poetry. Each one of his major poems, beginning from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and ending with the "Four Quartets" marks a definite stage in the developing curve of experience, where the borderline between the personal and the poetic is maintained with enough control to reveal the human element and

keep out the prejudice of sentiment. “Preludes” and “Marina” are remarkable early examples of this continuous development.

4.12.4 “Preludes” : Text

Preludes

I

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o’ clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

II

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.
And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;
Sitting along the bed's edge, where
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers, and eyes
Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

4.12.5 “Preludes”: Critical Analysis

In the “Preludes” Eliot draws the readers into the core of a diseased modern life peopled by deformed sensibilities. It is possible for readers to discern a similarity of content with Matthew Arnolds’s “The Scholar Gypsy” and “Dover Beach”. But where the earlier poet presented the agonies of spiritual apathy as a nostalgic commentary, interspersed with philosophical speculation, Eliot’s determination to “escape” from personality, and achieve a “concentration” or distilled expression of experience rules out the possibility of the reader enjoying poetry as an act of leisure.

Preludes is a cluster of four poems, probably acquiring their common epithet from a group of piano pieces composed by the Polish composer Frederic Chopin (1810-49). They were written separately so that “Preludes” I and II were penned in Harvard in October 1910, and directly relate to Eliot’s nocturnal forays in the Boston slums. The third “Prelude” is the record of the poet’s exploration of those areas of Paris, which lie just beyond the respectable perimeters of the city. The fourth and the last “Prelude” was written either in 1911 after the third, or possibly in the following year in Harvard. The poem is a representation of the urban space. Eliot’s four “Preludes” represent the introductory stages of a spiritual and imaginative odyssey that was to span for the next five decades.

One of the basic features of modern poetry, such as was being written by Yeats, Eliot, Auden and other poets of the 1920’s and 1930’s is that they cannot be paraphrased as a continuous narrative, if one says that the four poems of the “Preludes” describe a winter evening scene in a city, a typical urban morning scene, a prostitute’s chamber and the frustration of a city dweller, respectively, the reader will remain completely ignorant about the real significance of the poem. The precise imagery, like “burnt out ends of smoky days” or “smell of steak in passageways” does not tell a story, nor does its speculations form a peculiar, individualistic point of view. Instead, it takes the reader into the felt emotion of staleness attending urban life in cities at the turn of the century. When Eliot talks of “burnt out ends...”, “all the hands.../ raising dingyshades...”, or “trampled by insistent feet...” he manages to fuse a number of acute observations into a single powerful feeling. We get the impression of mechanical actions performed with boredom but without any attempt at exploring the sense of mental fatigue. The similarity with the expression of the Imagist school of poetry is evident

in the staccato quality of the pictures and Eliot's reminiscence of Baudelaire's "Crepuscule du Soir" and "Crepuscule du Matin" are also obvious in the vignettes of the first two 'Preludes'.

Through these images the reader is made aware of the spiritual inertia in squalid, urban scenes. Further, the repetitive actions are undertaken by dismembered limbs, and they convey the impression that human beings are no longer capable of original feeling and thought; they are no longer individuals but simply automations that are extensions of the materialism all around them. In the second "Prelude" Eliot selects the word "masquerade", probably digging it out from the recesses of his scholarship on Elizabethan drama, and uses its implications to add on to the impression of spiritual impoverishment, already in place. In the elaborate Elizabethan pantomimes called "masquerades" the participants wore grotesque masks and this form of entertainment always emphasized the elements of "exaggeration" and "caricature". Eliot sees the daily activity of earning a livelihood and generally surviving in the modern times as pantomimic gestures – that is, they are acts of pretence like the exaggerated actions of the Elizabethan masques, being made mindlessly, without consciousness.

The third Prelude offers a contrast to the picture of unimaginative, mindless existence. The imagery of this section most likely owes to Eliot's passion for the novel, written by Charles Louis Phillippe, called *Bubu de Montparnasse* on which he found the same unflinching emotional honesty that graced the works of the nineteenth century Symbolist poets. Here the protagonist is, as in Phillippe's novel, a depraved street walker. She is engaged in the age-old profession that exploits the perennial human weakness for the flesh and it is in her chamber that contemporary materialistic pompousness is most compromised because it is most clearly exposed for what it really is, namely sordid avarice. The act of prostitution is apparently much more vulgar and gross than the drudgery of the unconscious masses, but Eliot as the perceiver observes in the prostitute's sound perspective that includes an open acknowledgement of the depravity of both her customers and her own self, a sharpened sensibility totally absent in the more respectable segments of society.

But the impression of liberation of sensibility is short-lived. In Prelude IV the reader returns once more to a sensation of being denied vitality as he experiences imagery that talks of the "soul stretched tight across the skies". The reference to the "ancient women" is interesting. A group of women, old and wise, are encountered in Greek tragedies of dramatists like Sophocles. They comment upon the experiences and attitudes of the protagonists, explaining to the audience the reasons for their suffering. That is to say, in Greek drama these women, collectively called the Chorus, represent the sensibility at its most alert and sharpest. Yet in Eliot's poem the women are seen performing the menial task of scavenging upon the

streets of Boston. The image is an embodiment of the poet's realisation that human sensibility is dangerously departed from responsiveness. There is a sense of threatened self-esteem that makes up the content of much of twentieth century literature and is termed by critics as the "crisis of identity".

The four poems called the "Preludes" see the disturbed consciousness traumatised by its spiritual deficiency and cynically realizing that for all its "civilised" accomplishments it is a poor human being than those, who are kept outside the mainstream of society. Such a mood of agony and frustration provides the stimulus for the quest for redemption to begin and this prepares the ground for the arrival of "Marina".

4.12.6 "Marina": Text

Marina

Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga?

What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands

What water lapping the bow

And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog

What images return

O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning Death

Those who glitter with the glory of the humming bird, meaning Death

Those who sit in the sty of contentment meaning Death

Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,

A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog

By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer

The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger –

Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than the eye

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet

Under sleep, where all the waters meet.
Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.
I made this, I have forgotten
And remember.
The rigging weak and the canvas rotten
Between one June and another September.
Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own
The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.
This form, this face, this life
Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.
What seas what shores what granite islands towards my timbers
And woodthrush calling through the fog
My daughter.

4.12.7 Critical Analysis

T.S. Eliot's consummate imaginative achievement called "Marina" marks one of the rarer occasions because it provides a direct reference to his personal view of mysticism by stating the time of his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism. In 1927 Eliot, who was often assailed by cynicism in the early phase (when, for example, the "Preludes" was composed), was baptized into Christianity at Finstock Church in Oxfordshire, and received his confirmation in that summer. "Marina", published in September 1930, contains these lines:

I made this, I have forgotten
And remember
The rigging weak and the canvas rotten
Between one June and another September.

Despite the obvious relation between the poem's composition and Eliot's conversion, it is not a religious poem in the strictest sense of the term. Rather the dawning of a deeper realisation arising from the need to believe instead of living a life like 'Hollow Men'.

A convert undergoes a duality of involvement. He must simultaneously discard delusion and embrace the strange experience of true perception. "Marina" attempts to arrest the fragile, ineffable moment of transition from one experience to the other and record a final release. Its title refers to Shakespeare's "Pericles", the story of the Greek king who miraculously rediscovers a daughter, lost in the sea in her infancy; at the same time the title quotes Hercules' words of terrible remorse taken from Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, uttered after he wakes up from a charmed sleep and realizes that he has killed his children under the curse of a spell. The references evoke emotions of ecstasy and agony arising from the core of special bonding between the father and the child. The metaphorical nature of the title is clear when we realize that spiritual struggle entailing loss and recovery, or discovery of loss is as integral an element to man's existence as the child's relation to a father. When the spirit fights for vision and yet is not always enlightened enough to resist delusion, the emotional experience is richly ambivalent. It sways between the ecstasy of Pericles and the agony of Hercules as each becomes aware of the discovery and loss, respectively of something so indispensable to their lives.

The poem appropriately opens with a series of interrogations, as the struggling, questing soul is likened to a floundering boat, trying to reach a half-seen destination. The questionings express the anguish of a spiritual struggle. In the second stanza the reader is drawn into the heart of delusion, and it is worthwhile to notice Eliot's manipulation of semantics as the word death is invested with an extraordinary signification. "Death" is not physical annihilation but it is spiritual degeneration, and Eliot achieves this signification by piling up imagery of gross sensuality and Biblical references and withdrawing all punctuation so that the stanza rolls on presenting a series of images or objective correlatives which precisely evoke sensual responses till the predicate comes in the form of "Are become unsubstantial...." The animal imagery of the wolf or dog may have come from Eliot's fondness for Jacobean drama, especially Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*, where the scavenging wolf is often the symbol of gruesome death. The emblems can also be identified with the seven Deadly Sins of traditional Christianity like anger, envy, ambition, pride, sloth, greed and lust. The cumulative effect of the symbolic imagery is to bring an awareness of what Coleridge regarded as "the-death-in-life" syndrome in "The Ancient Marine". Indeed, the conventional life-attributes like anger and lust are referred to as negative experiences. By associating the so-called life-attributes with annihilation Eliot succeeds in making clear the nature of a new doubt. The self, undergoing spiritual cleansing, is expectant but vulnerable, as if after death he is about to encounter an unfamiliar existence.

With the understanding of insignificant existence firmly in place, the reader's mind is able

to respond to the redemptive emotion evoked by the liberating, refreshing images of a song-filled, salt-laden air of the opening lines. The soul, like the boat is ravaged, the one by spiritual struggle, the other by harsh weather. Eliot adds objective correlatives taken from Christian prayer such as “grace”, redemptive symbols like “stars”, and literary images of religious deliverance like the phrase from Alice Meynell’s poem ‘They’, reading “Given or lent”. These beautifully suggest the state of imminent redemption. As the call of redemption intensifies and becomes irresistible, the felt experience permits the highly involved metaphor of the boat to recede and a direct acknowledgement of faith, advancing the position of the protagonist as cynic, (cf. “Preludes”), to that of a believer, take its place. The reference is to the following lines:

This form, this face, this life
Living to live in a world of time beyond me, let me
Resign my life, my speech for that unspoken...”.

This is followed by the image of the Christian supplicant and the expression of rich mystic feelings becomes complete.

The poem ends with a near repetition of the first stanza. But there are significant changes on the level of language which you will immediately notice. If you keep in mind the metaphor of the boat, you will observe that the granite shore is now no longer at a distance but it is relentlessly coming closer. This signifies a readiness of the soul to surrender its flawed existence, even if it implies an entry into a strange spiritual condition, more demanding than the one left behind. The change in the nature of the fog is also noteworthy – from “wood song fog” we now have the wood thrush “calling” and there is no more fog. That is to suggest that the perceiver has increasingly achieved clarity of vision or belief, as he prepares to surrender his old life. The mention of “daughter” without the encumbrance of words suggesting the vulnerability of the early stages of the spiritual odyssey, denotes that like Pericles finally convinced of Marina’s miraculous recovery, the protagonist has also regained his lost faith in the act of living.

4.12.8 Glossary

- Milieu—background.
- Unitarianism—A Christian sect that grew out of Calvinist Puritanism but rebelled against the more dogmatic parent philosophy in believing in the rational man as opposed to the dogmas of Original Sin and predestination. Eliot was unhappy with

their tendency to combine theological liberalisation with social conservatism, and believed they were hardened rationalist time-servers.

- Decadence—from “decay”, state of decline.
- Irving Babbitt—Eliot took his course on Literary Criticism in France, in Harvard in 1909-10.
- George Santayana—Eliot attended his course on the history of Modern Philosophy in 1907-08, at Harvard.
- Aggravate—intensify.
- Darwinism—from “Darwin”. Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), a famous Naturalist, who systematically explored the theory of Natural Selection, as applied to plants and animals in *The Origin of Species* (1859). A theory such as this would assume sinister proportion in an age enslaved by the stranglehold of religion.
- F.H. Bradley—Exponent of philosophical thought called Neo-Idealism, (1846-1924). Eliot wrote his Ph.D dissertation on this philosophy, which was published as *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*. Eliot retained a life-long admiration for Bradley’s prose, which admitted contradictory points of view to arrive at a new richer signification.
- Noumenal—that which identifies, from the intuitive mind.
- Dante Aligheri—13th century Florentine poet, the writer of *La Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*) and *Divina Comedia* (*The Divine Comedy*). T.S. Eliot admired Dante’s artistic self-control, which resulted in precise rendition of complex spiritual struggles.
- Pastoral – of shepherds, of rural life. The Latin poet Virgil is credited for setting up the tradition of pastoral poetry, which, generally speaking, evokes sentimental images of rural peace and simplicity from an urban point of view.
- Empirical – based and acting on observation, not on theory.
- Humanistic – from “Humanism.” Sixteenth century meaning of Humanist – one who taught humanities as grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. In the 19th century “humanism” referred to the general values, educational ideas which were common to many humanists and later writers of the same tradition. Renaissance humanism assumed the dignity and central position of man in the Universe.
- Imagist – from “Imagism”. It was a poetic movement, which flourished in England and America from 1912-17. Based on the philosophy of T.E. Hulme, it was spread by writers like Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, D.H. Lawrence, William Carlos Williams, John Gould Fletcher and Richard Aldington.

- **Matthew Arnold** – Late Victorian poet (1822 - 1888), famous also as an educationist and a lecturer. He recognised the threat to man’s spiritual identity consequent upon the upsurge of dry rationality and materialism. He anticipates the concern for reviving spiritual integrity of the Modern poets. But he was more a man of thought than experience and wrote speculative poems which did not quite capture the disturbance of the times.
- **Persona**– Persona in recent criticism, reflects the tendency to think of narrative and lyric works of literature as a mode of speech. To conceive a work as an utterance is to assume that there is a speaker who expresses attitudes both towards the characters and materials within the work and towards the audience to whom the work is addressed. In recent criticism, then, the word is often applied to the first-person speaker whose voice we hear in a lyric poem. The term can be applied, for example, to the voice presenting the experience in “Marina” (and even “Preludes,” particularly in the last section). Sometimes it is possible to attribute the voice we hear to the poet in his own person (Yeats in “Among School Children” Eliot in “Marina”).
- **Image/Imagery** – This term is most common in criticism and sometimes it varies in meaning. Its applications range all the way from the ‘mental pictures’ often experienced by the reader of a poem to the totality of the components which make up a poem. Imagery is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature, through literal descriptions allusion or figures of speech (similes, metaphors). In recent criticism, imagery signifies figurative language, particularly components of metaphors and similes.

4.12.9 Summing Up

This unit has focussed on two of the significant poems of T.S. Eliot and discussed the important aspects of both. On the one hand, “Preludes” discusses the use of urban space and imagery while, on the other hand, “Marina” is suffused with religious fervour and provides a different dimension.

4.12.10 Comprehension Questions

Broad Answer-type Question

1. Images are carefully employed in “Preludes” to achieve precise effects. Elaborate.
2. Analyse the theme of the “Preludes”?

3. In a good poem the title often initiates you into the text. What does the title of “Preludes” signify?
4. Explain the significance of the title of “Marina.”
5. “Preludes” and “Marina” illustrate Eliot’s consummate use of what he called the ‘objective correlative’. Explain.

Medium Answer-type Questions

1. Can you pick out words and phrases used in “Preludes” which suggest (a) squalor, (b) dinginess, (c) monotony (d) stagnation? Comment on how they create a proper environment in the poem,
2. What picture of the urban space do you get in “Preludes”?
3. Would you consider “Marina” as a transitional poem? Explain.
4. Comment on how Eliot looks upon ‘Death’ in “Marina.”

Short Answer-type Questions

1. Explain the lines:
“The worlds revolve like ancient women/
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.”
2. What role does the figure of the daughter play in “Marina”?
3. What is the effect of bird images in “Marina”?
4. What images of sea do you find in “Marina”?

4.12.11 Suggested Reading

Ackroyd, Peter, *T. S. Eliot*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984.

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Stewart, J.M. *Eight Modern Writers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.

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Unit 13 □ W.H. Auden: “On This Island;” Philip Larkin: “Church Going”

Structure

- 4.13.1 Objectives**
- 4.13.2 Introduction: Auden**
- 4.13.3 Text: W.H. Auden’s “On This Island”**
- 4.13.4 Central Idea**
- 4.13.5 Critical Analysis**
- 4.13.6 Word Notes**
- 4.13.7 Introduction: Philip Larkin’s “Church Going”**
- 4.13.8 Text: “Church Going”**
- 4.13.9 Central Idea**
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- 4.13.11 Word Notes**
- 4.13.12 Summing Up**
- 4.13.13 Comprehension Questions**
- 4.13.14 Suggested Reading**

4.13.1 Objectives

In this unit we are going to study two twentieth-century lyrics. A lyric is usually regarded as an expression of a private mood, feeling or state of mind. The word “lyric” comes etymologically from the Greek musical instrument “Lyra” (lyre or harp) and signifies something meant to be sung to the lyre. Since music is associated with emotion, inevitably lyric poetry is emotional poetry. It is also subjective. In this unit you will notice that the poets, unlike, say, the Elizabethan lyric poets, have combined private feelings with the momentous public themes and events of the twentieth century like anxieties about World Wars (“On this Island”) and decline of organised religion, (“Church Going”). You should also note in both the poems, experiments in poetic forms and craftsmanship, the use of free verse, the rhythm of colloquial speech even in traditional stanza forms, the expressive sensuous sound symbolism in language

(alliteration, consonant clusters, pun, rhyme, etc.), subtle shifts and variations in tone, and evocative but complex imagery. These will help you to identify some of the most important traits that characterise twentieth century lyric poetry.

4.13.2 Introduction: Auden

W.H. Auden was born in 1907 at York in England, was educated at Oxford, where he came under the influence of the revolutionary ideas of Freud and Marx. He left England for the USA in 1939 and became a US citizen in 1946. In 1958 he bought a farmhouse in Austria and spent a few months there each year. He died there in 1973. His poetry since the forties became increasingly Christian in tone.

During the 1930's Auden, along with Stephen Spender, C.Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice, was determined to engage with the contemporary economic and political landscape. Topicality and social concern, and taking a political stand, usually left-wing, were more central to their works than to the works of poets coming before or after them. A blending of the individual perception and social awareness, of the private and the public, is a distinctive feature of the poets of the thirties. A careful reading of Auden's "On this island" clearly bears this out.

4.13.3 W.H. Auden's "On This Island": Text

On This Island

Look, stranger, on this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges

Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf,
And a gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands,
And the full-view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

4.13.4 Central Idea

The poet looks at a scene which is the meeting place of land and sea and suggests that though looking beautiful it is actually full of foreboding. It is apparently a poem of nature but, in fact, of man. The convergence of land and sea suggests harmony, but it is only illusory and is really full of the threat of imminent disharmony.

4.13.5 A Critical Analysis

The physical setting of the poem is a cliff, a meeting-place of the land and the sea – a frontier or border territory (the line between the known and the feared, the past and the future, is a recurrent image in Auden’s poems). The time is early morning. The speaker exhorts a stranger to look at England from the cliffs of Dover. The “leaping light” uncovers the island for the stranger. If he stands here quietly, he can listen to the moving sound of the sea. The waves break the chalk wall of the cliffs. The tall ridges resist the tide. The shingle is swept away by the withdrawing waves. A gull lodges “a moment” but does not make a home on the “sheer side”. Far off the ships sail on with some urgent voluntary purposes. But all these previously unperceived, beautiful sounds and sights may pass away soon and be mere objects of memory of a joyful past.

The poem was written in 1935 and published as the title poem of *Look Stranger!* (1936). But Auden preferred the title of the American edition, “On this Island” (1937). The first sixteen lines of the poem build up a picture in which potentially discordant elements are apparently reconciled. Here silence and sound, land and water, humanity and nature become interdependent. The sound of the sea suggests some vast violent force, but “the ear” can humanise it. It gets converted into the gentle murmur of a river as it passes “through the channels of the ear”. (In Auden’s poetry rivers are linked to valleys, good society, lit houses, friendship and hospitality, says John Lucas). The gull is also in harmony with the cliff, however short-lived it may be. The man-made and the natural are blended in the image of the ships as floating seeds. The last line also merges summer and autumn (suggested by the “floating seeds”). However, there are also hints that this harmonious picture is to be enjoyed only for the time being. The disharmony is first indicated in stanza 2 through such words as “oppose”, “scrambles”, “pluck”, and “knock”. The last stanza is now regarded as prophetic. The poet says that the ‘full view’ – formed after taking all things in consideration – may have to exist in memory only. For the poet cannot ignore the great economic depression and the ominous international situation during the 1930s. The decade began with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, killed his rival colleagues and withdrew from the League of Nations; Japan also did so and attacked China proper. The Spanish Civil War began in 1936. This series of international calamities culminated in Hitler’s attack of Poland and the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Auden was not unaware of the deep current of tension below the apparently peaceful surface which he perceived to be purely temporary. This is suggested by the repetition of the adverb “now” twice (lines 1 and 19). Moreover, the “urgent voluntary errands” has a suggestion of threat, for “urgent and “voluntary” seem to be contradictory and the line implies that soon the ships will be used to perform compulsory, coercive errands; they may be life-giving like seeds now, but soon will be more like bullets. Besides, an awareness of the international situation will make one regard the clouds as an image of the dark ominous future war and unrest.

Thus the mood of the poem, like that of most of Auden’s early poetry, has its origin in public history inseparable from a personal state of mind. You may read Matthew Arnold’s well-known poem “Dover Beach” and compare and contrast it with “On this Island.” Arnold’s poem also suggests a harsh note of violent clash and confusion within an apparently calm, fair,

sweet, tranquil picture of sea and land. However, Arnold is saddened by the present, and Auden is full of foreboding of the future.

4.13.6. Word Notes

Line 1: “Look, stranger”: who is this “stranger”?

Is Auden addressing a foreigner? Perhaps not. For a foreigner may not care much for the inward-looking, musing beauty of the vision. Auden may address another Englishman or the reader to look on and perceive the land and the sea in a new light. But more probably, “the address is a self-address”, the stranger being Auden himself. He may not have previously looked at contemporary Britain in the way that he “now” does. Besides, he often feels himself alienated from England, particularly from its natural beauty as displayed in an autumnal seascape, as he is often preoccupied with the industrial landscapes of a city like Birmingham where he grew up, with its tramlines and slag heaps and pieces of machinery.

Line 2: The “leaping light”—the sunlight on the dancing waves suggests the image of the spotlights of a theatre, and “discovering”, the rising of the curtain, almost as much as it suggests dawn.

Line 8-13: “ledges”: ridges of rock;

“shingle”: small rounded pebbles lying on sea-shore ;

“Scrambles”: moves hastily over rough ground

The language of these lines, according to John Lucas, is that of war, suggesting heroic resistance (“oppose”), and defection (“scrambles”). Allan Rodway, on the contrary, perceives the sense of a match, a game rather than a battle, and emphasises the harmony of the picture. The students should also note the sound-effects of “pluck”, “knock” and “sucking” and the use of insistent alliteration in lines 2,3,7,12,14,15,19, and 21.

4.13.7 Introduction: Philip Larkin’s “Church Going”

The Movement Poetry of the 1950s was marked by a reaction to the intellectualism and social consciousness of the previous three decades. Philip Larkin (1922-1985) is often regarded as one of the Movement poets who prefer traditional stansaic and prosodic forms, native common sense and an empirical approach, dislike the use of myths in the exploration of contemporary history, and allusiveness—what Larkin mockingly calls “a common myth-

kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets.” However, Larkin himself denies that his poetry has anything to do with the group image of the Movement and suggests that it is merely a media hype. “Church Going”, a central poem in Larkin’s work, for instance, does not fit in the theoretical mould of the movement for it has a grand theme, treated, in the last analysis, in a serious enough manner.

Larkin published only four major volumes of poetry with major time gaps in between: *The North Ship* (1945), *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). Yet he is regarded as one of the most important poets of the second half of the twentieth century. Donald Davie thought in 1973 that “there has been the widest possible agreement over most of this period, that Philip Larkin is for good or ill the effective unofficial poet laureate of post-1945 England”.

“Church Going” was written in 1954 when Larkin was in Northern Ireland. It was published in *The Less Deceived*. The title is ambiguous. It may mean “going into churches”, indicating a particular visit, or “the church is going”, that is, religion is dying; or, going to church, as people used to go as they will. Despite the neglect now, faith is inherently in us, and cannot die.

4.13.8. Philip Larkin’s “Church Going”: Text

Church Going

Once I am sure there’s nothing going on
I step inside, letting the door thud shut.
Another church: matting, seats, and stone,
And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut
For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff
Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;
And a tense, musty, unignorable silence,
Brewed God knows how long. Hatless, I take off
My cycle-clips in awkward reverence,

Move forward, run my hand around the font.
From where I stand, the roof looks almost new –
Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don't.
Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few
Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce
“Here endeth” much more loudly than I'd meant.
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,
Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

Yet stop I did: in fact I often do.
And always end much at a loss like this,
Wondering what to look for; wondering, too,
When churches fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show,
Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases,
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?

Or, after dark, will dubious women come
To *make* their children touch a particular stone;
Pick simples for a cancer; or on some
Advised night see walking a dead one?
Power of some sort or other will go on
In games, in riddles, seemingly at random;
But superstition, like belief, must die,
And what remains when disbelief has gone?
Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky,

A shape less recognisable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who
Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was; one of the crew
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?
Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?
Or will he be my representative,
Bored, uniformed, knowing the ghostly silt
Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground
Through suburb scrub because it held unspilt
So long and equably what since is found
Only in separation—marriage, and birth,
And death, and thoughts of these—for whom was built
This special shell? For, though I've no idea
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth,
It pleases me to stand in silence here;

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.

4.13.9 Central Idea

The poem is a meditation on the role of the church in a predominantly secular age. The poet assumes that in the second half of the twentieth century Christianity is dying. However, life will be the poorer for it. For the church has so long held the most important issues of life like birth, marriage and death in close and serious association. But now these are found only in separation, the unity has been wrecked. And yet, the poet feels that even if the church falls into a ruin, the place will attract people, for people have a hunger for “seriousness” which they think the church can satisfy, although on a conscious level they may feel embarrassed for doing so.

4.13.10 Critical Analysis

Stanza I:

Out for a bicycle ride, the poet stops at a church on a weekday and goes in to have a look. He makes a brief survey of its contents, deliberately trying to be irreverent: matting, seats, stone, little books, withered flowers from the Sunday service, some brass and staff and a small organ. He pretends to be detached, sceptical, colloquial, even a little mocking. Yet he cannot but feel an “awkward reverence”. He takes off his hat and cycle-clips, perhaps as a mark of respect to the place. He does not fully understand his emotions and feels slightly uncomfortable.

Stanza II:

Then he moves forward to the font, looks at the roof, wonders whether it is cleared or restored. He goes up to the lectern and reads a few lines from the Bible, parodying the manner of the vicar or lay reader (lines 5-16). His words echo in the empty church. The words (that is, his voice) do not snigger. Only the echo mocks the meaninglessness of his action. There is no relevance of these in today’s context. Then he comes back to the entrance, signs the visitor’s book and donates “an Irish six pence”. He thinks that the place is not important enough to make a stop.

Stanza III:

However, the fact is that he stopped there, went in and indeed, he often does so. He wonders why at all he stops to visit church and also speculates what will happen to such

places “when churches fall completely out of use”. Will some churches be kept as museums, and their contents like “parchment, plate and pyx” be kept in locked cases for exhibition? Will the rest perhaps be allowed to deteriorate? Will deserted churches be regarded as “unlucky places”?

Stanza IV:

He guesses churches then may be the breeding-grounds of superstitions. Some “dubious women” (of suspected, questionable character or doubting, hesitating) will come here to “make their children touch a particular stone” or pick medicinal herbs as a cure for cancer. Advised to visit the church on a particular night like the Halloween, the superstitious persons will see a ghost walking there. The belief in the existence of a supernatural power will be perhaps of service in a disguised way in games, riddles and other ways. But when superstitions, like religions, also disappear, nothing but “grass, weedy pavement, brambles, sky” will remain.

Stanza V:

Continuing his reflection, the poet says that after the disappearance of superstition, people will not be able to recognise either the place or its purpose. He guesses that the last person who will visit and recognise the church as church will be perhaps antiquarian “ruin-bibber, randy for antique” or some “Christmas-addict”. These types of people will be interested in the incidental, superficial objects to be collected as merely curious things, they will completely miss the true significance of the church. Or such a visitor may be like him.

Stanza VI:

In this stanza he elaborates on the last line of the previous stanza and describes himself and others who, like him, may come. He is “Bored, uniformed, knowing the ghostly silt /Dispersed” and yet incapable of resisting the attraction of the significance of the place. He thinks that because of the function of the church, marriage, birth and death in the past (in an Age of Belief) attained a unity and transcendental significance in human life. But with the decline of religious faith, these events are seen in isolation and without any sacred meaning.

For instance, marriage now no longer holds any sanctity. Now birth of a child is not always accepted as a blessing, may be something unwanted, preferably to be prevented or controlled. Shorn of religious meaning, death may now be only an object of fear and disquiet,

as passing into a void, into nothingness. The church, on the contrary, had conferred a divine purpose and unity to all these events.

However, the poet is still unsure of the validity of his thoughts. He calls himself, “bored” that is, not enthusiastic about such positive ideas and “uniformed,” that is, not knowing enough about churches and their significance. He is pleased to stand here in silence, though he has no clear “idea/what this accoutred frowsty barn is worth”. His rational mind deliberately uses these irreverent words – ‘frowsty barn’.

Stanza VII:

This stanza has been called a “peroration”, a formal conclusion. It contains no more doubtful question or uncertainties or deliberate understatement and downplaying of his true emotions, but declarations in serious tone and dignified language. Here he attempts to offer an explanation for his initial “awkward reverence”. He declares that the church is a “serious house on serious earth”. Although man may cease to practise the rituals of an organised religion, there will forever be “A hunger inhimself to be more serious”. So lack of seriousness about many of our compulsions like marriage, birth and death— “compulsions” because these are biologically inescapable—will leave in man a spiritual and psychological dissatisfaction. But in a place of worship these compulsions are “blent”, fused to form a harmonious whole, are presented as “destinies”. The word “destinies” connotes that men must accept these events with humility and positive meaning. The poet emphatically states: “And that much can never be obsolete”

And, therefore, men will for ever be “gravitating” to churches. “Gravitating” in this context is sufficiently weighty, serious and apt expression, for the verb “gravitate” means “be strongly attracted to some centre of influence” (OED, 3). Once man considered the church a “ground ... proper to grow wise in” by seeing, at any rate, “so many dead lying around” in the adjacent graveyard; it was what may be called a “memento mori”, a reminder of death. Even in the present godless age, or perhaps because of the prevalence of the forces of death as were displayed in the World Wars, the “hunger to be more serious” has not become dated; rather it has increased. That is why even in a secular, welfare state, men like the poet visit places of worship in search of a positive meaning and wisdom.

4.13.11 Word Notes

Stanza II:

font: a receptacle, usually of stone, for the holy water used in baptism.

lectern: reading-desk or singing-desk in church.

hectoring: blustering, imitating a grand, serious, heroic style.

snigger: utter half-suppressed mocking laughter.

Irish sixpence: the poem was written after an actual visit to a church in Northern Ireland.

Stanza III:

Chronically: through the ages.

pyx: the vessel in which the consecrated bread of the Eucharist is kept.

Stanza IV:

Simples: medicinal plants.

Stanza V:

Roodlofts: a gallery at the top of a roodscreen, the ornamental partition separating choir from nave or body of church.

Ruin-bibbers: one who is very interested in the study of ruins; 'bibber' actually means one who drinks much and often. Antiquarian.

randy: having a rude, aggressive manner; coarse-spoken, lustful.

Christmas-addict: perhaps formed on the analogy of drug-addict and implies being excessively romantic or sentimental about Christmas and things associated with it.

Stanza VI:

ghostly silt: 'silt' is fine sediment; it is used here to describe a deposit of belief in a supernatural religion.

scrub: undergrowth or thicket; brushwood; ground covered with it.

accoutred: dressed; equipped with all the paraphernalia of a church,

frowsty: stuffy; with musty warmth.

barn: large outhouse

4.13.12 Summing Up

This unit has focussed on two important modern poems written by two significant poets of the twentieth century. The poems are examples of assimilation of private emotions of the poets and crisis of the contemporary times of the poets. An in-depth study of the poems facilitates understanding of the salient features of twentieth century lyric poetry.

4.13.13 Comprehension Questions

Essay-type Questions

1. How does Auden make something like a nature poem informed with historical concerns in 'On this Island'?
2. Analyse the images employed in 'On this Island'.
3. "Church Going" is an important statement of the mid-twentieth century consciousness. Discuss.
4. "Church Going" reveals an agnostic's attitude to religion and its symbols. Do you agree with such an assessment of the poem? Justify your answer.

Medium-answer Type Questions

1. How does Larkin describe the contents of the Church?
2. Is the title "Church Going" ambiguous?
3. Describe the physical setting in Auden's the poem.
4. Briefly analyse how Auden combines opposite ideas in his poem.

Short answer type Questions

1. Whom does Auden address as "stranger"?
2. Bring out the significance of the repetition of the word "now" in lines 1 and 19 in Auden's poem.
3. What does the stranger see "at the small field's ending" in Auden's poem?
4. What will happen if the stranger stands "stable" and become "silent"?
5. When will "superstition" die? What kind of visitors will come to the church?
6. What does Larkin refer to by "all our compulsions"?

Unit 14 □ Rupert Brooke: “The Soldier”; Wilfred Owen: “Strange Meeting”

Structure

- 4.14.1 Objectives**
- 4.14.2 Introduction: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and War Poetry**
- 4.14.3 Rupert Brooke and the Sonnet**
- 4.14.4 “The Soldier”: Text**
- 4.14.5 “The Soldier”: Glossary and Annotations**
- 4.14.6 “The Soldier”: Critical Understanding**
- 4.14.7 “The Soldier”: Title and Theme**
- 4.14.8 “The Soldier”: Structure and Style**
- 4.14.9 “Strange Meeting”**
- 4.14.10 “Strange Meeting”: Glossary and Annotations**
- 4.14.11 Strange Meeting: Critical Understanding**
- 4.14.12 “Strange Meeting”: Title and Theme**
- 4.14.13 “Strange Meeting”: Structure and Style**
- 4.14.14 Summing Up**
- 4.14.15 Comprehension Exercises**
- 4.14.16 Suggested Reading**

4.14.1 Objectives

This unit seeks to introduce students to the genre of war poetry, by taking up two poets who showed diametrically opposed views about the First World War, to which they were integrally related. This Unit will

- introduce you to Rupert Brooke, a poet writing during the First World War, and one of the earliest twentieth-century writers to earn a name for himself, as a war poet (a description that could apply to anyone writing in verse about war, but which is, even now, associated greatly with those writing during World War I and II);
- consider how he used the sonnet, a verse form with a rich literary history, to write about war;

- examine in detail what is perhaps his most famous war poem, the sonnet “The Soldier”;
- introduce you to Wilfred Owen, one of the most famous, and perhaps the finest, of poets writing during the First World War;
- survey in brief his war poetry which in terms of theme, treatment and style constitutes a corpus of some of the most important creative responses to the destructive horrors of war;
- examine in detail “Strange Meeting”, considered to be one of his most representative and complex poems.

4.14.2 Introduction: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen and War Poetry

Rupert Chawner Brooke (1887-1915) was an Englishman who has been described as a “Georgian” poet, writing as he did in an era ruled by George V. He was one of the literary figures to feature in the five-volume verse anthology *Georgian Poetry* (1912-1922). He also had associations with the Bloomsbury group of intellectuals that included Virginia Woolf. Brooke was in his time something of a literary. It is possible that his pre-war poetry, with its dreamy romanticism, would not by itself have ensured Brooke’s place in later anthologies.

But then came the First World War, and like many of his age and class, Brooke volunteered to enlist. He joined the Royal Navy in 1914, but did not get to see much action: in April 1915, two days before the Gallipoli campaign, he died at the age of 28, of sepsis from an infected mosquito bite. His posthumous elevation to the level of national hero was largely on account of the series of five war sonnets written and published as *1914*, which reflect the innocence and idealism with which many Englishmen joined the First World War. These attributes, combined with the patriotic willingness to sacrifice the self for the country, characterised Rupert Brooke as a war poet, and constituted one of the two polarities between which World War I poetry ranged. At the other polarity would be those writers who, often as a direct result of having actually been in battle, saw the horrors of war and the inadequacy of conventional views glorifying war. These writers are perhaps best represented by Wilfred Owen, who will be studied later in this unit.

Like Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Edward Salter Owen (1893-1918) is a much anthologised English war poet who fought for his country and died young. But the differences between the two are perhaps more significant than their points of similarity.

Unlike Brooke, who was a published poet even before enlisting, Owen had only a few poems published in his lifetime. He wrote little of importance till he joined the war in 1915. Whereas Brooke did not actually see much action, Owen was a soldier for more than three years, was decorated for bravery, and eventually died in action a week before World War I ended. He is now almost exclusively remembered for the poems that were largely shaped by his experience of the horrors of war. These affected him as both a person and a poet, turning him from a shy, sensitive introvert into a battle-scarred warrior who could respond as the situation demanded, yet was deeply disturbed by what war did to people in mind and body. His poetic technique also changed, turning his verse from something faintly romantic and sensuous to a vehicle that stylistically and powerfully echoed the discord of a world at war all around him.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of Owen's war poetry is his preoccupation with what he calls "the pity of war". This phrase occurs in the poem you are about to study in detail, but is also found in the lines of a preface that he had drafted for a volume of poems he planned to publish: "My subject is war, and the pity of war."

The word "pity" here conveys a sensitivity to the agony and anguish of those who fought in war, but goes beyond, seeing all the suffering and destruction as a tragic waste of humanity. Such an attitude was in sharp contrast to the idealistic glorification of war that characterised much of war poetry, at least during the initial stages of World War I. (An example of such a view might, for example, emerge from your reading of Brooke's "The Soldier". And an example of what might be seen as Owen's rejoinder to simplistic praises of the glories of war would be his poem "Dulce et Decorum Est".)

4.14.3 Rupert Brooke and the Sonnet

Brooke's *1914* (which contains "The Soldier," the poem you are about to study in detail) is a series of five sonnets. Accordingly, this section will at first take a brief look at the sonnet form. With its 14 lines, sectional divisions and limited rhymes, the sonnet as a verse form is quite easy to identify. It has also been a poetic vehicle with which many English poets have experimented, from the sixteenth century onwards. Elsewhere in your study material you have also studied the characteristic features of the sonnet, and will remember that the most common variants are the Italian (or Petrarchan) form, with its octave-sestet division and five rhymes, and the English (or Shakespearean) kind, with three quatrains and a concluding couplet, and seven rhymes.

What makes a study of Rupert Brooke's war sonnets interesting is that he occasionally experiments with the verse structure. A poem might, for example, simultaneously display

characteristics of both the Italian and the English sonnet forms. At the same time, his choice of war as a subject is also a kind of extension of the scope of the sonnet, though we have seen different ways in which other English poets from Shakespeare onwards have done the same.

In this connection, you might look up another sonnet by Rupert Brooke, though this does not concern war. It is titled *Sonnet Reversed*. Does the title suggest anything to you about what the poem could be like? You can find the poem online here:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43715>

4.14.4 “The Soldier”: Text

And now let us take a close look at the poem “The Soldier.” The text has been taken from *The Poetry of the First World War: ‘Never Such Innocence’* edited by Martin Stephen, London, Everyman, 1993, page 54.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England’s, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends, and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

4.14.5 “The Soldier”: Glossary and Annotations

Corner of a foreign field: The soldier-speaker imagines that he might die in a foreign country, and refers to his grave in the land where he might lie buried. Incidentally, Brooke died in April 1915, and was buried in Skyros, a Greek island, and hence literally a “foreign field”.

England: a space occupied by an Englishman's mortal remains, and in that sense English space. (This is an example of the figure of speech known as **synecdoche**.)

In that rich earth a richer dust concealed: When the buried soldier's body has decomposed, and turned to soil, it mixes with the dust of the foreign country. Being a loyal Englishman, the speaker believes the dust that his body has turned into, has enriched the dust of the foreign country. (The phrase "**richer dust**" may be considered an example of **euphemism** as well as **hyperbole**, both figures of speech.)

bore: past tense of "bear", in the sense of "give birth to"

body: the focus in this section is on the physical person, just as the next section deals with his spirit

blest: a variant of "blessed", here meaning "given special favour"

shed away: cast off or discarded

a pulse... Gives somewhere back: when the dead soldier's body has disintegrated, his innermost essence returns to the Divine Being and exists as a "pulse" or beat that retains its Englishness, having brought along all the pleasant experiences of an English life.

dreams happy as her day: England is seen as an ideal place; where days are pleasant, as are its people's thoughts and dreams. (The phrase contains an example of a **simile**.)

4.14.6 "The Soldier": Critical Understanding

The poem seems to be an utterance of a soldier who imagines meeting his death in battle, away from home. He does not, however, express sadness or fear at the possibility that he might die. He rather considers it worthwhile, since he will be sacrificing his life for the sake of his country. What gives this poem its distinctive quality is the speaker's insistence that his national identity will be preserved even after he is dead. This is the idea that is developed in the first section of the poem. Thus, the grave in which the soldier's corpse lies buried, eventually to turn into dust, will be a space that represents England, containing as it does English remains, even if it is in a foreign land. As if to emphasise this Englishness, the speaker conjures up an image of the soldier before his death: a physical presence growing up in English conditions which seem both elemental and idyllic. Air, water and the fiery sunlight all nurture and develop the Englishman; with the elements so mixed in him that (rather as Shakespeare's Mark Anthony in the play *Julius Caesar* said about Brutus) Nature might point to the soldier as a perfect specimen of an ideal man. Or to put it perhaps more accurately, a perfect specimen of an ideal Englishman.

The second part of the poem carries the idea a step further. Whereas earlier the focus had been on the Englishman's corporeal or physical identity, the later section deals with his inner essence, or what is at the "heart" or spiritual core of a person. This innermost essence, according to the speaker's belief, will be united after death, with what he calls "the eternal mind", and others might refer to as God, or a supreme and immortal Divine Being. The idea here seems to be that, after death, an individual's spirit merges with that of the Divine Being. However, even in such a situation, the speaker's Englishness will be asserted. Death is seen as a process whereby all negative qualities are "shed away" or overcome, and what remains is only the good and imperishable. To the speaker, this implies all the factors that have nurtured his English existence, so that what his spirit "gives... back" or surrenders to the Divine Being are memories of experiences under "an English heaven".

4.14.7 "The Soldier": Title and Theme

Most anthologies reprint this poem simply as "The Soldier." However, according to The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, this poem initially was titled "The Recruit," and was published in a January 1915 edition of the periodical *New Numbers*. It was the fifth in a series of war sonnets published under the general title *1914*, which of course is the year in which World War I broke out. Accordingly, the poem may be also referred to as "1914: The Soldier." This version of the title indicates that it was composed during the first year of the World War I, and might in fact be a useful pointer that the soldier-speaker of the sonnet is more likely to be a fresh recruit than a war-weary veteran. It might also account for the youthful idealism of the lines. Such idealism (and its supporters) would, as the war dragged on, come in for increasing criticism.

The theme, as stated by the soldier-speaker, seems to be that for a loyal Englishman (or warrior), even death is an opportunity to assert his patriotism, since wherever he dies, the area occupied by his dead body will effectively be English space. The repeated mention of Englishness, the references to burial and death in a foreign land, all serve to locate the speaker in a specific time and space, but overall the sentiment may be seen as a recasting of what was once considered an acceptable sentiment concerning death in battle: it is worthwhile to die for one's country. (Or, in the words of the Roman poet Horace, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" You might want to find out what exactly these words mean in English, and which English poet has used the first four words of the quote as a title for one of his poems.)

4.14.8 “The Soldier”: Structure and Style

This poem is structured as a sonnet and, as has been mentioned, was part of a sequence of sonnets concerning war, published in 1914. The theme of the poem is that the soldier-speaker’s English identity and character will be preserved even after death. Notice how the two-part division of the Italian sonnet form is used by Brooke to focus separately on the external body (in the octave) and the internal being (in the sestet). Interestingly, however, the rhyme scheme of the octave is not typical of the Italian variant, but is more suggestive of its English/Shakespearean counterpart.

A tendency to experiment with divergent impulses may be noted in the language of the poem as well. For a poem that belongs to the early twentieth century, a word such as “blest” recreates an archaic, idyllic, almost Biblical effect, which might appear out of place in a poem about war. And Brooke’s choice of *given-heaven* rhymes might seem less than perfect in terms of matching vowel sound, and closer to the para-rhymes of Owen, as you will see when you study the latter’s versification in the next section/unit. However, the degree to which Brooke experiments is inconsiderable when compared to the techniques used by Owen.

Activities

1. Refer to what has been said about the sonnet form, here and elsewhere in your reading material, to determine the answers to the following questions:
 - a) How many rhymes does the octave contain?
 - b) What is the rhyme scheme of the octave?
 - c) Is this usual for a sonnet using an octave-sestet division?
 - d) How many rhymes are there in this sonnet?
2. Given below are a few points concerning what this section has covered. Included is *one observation that is NOT true*. Identify the incorrect one.
 - a) Rupert Brooke’s war poetry, in general as well as in this poem, reflects an innocence and idealism
 - b) “The Soldier” is from a collection of three sonnets published under the general title *1914*.
 - c) Despite its title, the poem makes no actual mention of war
 - d) “The Soldier” is about a protagonist for whom even death is an opportunity to assert his patriotism.
 - e) The poem is a sonnet with an octave-sestet division.

Key to Activity No.1.

1. Four
2. ababcdcd
3. No; the usual rhyme scheme for the octave would be abbaabba
4. Seven

Answer to Activity No. 2.

- b) "The Soldier" is from a collection of three sonnets published under the general title *1914*". The poem is one of a sequence of five sonnets, not three.

4.14.9 "Strange Meeting": Text

Let us now take a close look at the poem "Strange Meeting," which was composed probably in the last year of Owen's life, and published after his death. The text of the poem is taken from *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Third Edition* (1983) page 1035. The words/phrases in bold are explained in the section that follows the text provided.

Strange Meeting

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
 Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
 Through granites which titanic wars had groined.

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
 Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
 Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
 With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
 Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
 And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, —
 By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

With a thousand fears that vision's face was grained;
 Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
 And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
 "Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."
 "None," said that other, "save the undone years,

The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery;
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

“I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . .”

4.14.10 “Strange Meeting”: Glossary and Annotations

profound: an inspired choice of word, this suggests both “deep” and “significant”. The reader immediately registers that there is something particularly significant about this tunnel descent

granites: very hard rocks

titanic: great in terms of scale; the reference may be to the world war as well as to all great wars in history

groined: hollowed out

encumbered: burdened, by the uniforms and equipment the soldiers wear, but also may be under the weight of traumatic experiences

fast: a word suggesting deeply occupied, or taken up by

bestirred: roused or awakened

probed: explored, examined

grained: marked

flues: airshafts

Strange friend: There appears to be an oxymoron here, friends are obviously “familiar” rather than “strange” people, but this phrase indicates a major paradox addressed by the poem. War divides people into enemy camps; people who might otherwise be not just friends, but brothers or twins in terms of nature/temperament

save the undone years: except the years taken away or reduced by death

braided hair: hair tied in plaits; a physical attribute that represents tame beauty, along with the eyes mentioned earlier

richlier than here: more earnestly than is possible here

The pity of war: Owen’s famous phrase is, by his own admission, the subject of his poetry. The pity lies in the fact that war provides occasions for the display of man’s inhumanity to man: which hurts both those who die as a result, and those who kill and live with the responsibility and the guilt

distilled: left in its purest, undiluted form

trek: move away

vain citadels: proud cities, or in a broader sense, aggressive countries

too deep for taint: so well-entrenched that it cannot be falsified

stint: limit or limitation

cess: the word originally refers to a tax; here it might be used in the associated sense of “burden” or “curse”

Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were: in other words, these men have suffered, not physical pain from a wound, but mental trauma

I am the enemy you killed, my friend: the central **paradox** in the poem. How can an enemy be a friend? The answer obviously is that narrow political enmity comes in the way of broader, more universal, human ties

through me as you jabbed: an example of inversion, a figure of speech where the usual grammatical order or words is reversed. The normal order would be “as you jabbed (that is, thrust with your bayonet) through me”

parried: blocked or defended

loath: unwilling, possibly because the soldier is weary of fighting and killing

4.14.11 “Strange Meeting”: Critical Understanding

The poem begins with a narrator who is probably a soldier, since he tells us that he escaped “out of battle”. Note however that this is preceded by “It seemed...”; so this not a real retreat but a dream vision, or one imagined. Throughout the poem, the atmosphere is dreamlike and inconsistent, now lacking detail and logic, now coming sharply into focus. Note also that the soldier-narrator’s movement involves a descent, suggesting both a psychological journey into the depths of the subconscious and also a journey into some underworld or hell.

The narrator travels along a dark tunnel which has been carved out by the ravages of war, yet paradoxically offers protection from the destruction currently raging overhead. He comes across clusters of soldiers who are either unaware or inanimate. He examines them closely, and one of them jumps up, and with an expression of pity and distress seems to recognise the narrator. This, as we learn later, is because the narrator has killed him in battle the day before.

The speaker so far is surprised to note that the other soldier has a face lined with pain, for he assumes that this place, far removed from the war raging elsewhere, should have no cause for sorrow. The other soldier responds, and with his words the narrator seems to disappear from the poem, never to return, for he neither speaks again nor makes his presence felt.

The dead soldier says his sorrow is on account of death taking away his chances to lead a full life, to love and feel, and more importantly, to inspire others with hope and ideals. His laughter might have taught other people to laugh, and similarly his tears could have moved others to sorrow. His own sorrow has been generated by his experience of “the pity of war”: the realisation that killing in action connects a slayer and his victim, who do not know one another, yet who might be so similar as to be friends. Though the dead soldier has realised this truth, he cannot communicate this to other men as he is no longer alive. So some soldiers continue to count the supposed gains of victory, while others prepare to retaliate. Either way, people die, and nations who trigger destruction continue to regress. Owen presents here a powerful image of chariot wheels clogged by the blood of the slain, as the dead soldier laments that he might have brought relief and shared the truth about war, had he been alive. The dead soldier now reveals that he has been killed in battle, only the day before, by the poet-narrator.

The poem ends on a disquieting note, without a sense of proper closure. What happens to the narrator? Why are the words of the other soldier left unfinished, as indicated by the ellipsis? And when the soldier says “Let us sleep now...” what kind of sleep is indicated: the sleep of death? Or a more literal sleep? Either way, there is no guarantee that this slumber is restful. Remember, this soldier seemed asleep when the narrator first came upon him, yet he suddenly sprang up to address the narrator and to warn him of the tragic waste of war. Perhaps this is the lasting impression the poet intended to leave us with. This would be in consonance with Owen’s declaration in another part of that draft of a preface: that all a poet can do is to warn people.

4.14.12 “Strange Meeting”: Title and Theme

The title of the poem echoes a line from a poem by Shelley, who (along with Keats) was a major literary influence, at least in the early part of Owen’s poetic career. Shelley’s *The Revolt of Islam* contains the line: “Gone forth whom no strange meeting did befall” and Owen’s choice of title for the poem we are studying is an exact replication of the phrase “strange meeting”. The word “strange” here is a hint that the meeting or encounter described in the poem is not perhaps as realistic as it is metaphorical. In fact, some critics feel it might be an experience in a dream (or nightmare); others think that it is about a psychological journey, within a speaker’s mind.

Even in terms of theme, Owen may have been influenced by Shelley, who claimed *The*

Revolt of Islam was an expression of what he called the “precariousness” of his life, and that it was animated by feelings similar to those communicated by a dying man. There is a sense of the same in Owen’s poem, which depicts a meeting with an enemy soldier who in a larger sense, as a fellow human being, is a friend, yet has been killed out of compulsions that disregard the bonds of human brotherhood. The poem is thus clearly an exploration of “the pity of war”.

4.14.13 “Strange Meeting”: Structure and Style

In structure, the situation recreated in this poem might remind you of a poem by Siegfried Sassoon (who was a war-poet and a major influence on Owen), titled “The Rear-Guard.” There too a soldier travels along a tunnel, while a battle rages overhead, and mistakes a dead soldier for one asleep. But if Owen takes the germ of the idea from Sassoon, his extension of the situation and his treatment give the work a distinctive and unforgettable quality.

Owen impresses with his use of forceful language, and images that challenge rather than colour the reader’s imagination, but are undeniably striking. Witness lines such as these:

I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.

He resorts to alliteration, or the repetition of the same consonants in syllables close together, in constructions such as “might many men” or “boil bloody”; and onomatopoeia, where the sound of the word matches its sense, as in “thumped” and “moan”. All this charges the language with vigour and emphasis.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Owen’s poem is a technical virtuosity that was startling in its time and went on to influence profoundly the work of many who followed him. He discarded conventional patterns of rhythm and rhyme, with their associations of regularity and harmony, as inappropriate devices by which to express the chaos of a world torn apart by war; and in their place he popularised alternative devices. These include para-rhyme, where pairs of words have the same (or similar) consonants but different vowel sounds; either over single syllables, such as in *laughed/left*, or more, as in *mystery-mastery*. This creates a sense of discordance to ears used to full rhyme. Owen also used internal rhyme and assonance, which involve the repetition of vowel sounds within sentences but not at the ends of lines, as in “knew you”. All these create unfamiliar auditory patterns that counter the expectation of familiar cadences and rhythms.

Activities

Which of the following statements is not true?

- Wilfred Owen's earlier verse was more romantic and sensuous than his war poetry.
- The experience of the realities of war changed Owen as a person as well as a poet.
- The poem "Strange Meeting" was written soon after World War I began
- The poet's major concern is with "the pity of war".
- Elsewhere in your study material there are discussions that focus on the sonnet as a verse form, examining how it blossomed in England during the Renaissance and evolved in later centuries. An interesting point to note about the sonnet is that, during the First World War (as well as at other times), this form was adapted and used to write about war. We have already seen that Rupert Brooke himself wrote a series of sonnets on the subject. It might be rewarding for you to look for other examples of poets composing war sonnets in English. Wilfred Owen, the other war poet you have studied in detail, is a name that springs readily to mind in this connection. Here is a link to a handful of sonnets (and sonneteers) of the First World War: <http://www.sonnets.org/wwi.htm>
- Wilfred Owen died in 1918, at the age of 25. A number of poets in English literature have died young, their lives and careers cut short by mortality. If John Keats is perhaps the most famous of such terminated talents, Thomas Chatterton, is a lesser-known example, though he died even younger.
- It is sobering to note how many English poets lost their lives in a world war, while still in their twenties. You might prepare a list of your own, and go through a poem or two by each poet you identify. Would the following make it to your list? Keith Douglas, Julian Grenfell, Sidney Keyes, Ewart A. Mackintosh, Isaac Rosenberg, Charles H. Sorley. Decide why (or why not). Were they all casualties of the First World War?
- In this connection you may wish to look up a poem by Archibald MacLeish beginning "The young dead soldiers do not speak..." which was written by an American poet during the Second World War, but which may refer to all young lives lost while fighting in any war. Here is a link to the poem:

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-young-dead-soldiers-do-not-speak>

(Ans to Activity No. 1: (c) "The poem "Strange Meeting" was written soon after World War I began." The poem was in fact written towards the end of the war.)

4.14.14 Summing Up

This unit has examined two important poems on war – one written by Rupert Brooke (“The Soldier”) and the other by Wilfred Owen (“Strange Meeting”). You must have noticed that although the poets reflected on war, their attitudes to it were quite different. While Brooke’s poem embodies a nationalistic spirit and he finds in war a scope for upholding it, Owen’s poem views war as responsible for unnecessary violence and unethical killings. This unit also considers the genre to which the poems belong, their stylistic aspects and the structural devices employed by the poets. Now you will be better equipped to read and appreciate the two poems.

4.14.15 Comprehension Questions

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What picture of a patriotic soldier emerges from your reading of Rupert Brooke’s sonnet? Is this depiction, in your opinion, likely to match a portrayal of a modern-day soldier? Explain.
2. Consider how Rupert Brooke uses the sonnet form to develop his sentiments in “The Soldier”, and examine whether he strictly follows existing traditions, or adapts them to suit his own purposes.
3. It has been suggested that Brooke’s skillful use of language makes dying for one’s country sound like a great privilege. With reference to the text, do you think this claim is justified?
4. Show how Owen communicates “the pity of war” in his poem “Strange Meeting.”
5. Examine how Owen uses language and technique to great effect in his recreation of the horrors of war.
6. How far would you agree with the view that Owen’s response to war is anti-romantic?

Medium Length Answer Type Questions

1. “...[T]hink only this of me...” Discuss, with close textual reference, what the soldier, in the octave of the sonnet, would like others to think.
2. What does the protagonist in “The Soldier” have to say about “this heart”?
3. The speaker in Brooke’s sonnet is an Englishman. Examine how the poem asserts the soldier’s Englishness.

4. Recreate after the speaker in “Strange Meeting” his nightmarish descent, right up to the time he speaks to his “strange friend”.
5. Which sections of this poem suggest that the two soldiers, though on opposing sides, might essentially be the same kind of person?
6. What is para-rhyme? Examine a few occurrences of para-rhyme in this poem and suggest what Owen achieves by his use of these.

Short Questions

1. Examine the rhyme scheme used by Brooke in “The Soldier”. What is the metrical pattern used here?
2. Explain what the poet means by: “...there’s some corner of a foreign field/ That is forever England.”
3. Identify three figures of speech in the poem and explain any two of them.
4. Briefly explain the pattern of rhyme and rhythm in the poem.
5. How would you explain the phrase “the pity of war” in your own words?

4.14.16 Suggested Reading

- Hibberd, Dominic. *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography*. London: Phoenix (Orion), 2003.
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- Stallworthy, Jon. *Wilfred Owen*. Oxford: OUP, 1974.
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- Stephen, Martin, ed. *Poems of the First World War: ‘Never Such Innocence’*. London: Everyman, 1993.
- Ward, Candace, ed. *World War One British Poets: Brooke, Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Others*. New York: Dover Publication, 1997.

Module-5

Literature of the Modern Age: Prose

Unit 15 □ D.H. Lawrence: *Sons and Lovers*

Structure

- 5.15.1 Objectives
- 5.15.2 Introduction
- 5.15.3 The Novel in the Late 19th and early 20th century: An Overview
- 5.15.4 D.H. Lawrence: His Fictional World
- 5.15.5 Locating *Sons and Lovers* in the Lawrence canon
- 5.15.6 Characters: A Sneak Peek
- 5.15.7 Chapter-wise Critical Summary
- 5.15.8 Analysis of Major Characters
- 5.15.9 Human Relationships in *Sons and Lovers*
- 5.15.10 Symbolism
- 5.15.11 Classifying *Sons and Lovers* as a Novel
- 5.15.12 Summing Up
- 5.15.13 Comprehension Exercises
- 5.15.14 Suggested Reading

5.15.1 Objectives

This unit will try to introduce you to an important twentieth century novel—D.H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* (1913). It is considered to be a ‘modernist’ text that focusses on problematic issues such as love and sexuality. It will analyse the theme and issues of the novel, analyse characters, and explore its stylistic aspects. You will have a better understanding of the novel if you go through this unit attentively.

5.15.2 Introduction

Published in 1913, *Sons and Lovers* is D.H. Lawrence’s third novel, and one of the landmark novels of the twentieth century. In the forty odd years between the publication of Thomas Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and *Sons and Lovers*, the English novel developed in certain major aspects. It would not be enough to only point out that Hardy

was a Victorian novelist while Lawrence was modern. While that is true, what we also need to remember is that there are some striking continuities that we may detect between Hardy and Lawrence and again, there are certain aspects in which Lawrence brings something fresh and new to the English novel. Both Hardy and Lawrence are concerned with the ‘undefinable’, the ‘unanalysable’ and the ‘unresolved’. However, changes in attitudes, in society, in science, in beliefs in these forty years brought about many innovations in the form and content of novels.

Sons and Lovers is an intense and emotionally charged account of the coming of age of the novel’s hero Paul Morel, drawing heavily from Lawrence’s own experiences. Apart from being a vivid rendering of personal relationships, *Sons and Lovers* is also famous for its depiction of working-class life in the mining town of Bestwood, Nottinghamshire, a thinly disguised portrait of Lawrence’s own hometown Eastwood. Like many of Lawrence’s other writings, this novel too depicts the abject conditions of the small mines of Nottinghamshire and is informed by Lawrence’s denunciation of industrialisation and his nostalgia for an older pre-industrial England. In the following pages, we will try to explore the various facets of Lawrence’s first major novel and attempt to arrive at a better understanding of the text in its various aspects as a bildungsroman, a family chronicle, and a psychological examination of love and sexuality.

5.15.3 The Novel in the Late 19th and early 20th century: An Overview

As you know, despite the popularity of poetry, it was the novel which was the most dominant form of literary production in the Victorian Age. Novels were the chief source of entertainment for the burgeoning middle class of England. It is interesting to note here that during the Victorian Era, the population of England more than doubled, from 14 million to 32 million.

For this ever growing population, many different varieties of novels were written during the Victorian Age, for instance the novel of manners by William Makepeace Thackeray, the humanitarian and reformist novels of Charles Dickens, novels relating to social problems by Elizabeth Gaskell, romantic and Gothic novels by the Bronte sisters, novels exploring the genre of nonsense by Lewis Carroll, adventure novels by Robert Louis Stevenson, crime novels by Arthur Conan Doyle, the bildungsroman and exotic novels by Rudyard Kipling and Oscar Wilde and so on. A detailed study and analysis of these writers is important to understand the breadth and variety of the Victorian novel but is beyond the scope of this brief account.

While the early and mid-Victorian novels are characterised by a dominant sense of moral and social ethic and an identification of the authors as observers of the particular age to which they belonged, the late nineteenth century is characterised by movements like realism, naturalism and aestheticism. The influence of certain major nineteenth century thinkers like Charles Darwin (1809–1882), Karl Marx (1818– 1883), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), as we have seen in the earlier modules, led to sweeping social and intellectual changes and laid the foundation of the modern age. The powerful ideas of these thinkers led to a questioning of several social, economic and religious beliefs that had hitherto been entrenched in the Victorian mindset.

The Victorian era also witnessed some significant improvements in technology. The Industrial Revolution changed in a big way how people lived, worked, and travelled. These improvements in technology provided a number of unprecedented opportunities to the English people but they also led to a major upheaval in terms of how people lived and dealt with the world around them. This change was complicated further by the growth of the working classes. The growth of industrialism led to the creation of spectacular wealth but it also created an unbridgeable schism between the haves and the have-nots. These transitions from a predominantly pastoral lifestyle to one dominated by the urban milieu of the city, coupled with the changing dynamics between different social classes became one of the chief concerns of many writers including Lawrence.

With regard to the novel, the last decades of the nineteenth century are dominated by Thomas Hardy. Hardy was a Victorian realist whose important novels include *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895/6). All his novels were set in the fictional region of Wessex and explored the themes of fate and suffering. He was a trenchant critic of many Victorian social institutions. In one of Hardy's most controversial novels, *Jude the Obscure*, the author provides a dramatic depiction of the stranglehold that the outdated divorce laws can have on people. In the same novel Hardy also criticises the exclusivity of university admission norms and their discrimination on the basis of class.

With relation to Lawrence, the important point to remember about Hardy is the fact that he is often considered to be Lawrence's spiritual father and many of the tendencies he explored in his novels find full maturation in Lawrence's works.

5.15.4 D.H Lawrence: His Fictional World

Novelist, poet, playwright, critic, painter and travel writer, David Herbert Lawrence rose from very humble origins to become one of the most influential as well as controversial literary figures of the twentieth century. Lawrence was born on September 11, 1885, in the small mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, the fourth child of his parents. His father, Arthur John Lawrence, worked as a coal miner in one of the many small mines that dotted the Nottinghamshire landscape, whereas his mother, Lydia Lawrence née Beardsall belonged originally to the middle class and was a former school teacher. When her fortunes fell after her marriage, she began supplementing her husband's income by working from home as a lace maker. It is from his intellectual and ambitious mother that Lawrence inherited his love for books as well as his desire to rise above his working-class origins. As a child, he was a shy, reserved boy, a misfit among his social peers, but was academically good enough to be first boy in the history of Eastwood to win a County Council scholarship to the Nottingham High School. Thus we may bear in mind, as Raymond Williams points out, that the important thing to remember about Lawrence's social responses to industrialisation was that he was not merely a witness to it as a child, but someone who was caught in its processes, and it was no small miracle that he was able to break out of its shackles and fashion a literary career for himself, though it might have seemed obvious enough in retrospect.

Lawrence began working as a clerk for a surgical goods manufacturer in 1901, but quit soon after, following his brother Ernest's sudden death due to a skin disease. This was followed by his stint as a student teacher at the British School in Eastwood. It was here that he met a young woman named Jessie Chambers, a farmer's daughter who became his close friend and intellectual companion, and who was controversially portrayed as Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. Jesse encouraged Lawrence to pursue writing seriously and submitted a collection of his poems to Ford Madox Ford, who subsequently published them in the *English Review* in 1909. In 1911, Lawrence's first novel *The White Peacock* was published, a year after his mother's death. By this time Lawrence had passed from Nottingham University College and was writing frequently. In 1912 he met Frieda von Richthofen, the wife of his professor Ernest Weekly, and fell in love with her. Frieda left her husband and three children, and they eloped to Bavaria and then to Austria, Germany and Italy. They were married on July 13, 1914.

He published his first play, *The Daughter-in-Law*, in 1912. A year later, he published his first volume of poetry: *Love Poems and Others*. In 1912, Lawrence's second novel *The Trespassers* also appeared, and then in 1913, his first major novel, the heavily autobiographical *Sons and Lovers* was published. Lawrence was very confident about this third novel of his, about which he asserted in a letter to his publisher Edward Garnett, "It is a great tragedy, and

I tell you I've written a great book. It's the tragedy of thousands of young men in England ... Read my novel –it's a great novel. If you can't see the development – which is slow like growth – I can" (Letters I, pp.476-77).

Lawrence continued to write furiously, and in 1914 was published his critically acclaimed collection of short stories entitled *The Prussian Officer*. His fourth novel, *The Rainbow* was published in 1915, describing the experiences of two sisters growing up in the north of England. The character of Ursula Brangwen was partly based on Lawrence's teaching colleague in Nottingham, Louis Burrows, with whom he was briefly engaged. The novel explicitly dealt with sex and was banned on the charges of alleged obscenity. These were trying times for Lawrence as about a thousand copies of his novel were burnt on a magisterial order and his paintings were also confiscated from an art gallery. This was also a time when Lawrence and his wife were unable to obtain passports as Frieda was not only German but also a cousin of the famous "Red Baron" Von Richthofen, and was thus viewed with great suspicion. They were suspected to be spies for the Germans and were expelled from Cornwall in 1917. The Lawrences were not permitted to emigrate until 1919, after which they travelled many parts of the world. Still, in spite of such hardships, Lawrence published four volumes of poetry during this period –*Amores* (1916), *Look! We Have Come Through!* (1919), *New Poems* (1918) and *Bay: A Book of Poems* (1919).

In 1920 was published his next major novel, *Women in Love*, considered to be a sequel to *The Rainbow*. This novel additionally grapples with the theme of homosexuality too, and it is around this time that Lawrence is alleged to have had a homosexual liaison with a Cornish farmer named William Henry Hocking. In a letter written during 1913, he writes, "I should like to know why nearly every man that approaches greatness tends to homosexuality, whether he admits it or not ..." He goes on to recollect, "I believe the nearest I've come to perfect love was with a young coal-miner when I was about 16."

In the 1920s Lawrence and Frieda travelled extensively around Europe, New Mexico, and Mexico in a period he later described as his "savage pilgrimage". He continued writing prolifically, but it is only with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), his last major novel, again heavily censored and censured for its erotic subject matter, that he approached the fame and reputation of his acclaimed earlier novels.

Following various bouts of illnesses including malaria, Lawrence died of tuberculosis on March 2, 1930, in Vence, France.

5.15.5 Locating *Sons and Lovers* in the Lawrence canon

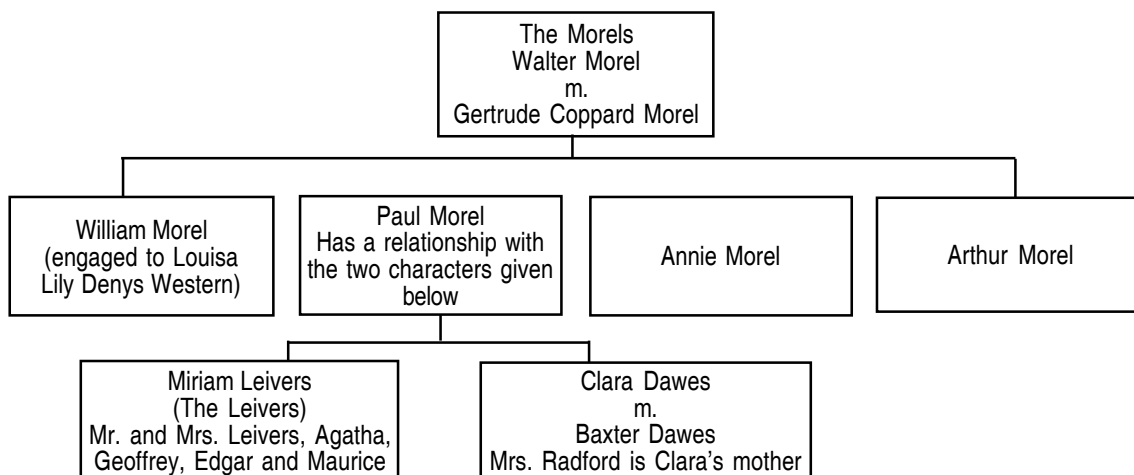
Sons and Lovers (1913) is Lawrence's first major novel. Initially titled *Paul Morel*, it is a deeply autobiographical novel that traces the unhappy marriage of Paul's parents, the "warm

and hearty, but unstable” Walter Morel, and the “clever, ironical, delicately moulded” Gertrude (*Letters* I.190), and the effect it has on the children, particularly on Paul. As he grows up, he is inevitably and unconsciously drawn towards his mother and, simultaneously, develops a hatred for his father. This close bond with his mother gradually assumes Oedipal overtones and stunts Paul’s emotional response towards other women in his life, thus leaving him unable to have fulfilling relationships with them, though he does attempt to break free from his mother’s emotional prison.

The actual process of writing the novel proved to be difficult and full of interruptions for Lawrence. He began working on it in September 1910, coinciding with the closing stages of his mother’s illness, only to discontinue it. In March 1911, still grieving his mother’s death, he resumed a new draft which was also abandoned. He tried yet again in November 1911, and it was almost a year later, in late autumn 1912, when, after having met Frieda, and after extensive revisions suggested by his editor Edward Garnett, he finally finished the novel and changed the title from *Paul Morel* to the more meaningful *Sons and Lovers*. The deeply personal and disturbing nature of his work was evident to him and he wrote to Garnett, “It’s the tragedy of thousands of young men in England” (*Letters* i. 476).

Sons and Lovers marks a culmination of Lawrence’s early phase as a novelist and along with *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1921), it remains one of his highly regarded works. In terms of his style, this is a novel where we find a coalescing of the realistic narration of the traditional novel with the nuanced approach of the modern psychological novel.

5.15.6 Characters: A Sneak Peek



5.15.7 Chapter-wise Critical Summary

Book –I: Chapter – 1: The Early Married Life of the Morels

Chapter-1 introduces the Morels – Walter and Gertrude, and their two children William and Anne. Gertrude is pregnant with her third child. We also get a glimpse of an unhappy marriage. Gertrude had married beneath her class and the stark differences between her and Walter are now beginning to crack open their relationship. Walter is spirited and physical, while Gertrude reserved, puritanical and intellectual. This chapter also gives the book its sense of place – Bestwood, a little Nottinghamshire town that is a thinly veiled representation of Lawrence’s own native village of Eastwood. The opening lines – “‘The Bottoms’ succeeded to ‘Hell Row’” – create the ambience of a domestic and pre-industrial mining town. The strong maternal bond that William has with Gertrude is highlighted when he is proud and happy that his attractive mother accompanies him to the wakes, but when she leaves, though he still stays back, somehow he doesn’t feel as happy anymore. Later he brings two egg cups that he won as prize, as a gift for her. The chapter ends with a violent quarrel between the Morels that crystallises their mutual hatred.

Chapter – 2: The Birth of Paul, and Another Battle

There is a two-directional contradictory movement in this chapter. The marital discord between the Morels reaches a crescendo, with growing quarrels between them on the one hand, and on the other hand, this chapter depicts the birth of the Morels’ third child Paul, who will later of course, become the protagonist of the story. Things come to such a pass between Gertrude and Walter Morel that they both develop a hard bitterness against each other and their relationship reaches a point of no-return. While Walter is clearly the aggressor, and the one who causes so much trouble for his wife, in terms of their spirit however, Gertrude emerges far stronger than her husband. Once when she had left home with her children in exasperation as Walter had kicked William, Gertrude looks at Paul’s innocent baby face and realises, “in some far inner lace of her soul, that she and her husband were guilty.” And so, she pledged “With all her force, with all her soul she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved.”

Chapter – 3: The Casting Off of Morel – The Taking on of William

Morel suffers from an inflammation of his brain due to which he is incapacitated, and for a while, he is unable to go to the mines. During this financially strained period of his convalescence however, Mrs. Morel slowly begins to realise that she can fend for herself even when Morel, the breadwinner of the house, is bedridden and incapacitated. This leads to a subtle and gradual shift in their equation. Thus while the frequent and violent quarrels between

them abates substantially, it also means that Gertrude begins to love Walter lesser and lesser. This growing distance between them is coterminous with their first born William growing up into a competent and strong young lad. There is a crucial occasion in the chapter when Gertrude puts her foot down and does not let Walter thrash William on the basis of complaints from a neighbour. This casting off of Walter Morel both in the sense that she no longer felt dependent on him and also her growing fondness and preference for William to fill up her life provides the title of this chapter. But crucially the chapter ends with William having got a job in London and his impending departure from Bestwood. Mrs. Morel's intense and almost passionate dependence upon her elder son foreshadows her relationship with Paul later in the novel. Also, their fourth child Arthur is born.

Chapter – 4: The Young Life of Paul

The heavily autobiographical portrait of Paul Morel emerges in this chapter. It is a picture of an overly sensitive, artistic boy who has trouble fitting into the coarse environment of Bestwood. He shares an intense bond with his mother, and the Oedipal overtones of this relationship are very clearly delineated from this chapter onwards. He is initially dependent upon his sister Annie, which in a way, foreshadows his dependence upon his mother later in the novel. In fact, this childhood portrait of Paul is significant in its anticipation of many of his traits that will become apparent later on. In a curious incident, Paul accidentally breaks Annie's doll. Instead of being apologetic to Annie, Paul becomes strangely destructive and proposes to burn the broken doll as a sacrificial rite. In a way, Paul will continue to hate those whom he hurts. There is an instance in this chapter where Paul goes to collect his father's salary from the mining company's office but recoils from the masculine physicality of the interaction there. With the money coming in from William at least in these early days, the Morels move out from the Bottoms to a pleasanter house on top of a hill. William arrives from London, laden with gifts, but the domestic harmony is short lived. Quarrels between the Morels continue and at one point William threatens to beat up his father if he touches his mother again. Though this flashpoint is diffused by Gertrude, yet Lawrence succeeds in showing different dimensions of the same event, in that she may seek to control this father-son rivalry for some kind of emotional fulfilment or compensation. Walter Morel realises his increasing isolation within the family but he reacts perversely by becoming even more coarse than before.

Chapter – 5: Paul Launches into Life

Walter Morel injures his foot and is hospitalised. With him away, the house seems to be a haven of exceptional peace and harmony for Gertrude and the children. Presently, Paul is fourteen and his mother asks him to search for a job in the advertisements in the local newspapers. Paul and his mother go to Nottingham for a job interview at the office of a

surgical appliances manufacturer. Throughout this chapter, there are references to Paul's extreme shyness and oversensitivity. The journey to Nottingham with his mother is satisfying and happy, though there are minor problems. Lawrence hints at the amorous overtones in their relationship. As Mrs. Morel takes money out of her purse, Paul watches her carefully, and the narrator describes how "his heart contracted with pain of love for her". Again, on the train, "he was sensible all the time of having her opposite him. Suddenly their eyes met, and she smiled to him – a rare, intimate smile, beautiful with brightness and love. Then each looked out of the window." And again, even more directly, they "walked down Station Street, feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together." Meanwhile, Paul gets the job and begins working as a "Spiral" – someone who was required to translate French letters of orders and requisitions into English. Though he is very shy to begin with, after a while, he gets along fine and enjoys himself at work, though the long hours and unsanitary working conditions make him sick and pale.

Chapter – 6: Death in the Family

William brings Lily Weston home but it is an unsuccessful trip, as nobody really likes her, nor does she feel comfortable with them. Due to the presence of Lily, there is a change in the equation between William and Mrs. Morel – the latter now relying more on Paul, and feeling more and more distant from William. She seems unable to forgive or accept the presence of another girl in his life. Later, Mrs. Morel proposes to visit Wiley Farm, where the Leivers live. Like Paul, Miriam too is shy and sensitive, but she will bring out a complicated response in Paul later on. William and Lily come back for a second trip to Bestwood, and though William still plans to marry her, there are cracks in their relationship. William prophetically predicts that if he were to die, she would not waste too much time remembering him. Later in October, when William comes home again, alone, his health begins to deteriorate. Within days of his return to London, a telegram reaches Mrs. Morel informing her of William's failing health. He dies suddenly of pneumonia and a skin infection called erysipelas. For the first few months, Mrs. Morel is in a state of shock after such a sudden bereavement and seems to withdraw from life, but when Paul too, falls ill with pneumonia, she is jolted back to life. She nurses him back to health and from now onwards, her life is rooted in Paul.

Book –II: Chapter – 7: Lad-And-Girl Love

This chapter also marks the beginning of Book – II of the novel, a phase where Paul will come into his own and rightfully become the 'hero' of the book. With William's death he becomes the centre of Mrs. Morel's life. At the same time, he becomes closer to Miriam and her mother, Mrs. Leivers. The resultant tension in Paul's characterisation where he is pulled in different directions becomes the central focus of the novel, and it is for us to witness what

choices Paul makes from here on. Miriam's sexual inhibitions are also explored in this chapter repeatedly. Once when she takes Paul to the family swing, though he soars in freedom, she finds it impossible to let go and surrender herself into Paul's hands. Although Paul will feel inspired by Miriam and also attracted by her, it is this inhibition which will mar their relationship in course of time. Her natural intensity towards most things around her will stifle Paul, and also scare Mrs. Morel that if she does not stop Miriam's growing closeness with Paul, she will not only "suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left" but also, more importantly, usurp her position in his life. During their trip to the Mablethorpe Cottage by the seaside, both Gertrude and Annie scorn her. On their walk back to the cottage, Paul is filled with desire for Miriam, but he senses something in her that prevents him from kissing her or expressing his feelings for her in any way. Thus while he feels intensely attracted to her, he is also repelled by her and craves to go back to his jolly family that brings out his normal happy self.

Chapter – 8: Strife in Love

Clara Dawes is introduced briefly in this chapter. Paul runs into her and Miriam and is immediately struck by her beauty. Miriam notices his attraction for the older and stronger Clara, but later, Paul evasively criticises her for being badly dressed. As the title of the chapter suggests, the tension in the Paul-Miriam relationship heightens in this chapter. They are both drawn to each other but are held back by a strange and strong kind of inhibition and are unable to be physically intimate. In Paul's case it is the fierce jealousy and possessiveness of his mother that renders him unable to break free from it. On the evening when Miriam comes to visit him, though Paul forgets the bread in the oven because he was busy flirting with the earthy Beatrice, yet it is Miriam who is blamed for his carelessness by Mrs. Morel. In one of the most overtly Oedipal scenes of the novel, Mrs. Morel accuses him of being obsessed with Miriam. Paul pleads by claiming that he only likes to talk to Miriam but does not love her. They embrace closely and Paul passionately kisses Mrs. Morel on her throat, and she kisses him back. Walter Morel enters and sneers at their closeness, and father and son are about to come to blows, which is prevented only by Mrs. Morel's suspiciously timely fit of fainting. This chapter also shows Lawrence's warmth and respect towards the common miners and their activities in the reckoning scene, where Walter Morel and the other miners of his stall divide the money among themselves with utmost honesty despite being poor and needy.

Chapter – 9: Defeat of Miriam

Yet another sequence of events resulting in the same unconsummated passion between Paul and Miriam is recorded in this chapter. Lawrence is possibly trying to show how, whatever might be the reasons, this relationship is doomed. Paul torments Miriam by telling her that they should not meet too often but then the very next week he proposes marriage

to Miriam. But she refuses, sensing that he is doing so only under duress, because he is concerned that it may not be socially acceptable to be spending so much time together without marrying each other. This chapter marks the beginning of the end of the Paul-Miriam relationship. In an effort to test Paul, Miriam tempts him by getting him to meet the attractive Clara, because she believes at heart, that Paul's need for her is greater than such temptations. But their relationship flourishes before her very eyes as they meet frequently at Willey Farm, after Clara's initial haughtiness and Paul's resultant discomfort. After this Paul withdraws from Miriam even more. This chapter also presents Annie's marriage with Leonard and Arthur's courtship of Beatrice Wyld. After Annie's marriage, the Morels are very lonely, leading Paul to feel even more responsible for his mother's happiness and emotional well being.

Chapter – 10: Clara

Paul wins the first prize in the prestigious winter exhibition held at the Nottingham Castle. Mrs. Morel is overjoyed and deems it to be as much her success as Paul's. Mr. Morel too is happy and awed by Paul's success but his feeling of being an outsider in his own family will be compounded after this event, as Mrs. Morel will pull out all stops to push Paul upwards into the middle class. Paul however idealistically believes that it is the working class which has the vital life force and human warmth. Meanwhile Arthur marries Beatrice Wyld after she becomes pregnant. One day Paul visits Clara at her mother, Mrs. Radford's house, and is shocked to learn that Clara is a menial lace weaver. He encounters Clara's vulnerability for the first time and that opens another dimension in their relationship. He insists on helping her get her supervisory job back at Jordan's. But though she becomes closer to Paul, the other shop girls resent her and cut her out of their plans of gifting Paul a box of paints. Clara feels hurt that she did not even know that it was Paul's birthday and later sends him a book of poetry. Paul is deeply moved by the gift, more so because he knows she has gone beyond her means to buy it. Later on one of their walks, Clara confides in Paul about the story of her marriage but Paul sympathises with her husband Baxter as much as he does with Clara. Clara too, on the other hand, tells Paul that Miriam desires him but it is he who never approached her directly for a relationship, and kept her in a limbo of platonic idealism.

Chapter – 11: The Test on Miriam

This is a chapter that brings the sexual incompatibility of Paul and Miriam to the fore. With the advent of spring, Paul is back to Miriam. On a stormy evening, when Paul and Miriam are together, he loves the dark as he feels the individual is dissolved into an eternal being. But Miriam hates it and fears that the damp and cold will make Paul feel sick. Later when they are alone together in Miriam's grandmother's cottage, Paul is transfixed by Miriam's beauty. They play man and wife with gay abandon, but on each occasion of their love making, Miriam

feels as if she should offer her body as an act of sacrifice or duty to Paul because he wants her, and not because she feels any desire herself. Just like Paul, she too is deeply affected by her mother and is reacting as a result of her sexually repressive indoctrination. After this, though Paul feels he should be loyal to Miriam, and that he belongs to her in some way, he sees her less frequently. In a significant and symbolic moment, Paul goes out into the garden and is intoxicated by the smell of the white lilies but he is somehow unable to touch them, analogous to his relationship with Miriam. But he plucks one of the purple irises without much thought and promptly returns indoors and announces to his mother that he is leaving Miriam. They exchange bitter words between them, each feeling utterly let down by the turn of events.

Chapter – 12: Passion

Financially and artistically, Paul is prospering. Emotionally, after leaving Miriam, he goes straight to Clara. Once they go on an outing to the river Trent. Though the narrator does not explicitly describe it, they make love, signalled by the fact that Clara's carnation corsage is crushed. However, despite his relationship with Clara, he still visits Willey Farm, as he feels himself to be a part of their family. Very insensitively, Paul discusses his affair with Miriam without caring how she might be feeling after having an affair with him so recently. They discuss various relationships – Paul believes that unlike Baxter Dawes, he knows how to awaken passion in Clara. When Miriam tries to reason that they may be incompatible just as his own parents were, Paul again flares up and says that even if for a short while, there was passion in his parents' marriage. Later, Clara comes to visit the Morels. Strangely, Mrs. Morel is cordial with Clara, possibly because she does not mind allowing her son's physical needs as long as she controls him emotionally. Suddenly, Miriam also drops in at the Morels'. Both Mrs. Morel and Clara are critical of her, but Paul guiltily tries to be nice to her. A few days after this incident, Paul and Clara are late in returning from the theatre and decide to spend that night at Mrs. Radford's place where Paul watches a naked Clara and shares intense moments of intimacy with her.

Chapter – 13: Baxter Dawes

Paul runs into Baxter Dawes in a pub and the two almost come to blows. The simmering tension continues at work too, where Baxter ends up assaulting Mr. Jordan, who was trying to save Paul. But when Paul is called as a witness in court, he upsets Mr. Jordan by saying that his rivalry with Baxter is due to Clara. After being initially upset with him, Clara falls even more strongly in love with Paul. But Paul now begins to drift apart from Clara, telling his mother that all women were out to claim his soul. While Clara looks for permanence and commitment in the relationship, Paul's needs are more specifically sexual. Paul encounters Baxter twice more in the chapter and during the latter he is knocked unconscious by Baxter.

When Paul regains consciousness, ironically he feels a strange kind of wonderment, almost akin to his feelings after lovemaking. While Paul convalesces with a broken shoulder, both Miriam and Clara visit him, but he seems indifferent to both. After a few days, Paul goes on a vacation with his friend, but when he returns he finds his mother seriously ill with a possibly cancerous tumour in her stomach. Paul is terrified about what the future holds for him.

Chapter – 14: The Release

Paul visits Baxter in a hospital in Sheffield where he is recovering from typhoid. Despite their bitter and violent past, the two men share a deep unspoken bond. While Baxter sympathises with Paul about his mother's illness, Paul can feel Baxter's sorrow on losing Clara. Later when Paul tells Clara about the ailing Baxter, she is ridden by guilt and accuses him of never having loved her as much as Baxter did. Meanwhile Mrs. Morel is dying a slow painful death with stomach cancer, though she is contented with Paul's success. Paul though, is deeply distressed to witness his mother's terminal illness from such close quarters. There is a fluidity in the equations shared by the main characters at this point. While Mrs. Morel lay dying, Baxter was recuperating. Clara was getting closer to her former husband and moving away from Paul, and finally, Baxter and Paul were becoming close friends. As the months pass, Mrs. Morel's condition deteriorates rapidly until she only seems to be a pair of large eyes. Unable to bear witnessing her pain anymore, Paul, along with Annie, crush all the morphine pills at home and give it to Mrs. Morel. With Mrs. Morel's death, not only is the anchor of Paul's life gone but also his strongest controlling factor. Paul finally breaks up with Clara, who vows to build a better future with Baxter.

Chapter – 15: Derelict

After his mother's death and his break with Clara, there is nothing really left for Paul at home, or at work. The Morel household breaks up, Walter Morel leaves to stay with a friendly family in Bestwood while Paul drifts to Nottingham and takes lodgings there. A depressed Paul analyses that only art or marriage and children can bring him back to a certain degree of normalcy. But he is unable to paint anymore and wonders if there is anyone who would be right for him as a partner in marriage. One day he meets Miriam at church. Though they are old friends and Miriam had been a spiritual anchor for him in the past, he knows now that they are not suited for each other. Miriam still believes that Paul belongs to her and will eventually come back to her but Paul goes away. As Paul walks down in the dark night he is aware of his existence as a miniscule part of a much larger whole. While his tiny presence may not matter much, yet he does exist. Paul remembers his mother and calls out for her but he knows that she has diffused into nothingness now. In an ambiguous movement, Paul quickly turns away from the darkness and heads towards the "faintly humming, glowing town,

quickly”. This ending may be read either as one of hope, or of despair, depending upon our assessment of Paul’s character.

5.15.8 Analysis of Major Characters

Paul Morel

Paul is the third of the Morel children in *Sons and Lovers*, and an autobiographical portrait of Lawrence himself. In many ways the chief focus of the novel is the coming of age of Paul Morel, and it has often been alternately described as a *bildungsroman* or a *kunstlerroman*. As a child the sensitive Paul has difficulty assimilating with the rough and tumble of the masculine world of the Bestwood collieries. At home, he is deeply affected by the marital discord between his parents. This leads him to form a strange mixture of sympathy, love and dependence upon his stern, disciplinarian mother Gertrude Morel. But this bond is so very overpowering a presence in Paul’s life that he is unable to sustain independent relationships with other women towards whom he is attracted. It is through Paul that his mother seeks to realise her dream of moving socially upward. Although he begins as a shy child, he gains social confidence as he grows up, particularly after he begins working in an office. This new found confidence, coupled with his growing interest in art, leads him on for intellectual stimulation and company to Miriam Leivers and her mother Mrs. Leivers. But his mother strongly disapproves of his relationship with Miriam, whom she feels threatened by. Faced with a choice, Paul unceremoniously rejects the emotional and spiritual Miriam and falls back upon his mother. With Clara too, Paul shares a predominantly sexual bond. The Oedipal theme of the novel is one of its central strands, and one that defines Paul’s character. He feels for his mother as one might feel for a lover, and this streak in him incapacitates him from forging fresh linkages. His relationship with his father is fraught with bitterness and hatred. Paul squarely blames him for his mother’s misery, and even implores her on occasion not to share the same bed with him. It is only after his mother’s death that he finds himself bereft of her anchoring presence in his life. Whether he chooses to drown in his sorrow for his mother or whether he moves on to explore a new life has been left open to interpretation.

Gertrude Morel

Married to Walter Morel, Gertrude Morel is the mother of the five Morel children. She is intensely attracted to Walter in her youth and marries him for passion. But within months of her marriage, she is contemptuously informed by Walter’s mother that he has lied to her and he neither owns the house they live in, nor makes as much money as he has given her to believe. The marriage soon spirals downwards into a mess and Walter turns into an abusive

alcoholic. Things come to a pass when in a fit of rage, Walter throws a heavy wooden drawer at his wife which causes a deep gash in her forehead. He immediately sobers and tries to make amends but it is too late by then. Gertrude walks out of her home and though she has no option but to come back the next morning, the night spent outside her home has been epiphanic in that she realises that she should live for her children. Looking at the infant Paul, she realises that it is her duty to look after him and care for him even if she has grave differences with her husband. After this Gertrude gradually and irretrievably withdraws from her husband and devotes all her energies to the upbringing of her children, particularly her two sons William and Paul. She pins all her hopes initially on William, who grows up to be a strapping, handsome young man with all the social vitality and love for dancing of his father. But when he moves away to London, marries and then shockingly dies, Mrs. Morel slowly turns all her energies and affections to Paul. She lives her dreams through Paul and there are several instances throughout the novel that she treats him like a lover. So when he is attracted to Miriam, Mrs. Morel strongly disapproves. Lawrence has interestingly chosen the name Gertrude as it echoes the name of Hamlet's mother, thus once again, suggesting the same erotic overtones as existed between Hamlet and his mother.

Walter Morel

Walter Morel comes across as a strong but contradictory character who is alternately brutal and tender with his family. Lawrence's description of the young Walter Morel is of an instinctual and unrestrained handsome man, to whom the reserved Gertrude is irresistibly attracted. Gertrude describes him as a man whose "flame of life" "flowed from off his flesh like the flame from a candle". This is the Walter Morel who, as a sensuous young man, is ready and so pleasant with everybody. But as the marriage becomes more embittered, Walter turns increasingly brutal and anti-social, resorting to violence, abuse and alcoholism. Consequently, his sons, particularly Paul, is wary and resentful of him and treats him as an outsider. There are instances of Morel's tenderness towards his family as he potters around the house doing odd jobs. During such times, his children gather around him warmly and these are occasional instances of domestic harmony that the novel is peppered with. One of the keys to Morel's character is his attitude towards authority, which he found hateful. Thus whenever Morel is left unfettered, it is his natural tender self that is seen. On the other hand, whenever he feels compelled by any kind of authoritarian or controlling figure, he explodes into bitterness and violence. Many of his arguments with Gertrude also take this trajectory. Thus, Lawrence's attitude towards Walter Morel's character is ambiguous. While the narrative makes it quite clear that Walter Morel is extremely abusive and brutal, yet it also suggests that there are redeeming shades to his nature, and that his violence often stems from his inability to handle dominating behaviour rather than any innate cruelty.

William Morel

William, the eldest of the Morels, is Mrs. Morel's first son and lover. As William grows up, Gertrude first pins all her hopes on him. Strikingly similar to his father, William is handsome, athletic, hardworking and social. He works initially as a clerk in the Bestwood Co-operative Society office, but later moves to Nottingham, and then to London, with a lucrative job at a lawyer's office. In London, William gets engaged to the pretty but shallow Lily. Though he soon realises his folly, he feels obliged to marry her as he is obligated to honour his commitment. This trait in William sets him as a foil to Paul, who will prove himself to be a non-conformist, unaffected by social conventions. At such a juncture of William's life, he suddenly falls ill, and mysteriously dies of pneumonia and the rare disease erysipelas. It is under such circumstances that a shocked and bereaved Mrs. Morel turns all her attention towards her second son Paul, who now takes William's position in her life.

Miriam Leivers

In a certain sense, *Sons and Lovers* may be said to be an exploration of Paul Morel's relationship with three women who play pivotal roles in his life. The first of these women is of course Gertrude Morel, Paul's mother. The second woman whom Paul encounters and who has a lasting influence on his life is Miriam Leivers. Miriam is the first young woman Paul is attracted to. She is a shy, sensitive and romantic girl, who lives in the neighbouring Wiley Farm. She is attracted by Paul's intellectual and his artistic talent, which she steadfastly encourages. Paul too feels inspired by Miriam's interest in his art and it leads him to be more confident about his abilities. She is also the first person who causes Paul to move away from his mother. This expectedly causes a great deal of resentment in Gertrude Morel, who feels challenged in her emotional control over Paul, for which she never forgives Miriam. There are obvious repercussions on the Paul-Miriam relationship. Mrs. Morel is openly jealous of Miriam and satirically observes that Miriam seems to want to absorb all of Paul for herself and finds it abnormal. Paul too, almost reflecting his mother's constant resentment of Miriam, feels stifled by her intense spirituality and her emotional over-dependence on him. After being interminably confused about Miriam eventually Paul rejects her with a cruelly worded letter where he describes her as a mystic nun, whom he is spiritually aligned to, but with whom he cannot ever be capable of physical intimacy.

Clara Dawes

Towards the close of the Miriam episode, Paul begins to turn towards Clara Dawes. This coincides with Mrs. Morel's realisation after Paul's rift with Miriam that it will not be possible for her to hold on to her son's affections exclusively. Clara, Baxter Dawes's estranged wife and a member of the Suffragette movement, is Lawrence's portrayal of the New Woman.

Frankly sensual, forthright and a woman of this world, Clara is diametrically opposed to Miriam. It is due to Clara's influence that Paul is able to shake off his own physical awkwardness. But even with her, Paul is unable to give himself completely, and he confesses as much to his mother when he says that he would never be able to do so completely as long as she was alive. When his mother dies, he realises that he has never learnt to live without her, and so, in a sense, he has never learnt to live. The relationship with Clara too inevitably ends. As the feminist critic Kate Millet has pointed out, Lawrence seems to use the women in this novel as instruments to show Paul's growth as a character, and he seems to discard them arbitrarily. If Miriam helped Paul delve into his spiritual and artistic capabilities, Clara freed him from his physical and sexual hesitation. But having served this purpose, Paul seems unable to forge a full-fledged relationship with her, or with any other woman. In the end, unable to find the commitment she desires from Paul, Clara goes back to her husband, Baxter, with whom she pledges to build a strong relationship.

Annie Morel

Paul's older sister. When their mother lies dying toward the end of the novel, she and Paul decide to give her an overdose of morphine.

Arthur Morel

Paul's younger brother and the youngest of the Morel sons. He is handsome but immature. He recklessly joins the army only to leave it soon.

Louisa Lily Denys Western

Lily is the vain and materialistic girlfriend of William Morel. She comes to visit the Morels and stays with them for a while, but her arrogance puts William off. After his death, she soon forgets about him and moves on with her life.

5.15.9 Human Relationships in *Sons and Lovers*

Like all of Lawrence's other novels, *Sons and Lovers* too, is essentially a novel of human relationships. From the unhappy marriage of the Morels to the Oedipal overtones of the Paul-Gertrude relationship and Paul's resultant inability to successfully handle relationships with other women in his life, the central focus of the novel rests in the minute explication of these personal relationships among its characters. In order to understand the dynamics of the various human relationships that are portrayed in the novel, you must keep in mind some of Lawrence's basic ideas about relationships. For Lawrence a new form of human consciousness could only be achieved on the basis of authentic human relationships. To that end, he had radically different views from the conventional mores of his times. He was a strident critic of traditional Victorian moral and ethical values.

Lawrence's depiction of relationships is informed by his understanding of sexuality, religion and philosophy. Drawing his beliefs from his readings of Schopenhauer, William James, Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Ernst Haeckel, Lawrence saw a fundamental duality between flesh and spirit, and he believed that human relationships are hampered by social and religious strictures. In 1915, Lawrence published a volume of six essays entitled *The Crown*, that encapsulated his philosophical ideas about human nature and relationships. For Lawrence human life is split between a conscious rational essence and an unconscious, biological (natural) existence. Lawrence placed his trust on instinct as the fundamental governing principle of all human relationships and emphasised on the importance of sexual relationship as an important means towards an authentic union between man and woman. It is through a fulfilling sexual relationship, according to Lawrence, that man may attain a sense of human dignity. Thus a fulfilling physical relationship can lead to a sense of self-actualisation and act as a solution against the dehumanising and impersonal modern civilisation.

In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence not only tackles a Freudian Oedipal relationship between Paul and his mother, he also portrays Paul's relationships with Miriam and Clara, on the corresponding planes of spirit and flesh. In his frank treatment of sexuality in man-woman relationships, he was undoubtedly influenced by Thomas Hardy, who broke new ground in Victorian fiction with his articulation of sexuality and the unconscious. While Hardy still employed indirect and veiled narrative strategies, Lawrence took this legacy forward and was much more forthright and direct in his depiction of sexual relationships in many of his novels, including *Sons and Lovers*. In doing so, Lawrence rejected the doctrines of the traditional Christian religion and may be said to be one of the precursors to the sexual revolution of the twentieth century.

5.15.10 *Symbolism in Sons and Lovers*

A symbol may be defined as a literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. Symbol is using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning. As a novelist, Lawrence is known for his deft handling of symbols that imbue his stories with a more complex and deeper meaning, as we may note in this novel too.

In the first chapter, when William proudly gifts his mother the two blue egg cups that he has won in the fair, it is a symbol of his reverential love for his mother and his anxious need to please her. Mrs. Morel is indeed very happy with the delicate egg cups. This is followed

soon after by a drunken Walter Morel coming home with a gingerbread for his wife, but it of course leaves her unaffected, thus depicting Morel's inadequacy in pleasing his wife.

Once the Morels move to Scargill Street, the ash-tree beside their house stands for the sinister and dark aspects of life. It is symbolic of the dark, mysterious forces of nature which are the foreboders of tragedy in human-life. It is symbolic of the disharmony that exists between the husband and wife in the Morel family. Although Mrs. Morel is very fond of the ash tree, the children are terrified of it. The persistent bickering of the parents becomes a terror for the children, who lying awake upstairs are unable to coherently apprehend as to what would happen ultimately. The tree becomes a symbol of the inner terror of children who strike and moan inwardly. It also prophesies the future doom which is to beset the Morel family.

The Swing at Willey Farm is symbolic of the vacillating relationship between Paul and Miriam. The forward and backward movement of the swing stands for the moments of their emotional and spiritual union only to be followed by their inability to hold on to each other for a very long time. While Paul enjoys swinging with abandon, Miriam is unable to let go of herself, which seems to suggest a degree of frigidity that Paul will later accuse her of. Miriam's inability to relax is also suggested when she is afraid to feed the hens in Wiley Farm although Paul assures her that it will not hurt her.

Natural images and symbols abound in the novel. One evening, when Paul and Miriam are on a walk together, they witness a large orange moon behind them. Both Paul and Miriam are aroused by the sight of the moon. But though Miriam is also deeply affected, still Paul fails to get across to her. Thus the orange moon becomes a symbol of aroused passion in Paul. Mrs. Morel too once witnesses a "blinding August moon" when she is locked out of the house by Walter just before the birth of Paul. Mrs. Morel feels herself melting away in the moon light along with the child. Later when she is allowed into the house again, she smiles seeing her face smeared with the pollen dust of lilies. The yellow dust is symbolic of Nature's benediction for both Gertrude and the unborn Paul and it also suggests their oneness with the natural order of things.

One of the major symbols in this novel is the ubiquitous use of flowers. Often they are used to prefigure events that will occur very soon after the appearance of the flower. For example, a black flower is described before the death of William, clearly symbolising the death and grief that is about to enter into the Morel family. In the same way, red and white flowers are described usually before romantic moments of physical union. Another important flower symbol occurs in the scene where Clara, Paul and Miriam are walking together in a field with its many "clusters of strong flowers" which they begin to pick. Paul chooses his flowers

scientifically and objectively. He has a spontaneous and direct contact with the flowers. Miriam picks the flowers reverentially yet she seems to suck out the life from them. Her bunches thus lack elegance. But Clara does not pick them at all, boldly declaring that flowers are not to be picked at all because it kills them.

5.15.11 Classifying *Sons and Lovers* as a Novel

As a Psychological Novel

One of the dominant impressions we form of *Sons and Lovers* is that it is a typical example of both psychological as well as autobiographical fiction. Paul's Oedipal relationship with his mother forms the core of the novel around which the rest of the story is fleshed out. The term 'Oedipus Complex' derives from Sigmund Freud's theory that the child, especially the male child, is sexually attracted to his mother, but represses this strong emotion. This repression, however, is never complete and finds expression later in life. In *Sons and Lovers*, we find Paul being enamoured of his mother Gertrude, as one would be of a lover. In keeping with the autobiographical note in Lawrence's fiction, this relationship is modelled on Lawrence's own experiences. In 'A Personal Record', Jessie Chambers, upon whom the character of Miriam is based, quotes Lawrence as having said about his mother, "I've loved her like a lover. That's why I could never love you". This is in fact corroborated by Lawrence's own letter to his publisher and friend, Edward Garnett, where he often wrote about this strong bond with his mother. It is in fact so overpowering an affinity that he is unable to form wholesome, fulfilling relationships with any other woman. As a child, Paul is deeply in awe and admiration of his mother. Even when he grows up and feels attracted towards other women, he is in constant need of his mother's approval. His relationship with Miriam is thwarted chiefly because he does not get this approval. It is different in the case of Clara, since it is chiefly a physical relationship more than anything else. When Mrs. Morel dies, Paul is left unmoored, and finds himself at a crossroads. The open ending of the novel has been variously interpreted in term of either a negation or an affirmation. We might choose to read it as the latter as one of the strands of the novel has been to trace Paul's emotional crisis stemming from his complicated relationship with Gertrude Morel, and her death provides him with an opportunity to break free of her psychological stranglehold and redefine his own selfhood and identity. The last lines are positive and affirmative: "His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the *darkness*, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, *glowing town, quickly*" (emphasis added).

These last lines clearly spell out a message of growth, hope and moving ahead for Paul.

As a *Bildungsroman*

Bildungsroman is a German word which means “novel of education” or “novel of formation.” *Sons and Lovers* has been considered to be a classic example of this genre in the twentieth century.

Some characteristics of a typical specimen of this genre are the following:

- the growing child in these novels is often orphaned or fatherless — if not literally, then metaphorically
- the journey from the home is often a journey away from provinciality
- money or financial independence are important factors
- many protagonists are tested not only by their new surroundings, or by money, but also by love — many times a pure love is contrasted to a destructive/unhealthy one
- the central obstacle in many such novels is contained within the protagonist himself
- most protagonists experience some sort of epiphany, where a moment of clarity helps them break through their delusions and changes them, either spiritually or in terms of their conduct, or both
- the ending is often ambiguous, ambivalent, or lacks decisive closure
- many Victorian *bildungsroman* were considered at least partly autobiographical (<http://web.stanford.edu/~steener/su02/english132/Bildungsroman.htm>)

Of course, some novels of this genre follow these parameters more faithfully than others. Essentially, a *bildungsroman* is a “novel of formation” or “education” which follows the development of the protagonist’s mind and character in the passage from childhood through various experiences (usually involving a spiritual crisis) into maturity and the recognition of his/her role in the world. Considered in the light of these parameters, it is clear that the journey of Paul Morel from childhood to maturity follows this trajectory of the *bildungsroman*.

Paul’s struggles are manifold – social, economic, emotional and spiritual. Egged on by his mother, he aspires to break out of the mining town of Bestwood and has no intention of following his father’s footsteps in his mining profession. Apart from his school, Paul learns from various sources. He is tutored in French and German by the local minister, Mr. Heaton; coached in composition by his brother William; encouraged in his art by his mother; and self-taught when it comes to literature. But the path to the fulfilment of his desire to become an artist and to seriously earn from it is not easy. He begins by working in a dingy Nottingham firm translating French letters into English, but finds satisfaction in painting. In this he finds ardent support and inspiration from Miriam, with whom he shares his knowledge of and enthusiasm for art and literature. The novel progressively shows Paul’s growth and success as an artist and this leads Paul to take himself more seriously in his painting.

In its core, a bildungsroman consists of a quest for identity. The novel portrays three central relationships in Paul's life – with his mother, with Miriam Leivers and with Clara Dawes. While his mother functions as his emotional anchor, it is with Miriam that he discovers companionship and the pleasure of interacting with someone his own age. But his relationship with Miriam was doomed from the moment his mother became hostile about it. When he meets Clara, he sheds his earlier physical hesitation and achieves sexual consummation for the first time. Each of these relationships takes him further in his spiritual growth. *Sons and Lovers* has been criticised for focussing on Paul's character at the cost of all these other characters, but we may remember here that it is inherent in the format of the bildungsroman to have characters other than the protagonist in 'instrumental' rather than 'independent' functions.

In his essay '*Sons and Lovers as Bildungsroman*', critic Richard D. Beards comments that there are "four distinct trials which the Bildungsroman protagonist must traditionally master – vocation, mating, religion and identity". He defines these as the four axes through which the protagonist matures. Paul has a distinct sense of religion. He explains the nature of his religious belief in an argument with Miriam: "It's not religious to be religious. ... I reckon a crow is religious when it sails across the sky. But it only does it because it feels itself carried to where it's going, not because it thinks it's being eternal'. The crow's lack of consciousness, its utter passivity - "it feels itself carried to where it's going" – corresponds to Paul's (and Lawrence's) sense of the religious as opposed to Miriam's.

Finally, as the novel concludes, though it is left open ended, we may discern that Paul has worked through various emotional and spiritual crises, and that the distant twinkling lights of the city are symbolic of the way ahead for him.

As a Working Class Novel

Lawrence's novels provide a rare insider's view of working class life in the English Midlands. The backdrop of the pre-industrial small colliery town of Bestwood is portrayed with extraordinary attention to historical and geographical detail, as this was the kind of mining community Lawrence himself grew up in. In fact, *Sons and Lovers* has often been regarded as the first working class novel in English.

The novel opens with a very evocative description of the Bottoms, where the Morels live. Although Walter Morel works as a coal miner, his wife Gertrude aspires to break out of this world and dreams that her sons will carve a better future for themselves away from the mines. Having come from the genteel middle class herself, Gertrude has never been able to adjust to her altered conditions, and after the first flush of marriage got over, she has always felt alienated by her surroundings. Walter Morel, on the other hand, stands as a representative of

the working classes, embodying many of their characteristic features, such as a robust spontaneity, warmth and physical energy. Lawrence vividly portrays minute details of the typical routine of a miner – there are descriptions of the dire working conditions inside the pits, the food that Morel takes along with him, and of the utter exhaustion he feels after a day's work. He also accounts for the finances of the coal miners – how money was divided within the family, scenes of collecting money at the company office, dividing the pay among the four butties and of the compensation he receives when he is injured. We may therefore find an accurate description of life in a turn of the century coal mining town that Bestwood was.

Considering the very different backgrounds to which the Morels belong, the outlines of a class battle are drawn within the Morel household and every confrontation between Walter and Gertrude is inevitably also tinged and complicated by this consciousness of mutual difference. Gertrude places all her hopes first on William, and then when he dies, on her second son Paul, and she considers her ambition for her sons as also a kind of vindication for her lifelong struggle in a bitter marriage.

The plot of this novel may thus be seen as operating on a dual plane – one tracing the web of relationships centred around Paul, and the other presenting a faithful portrait of working class life in the Midlands, and of the way some young men strive to break out of their life in the collieries. In the Morel family, William is the first to do so, when he secures a well paying job in London and becomes something of a gentleman. After his death, Paul charts his own trajectory as an artist and the novel concludes with him standing at the crossroads of his small town past and a possible and indeed, probable future in the city.

5.15.12 Summing Up

- *Sons and Lovers* occupies a unique position in D.H. Lawrence's work as it has variously been considered to be the last of his early novels or the first of his mature works.
- The novel deals with many themes that were considered radical in its time, celebrated most of all for its handling of the **Oedipal relationship** between Paul and Gertrude Morel. This attachment takes on such pathological proportions that it affects all his other relationships with women of his own age, and even as the novel ends, Paul knows that he has not been able to break out of this bond that has alienated him and left him incapable of all other relationships.
- The novel may also be considered a **bildungsroman** as it depicts the coming-of-age of Paul Morel, tracing his journey from his birth upto his adulthood, when he is ready to step into the wider world.

- One of the aspects of the novel that has unfailingly been pointed out by all critics is the **autobiographical** nature of the novel. Most of the characters have equivalents in Lawrence's own life, with Paul Morel being a faithful self-portrait of Lawrence himself.
- But what one must remember is that although Paul acts as the **narratorial mouthpiece** and though the narrator seems to speak from Paul's point of view, there is enough evidence in the action of the novel that complicates and undercuts this privileging of Paul's point of view. One such instance that is often cited is Paul's rejection of Miriam. Though he cruelly breaks off all ties with her saying that she is too spiritual for him, Clara sets him right and points out that Miriam was like any other woman, and it was Paul who failed to take the relationship forward. Also, although Paul is completely sympathetic towards his mother and the narrative too depicts the domestic abuse meted out to Gertrude, there are enough instances in the story that present the predicament of Walter Morel, who finds himself isolated in his own house by a cold and reserved spouse who does not understand him and of whom he is plainly afraid.
- Thus both the Morels are alternately agents and victims of abuse. It is this **nuanced and layered tonality** the novel has that allows for **multiple perspectives** to coexist in the same narrative.

5.15.13 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions

1. How can we see *Sons and Lovers* as a working-class novel? Discuss.
2. Does *Sons and Lovers* deal with the Oedipus Complex? Justify your opinion with a close reading of the text.
3. Consider *Sons and Lovers* as a Bildungsroman.
4. Write a note on the women characters of *Sons and Lovers*.
5. Discuss *Sons and Lovers* as an autobiographical novel.
6. Comment on *Sons and Lovers* as a novel about human relationships.
7. Write a note on the interrelationship of class and sexuality in *Sons and Lovers*.
8. Write a note on Lawrence's use of symbols in *Sons and Lovers*.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions

9. Write a note on the character of Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers*.
10. Why do you think the Morel marriage was so unhappy? Who was more to blame? Discuss.
11. Was Walter Morel a bad man? Give your opinion and substantiate it with examples.
12. Describe Paul's relationship with his mother.
13. Write a short note on the character of William Morel.
6. Write a note on the character of Miriam Leivers.
7. Was the Paul-Clara relationship based on love or passion? Discuss.
8. Would you say Gertrude Morel was a good mother? Discuss.

Short Questions

1. What was Gertrude unaware of about Walter? Do you think she was sorry she had married him? Why?
2. Why do you think Morel cuts off William's hair? Why does that upset Gertrude so much?
3. Why was Gertrude opposed to William marrying Lily Western? Was she jealous or actually concerned about her son's future life?
4. Would you say Paul was cruel to Miriam? Give instances.
5. Why did Mrs. Morel not approve of the relationship between Paul and Miriam?
6. Describe the death of Gertrude Morel.

5.15.14 Suggested Reading

Primary Text :

Celly, Ashok, ed. *Sons and Lovers*. By D.H. Lawrence Worldview Critical Editions. Delhi : Worldview, 2002 Ashok, ed.

Bell, Michael. *D.H. Lawrence: Language and Being*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers*. New York: Chelsea House, 1988.

Draper, R. P., ed. *D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.

Farr, Judith, ed. *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of 'Sons and Lovers'*. Englewood

Unit 16 □ Virginia Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway*

Structure

5.15.1 Objectives

5.16.2 Introduction

5.16.3 Critical Summary

5.16.4 Themes and Issues

5.16.4.1 The First World War

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5.16.4.3 The Life and Death of the Soul

5.16.4.4 The Theme of Love

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5.16.4.6 The Social Critique

5.16.5. Virginia Woolf's Art of Characterisation

5.19.5.1. Clarissa Dalloway

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5.16.6. *Mrs Dalloway* as a Feminist Text

5.16.7 Use of Imagery

5.16.8 *Mrs Dalloway* as a Modernist text and its Narrative Technique

5.16.9 Summing up

5.16.10 Comprehension Exercises

5.16.11 Suggested Reading

5.16.1 Objectives

In this unit, we shall focus on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). It is one of the most well-known British modernist literary works. This unit will

- provide a critical summary of the novel;
- discuss the main themes of the novel;
- analyse the central characters of the novel;
- analyse the critical issues raised by the novel.

5.16.2 Introduction

Virginia Woolf was born as (subsequently referred to as ‘Woolf’) Adeline Virginia Stephen in Lewes, United Kingdom on 25 January, 1882. Her father was the famous English thinker and writer Leslie Stephen. Both of her parents came from upper-middle-class families. In 1912 at the age of thirty, she married Leonard Woolf, a thinker and writer of repute at the time. The marriage was marked by mutual understanding and affection. Her major works include *Jacob’s Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) *Orlando* (1928), and *The Waves* (1932). In non-fictional works such as *The Common Reader* (1925) and *A Room of One’s Own* (1939), she comments on social and literary issues. She passed away in 1941.

Woolf’s adolescence was blighted by a number of traumatic events. Her mother Julia died in 1895. Shortly after this, her half-sister Stella died; and then in 1904 and 1906 occurred the deaths of her father and her brother Thoby respectively. After such incidents, the Stephens moved to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. It was here that the famous Bloomsbury group was formed. At first, it consisted almost entirely of her brother’s friends from Cambridge. However, as the group expanded many famous artists and thinkers became involved, including John Maynard Keynes, the economist; Lytton Strachey, the author of *Eminent Victorians*; and Clive Bell, the painter. Later, the novelist E. M. Forster and the poet T. S. Eliot became associated with it. At the center of the group’s thought was a commitment to innovation and experimentalism and a determination to shake off the influence of the Victorians.

During the early years of her involvement with the group, Woolf read widely English and European literature and gradually began to establish her own voice as an author. She began work on a novel in 1906, but it was never finished, and it was not until 1915 that her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, was published. In 1915 the Woolf’s moved from central London to Hogarth House in Paradise Road, Richmond, on the outskirts of London. The famous Hogarth Press was set up here in 1917. It allowed them to promote new and unconventional literary works, and it was the Hogarth Press that first published T. S. Eliot’s important volume *Poems 1919* and then in 1922 *The Waste Land*. She had now complete control over the publication of her own novels. A part from *Night and Day* (1919), all her books were published with the Hogarth imprint.

In 1922 Virginia Woolf began to work on the portrait of a shallow and superficial society hostess called Mrs Dalloway, who had made a brief appearance in her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915). At least part of the revival of interest in the character came about because of the

death in October 1922 of Kitty Maxse, whom Virginia had used as her model. The original portrait had been rather unsympathetic and external, but in the intervening years Woolf's response had changed. Woolf wrote the short story "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street" in August 1922. A prefatory to the novel, it was ultimately published in 1925.

5.16.3 Critical Summary

Mrs Dalloway is not a novel that chronicles the life story of Clarissa Dalloway. It is a collage, a mosaic portrait; it pieces together bits of Mrs Dalloway's past and bits of her present in a single day—a Wednesday in mid-June, 1923. Although *Mrs Dalloway* is a rather forbidding novel when approached for the first time, the plot is, in fact, extremely straightforward. Mrs Clarissa Dalloway, the middle-aged, convalescent wife of Richard Dalloway, a Member of Parliament, is to hold an important party on a June night in 1923. One thread of the novel follows her thoughts and actions as she moves through the day making her preparations. The reader is also asked to see her from other people's points of view. This telling of a story from multiple perspectives is a noteworthy modernist technique. The most complex response comes from Peter Walsh, newly returned from India (then part of the British Empire) to arrange his marriage to Daisy, currently the wife of a Major who was serving in the British army in India. Peter is deeply critical of the way Clarissa has given herself over entirely to her husband and to high society; and yet as someone who never quite recovered from loving her and being rejected, he retains an affectionate and indulgent attitude towards her. A stark contrast to the lives, concerns and pretension of those who inhabit the upper-middle, governing class is provided by the story of Septimus Smith, a self-educated war veteran, and his Italian wife Lucrezia (mostly called Rezia in the novel). The events of their day are paralleled with those of Clarissa and her circle, but it is not until the evening that the two worlds truly overlap when Sir William Bradshaw, a physician, talks to Richard Dalloway about the suicide of Septimus, who is one of his patients. Although England has largely recovered from the horror of the First World War (1914-18), Septimus remains vulnerable to the violent memories which lead to frequent nervous breakdowns.

Rezia, unable to communicate with her husband, takes him to see Sir William, a specialist in nervous diseases. However, Sir William is mechanical in approach and is rather myopic in his treatment. He often makes matters worse for Septimus as – his concerns, mostly well-meaning concerns like those of his colleague Dr Holmes, are seen as a threat by Septimus. Later in the day Dr Holmes calls on the Smiths at their lodgings in Bloomsbury, with the

intention of having Septimus taken to a mental home. Septimus, worried that everyone is trying to pry into his privacy, throws himself out of the window to his death. The novel ends with Mrs Dalloway's party. The news of Septimus's death breaks in upon Clarissa's gaiety. But even though she is disturbed, she decides not to let her own feelings subdue the mood of her guests. By the end, her old friend Peter Walsh sees her in a new way, though she still remains an enigma.

5.16.4 Themes and Issues

Some of the central issues Woolf raises in the novel guides the reader's responses to the characters. Firstly, the novel shows that all experience is subjective: each of the characters perceives life in a different way because each one has specific experiences. Secondly, the reader is constantly asked to attend to ideas about human personality being fluid rather than fixed. Woolf takes up this last idea and combines it with an examination of the view that the inner self of each of us is constantly changed and moulded by moods or new experiences.

5.16.4.1 The First World War

The twentieth century experience is shaped by the historical event of the First World War. It reconfigured existing values in life and literature. After the end of the First World War in 1918 the world had radically changed. It was a divided world. Europe which was highly industrialised followed capitalism as its chosen economic path. The countries in the continent had colonies in South America, Africa, Asia, and the Far East, but all on a sudden their political power and clout declined. Particularly, England lost its sheen and was faced with the challenge of managing its colonies in the new situation. This rings true in some parts of *Mrs Dalloway*.

War had various effects on the common people. In the context of the War, the war-veteran Septimus Warren Smith in the novel turns into a symbol of the devastation of modern-day war violence. That is where the First World War becomes an integral theme of this novel. We are given the following picture of the War that affected Septimus's mind superficially, first in an ordinary sense, and later in a fearsome way:

For, now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunderclaps of fear. He could not feel. As he opened the door of the room where the Italian girls sat making hats, he could see them; could hear them; they were rubbing wires among coloured beads in saucers; they were

turning buckram shapes this way and that; the table was all strewn with feathers, spangles, silks, ribbons; scissors were rapping on the table; but something failed him; he could not feel. Still, scissorsrapping, girls laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge.

The effect of war on Septimus's mind is debilitating. It is devastating to him as well as to his readers. When he looks at an ordinary scene in the marketplace, "something fails him" and he cannot feel. It anticipates a deep malady forming in him. After marrying Lucrezia, they plan to have a child. But something has gone wrong with his physical impulse, and he cannot attain arousal, it stuns and destroys all kinds of creative impulses, even as there is no medical reason for the problem:

So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter except the sin for human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel. He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its degradation.

Death of Evans is disturbing enough. It jolts Septimus completely, making him confront a sense of vacuum. It was the loss of a friend and sweetness of the climate that both had created for each other. They would invent games in the middle of gunshots and smoke, and the killings would move to the background. The ending of the sentence with 'prostrate body which lay realizing its degradation' was a whole new construct of the sense of death pervading that atmosphere. It is Virginia Woolf's creative skills that takes the readers suddenly into the middle of 'degradation.' Septimus feels it crawling into his mind and disturbing his normal perceptions.

5.16.4.2 The Medical Profession

In the novel, we have Doctor Holmes and Doctor Bradshaw providing medical advice and treatment to the needy. The former is a general physician and the latter, a specialist. They are professionally well-trained and can explain the health issues connected with the well-being of citizens. Woolf deploys a sharp satire. She makes it clear that the field of medicine has no serious concern for public health. It is more of a sham than a genuine pursuit to serve the noble cause of providing care. Holmes and Bradshaw pay little attention to the requirements of patients. In treating Septimus, Dr. Holmes has no sympathy for the patient and is casual in his approach. He finds Septimus over-anxious and fails to address his mental condition. He terms Septimus's condition a part of human nature and believes there is nothing wrong with him.

Also, he eyes Septimus's wife Lucrezia with interest and is not bothered about the patient's fear related to the fact that he was hallucinating about Evans. On his part, Septimus does not trust him and has angry outbursts off and on. He does not like Dr. Holmes at all. We are told the following about Septimus by the author-narrator:

Human nature, in short, was on him (Septimus) the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils. Holmes was on him. Dr. Holmes came quite regularly every day. Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard, human nature is on you. Holmes is on you. Their only chance was to escape, without letting Holmes know; to Italy anywhere, anywhere.

Later, Lucrezia is more worried seeing the condition of Septimus which deteriorates further. His hallucinations about Evans gives Septimus a mix of perspectives which becomes too difficult for him to handle. Lucrezia does not know what to do when she hears him speak the following: "Communication is health, communication is happiness, communication... he muttered." The author's opinion about the doctors is that they are not serious. Dr. Holmes's attitude towards Septimus is cynical. He is clear that being of low economic status, Septimus does not deserve more than he is getting. The doctor's eye is on the patient's pocket. Still worse is the case of Dr. William Bradshaw who is represented in strongly critical terms. Woolf characterises him as follows:

Sir William...had worked very hard. He had won his position by sheer ability (by being the son of a shopkeeper); loved his profession; made a fine figurehead at ceremonies and spoke well all of which had by the time he was knighted given him a heavy look...He could see the first moment they came into the room (the Warren Smiths they were called); he was certain directly he saw the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown — complete physical and nervous breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes (writing answers to questions, murmured discreetly, on a pink card). How long had Dr. Holmes been attending him? Six weeks. Prescribed a little bromide? Said there was nothing the matter? Ah yes (those general practitioners! thought Sir William). It took half his time to undo their blunders. Some were irreparable.

In this extract, Woolf has drawn the reader's attention to Bradshaw's social background that affected his value system. The son of a shopkeeper coming to the medical trade and aiming to rise high in the general esteem is his chosen course. These have been acquired by him with hard work and application. For him, the knowledge of medicine has crystallised into

a valuable acquisition called expertise. His language too is affected by his social standing in the profession. It makes him view Septimus and Lucrezia as a social category, 'The Warren Smiths they were called'. The intention of the author is to expose the hollowness of the medical profession and its practitioners who should be responsible for the wellbeing of the masses.

5.16.4.3 The Life and 'the Death of the Soul'

At the centre of *Mrs Dalloway* is a portrait of Clarissa's marriage to Richard. To an outsider like Peter Walsh, it seems that Clarissa has embraced 'the death of the soul.' It appears that she has exchanged her freedom of spirit and her sexuality for the wealth and security which Richard can offer. His thoughts regarding Clarissa at Bourton (Bourton is the place where Clarissa spent her youth) appears to have come true: in his eyes she is 'the perfect hostess' who has lost all depth and is now merely an empty shell. It is because of this that Peter's question during the morning visit has such urgency. He is desperately attempting to get beneath the social veneer: "Tell me," he says, seizing her by the shoulders. "Are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard—" What he cannot know, however, is that Richard, whom Clarissa, Sally (Clarissa's friend from her days at Bourton) and he had mocked initially at Bourton, acts as a source of strength.

When we see Clarissa from the inside, we recognise that the veneer hides both her insecurity and her complexes. Although Clarissa still cares for Peter, she has had to recognise that he trespasses on her inner self too much: 'with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable.' What Clarissa appreciates about her marriage is the way that it offers stability and sanity: "Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading *The Times*, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished." Richard's roses and his solicitousness about her health testify to an affection between the two which allows them to communicate enough to preserve Clarissa's sanity. More importantly, the boundaries between them are clearly defined so that she can retain a sense of self-independence despite having a husband. However, in her lonely reflections on the nature of her marriage she is deeply aware of how much she has missed through her inability to commit herself to him sexually. On the other hand, further involvement would have allowed a rape of the soul. Rape of the soul here would mean the intrusion into her inner self which she never really preferred. She was happy with her relationship with Richard more because it was distant both physically and mentally. The boundaries were as if defined which did not allow incursion.

In choosing to cut herself off from Peter she has sacrificed a vital part of herself. When he comes to visit her, she suddenly has a sense of enormous well-being: “all in a clap it came over her. If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!” Deep down, she realises that she has surrendered her desire to feel deeply. Instead, a mere sensation – an acute awareness of the world immediately around her – has taken the place of anything more substantial. The point is made obvious through the ornate descriptions of Clarissa’s everyday life (her view of the florist’s shop). Her extravagance smacks of insincerity. It is because of this that she recognises in moments of honesty that there is really something wrong with her: “There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room.” The purity, the integrity” of her youthful emotion towards Sally Seton proves how much Clarissa has changed: “Then, for that moment, she had seen the illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed.” Her desire for privacy has forced her to ‘stifle her soul’ – she has snapped off all true communications with others. She has made her choice and now, she must live with it: “It was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun.”

5.16.4.4 Theme of Love

Love is a major theme in *Mrs Dalloway*. This emotion captured in the novel looms large in the general scheme of things and affects the characters variedly. It gives people a purpose beyond social boundaries. Between Septimus and Lucrezia, love prospers, giving the two lovers stability and commitment. Traumatized by war, Septimus meets Lucrezia in the market in Italy. Soon, the two fall in love and decide to tie the knot. Lucrezia likes Septimus’s quiet ways and innocence as well as his penchant for literature. Lucrezia attracts him for her soft charm and industrious nature. She works earnestly for livelihood. Following their marriage, they shift to England and set up home there. Contrary to expectations though, life does not prove to be simple and cozy for them. The antagonist in this scheme of things is Septimus’ subconscious state of mind. He thought bad memories was left behind and he could settle down peacefully with his wife. It was based on attraction, urge and inspiration. The simple story of Septimus and Lucrezia soon takes a disturbing turn when the former hallucinates about his comrade-in-arms, Evans, on the war front. Septimus saw him dying in front of him. The incidence of death did not sink in immediately. After marriage with Lucrezia, Septimus hallucinates Evans walking towards him in London. But how would he see the difference between an unreal, hallucinatory image of his friend and the fact that he is really dead. He takes the image as real and this is the onset of madness. He starts hallucinating probably because his emotion of love for Lucrezia gave him a heightened mental state. Love conjures

up fantasy and imagination. Lovers cannot distinguish between the real and the imaginary as easily as normal people would. In the present case, it is not easy to match the real with the imagined in a world that was rocked by death and destruction.

5.16.4.5 Theme of Madness

In many ways, Septimus Smith's story, though seemingly unrelated to Clarissa's, accentuates yet further the theme of the isolation of an individual within society. Once again, Woolf emphasises the importance of the inner self and the need to retain individuality. The most important similarity lies in Septimus's extreme awareness of his isolation, the 'pit' into which he is conscious that he is descending. The passage in which he reflects that he is 'deserted' exactly parallels Clarissa's panic when she realizes that Richard has gone to lunch with Lady Bruton: "He has left me; I am alone for ever, she thought." Woolf is drawing attention to his madness as merely a more extreme form of everyone else's sanity. Unlike Clarissa, he has become oblivious to social pressure; he is no longer able to present an external appearance which is at odds with his inner integrity. Because of his war experiences he is unable to see himself as anything except a brute. Consequently, he refuses to adopt the false identity – that of the decorated war hero which society attempts to force upon him. He is sympathetically portrayed as a victim of society's definition of normality because society refuses to take any of the blame for his illness. Nonetheless, he longs to connect with other people (p. 84): "Communication is health; communication is happiness. Communication, he muttered." However, his efforts to communicate always end with him talking to himself because he now lives in a self-enclosed, dream-world. Whereas for Clarissa there is an overwhelming sense that she must continue trying to make sense of a meaningless world through the giving of parties, for Septimus the world is suffused with meaning, though he can never quite work out what it is. Thus the exhilaration which Clarissa gets from everyday events becomes for him a form of torture because the natural world takes on a nightmarish and surreal quality and seems to be about to engulf him: "But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down" In order to preserve his sense of identity Septimus has to cut himself off from the intensity of such a moment: "But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more."

Unfortunately for Septimus, death through suicide is eventually his only means of defeating the forces which threaten his inner sense of himself. For him, as Clarissa recognises "Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate ... There was an embrace in death." And from her point of view, Septimus's true importance lies in the way that he would not allow

his soul to be forced by society, symbolised by Sir William Bradshaw and his belief in proportion. He has maintained his independence and his integrity, reasserting control at the last moment.

5.16.4.6 The Social Critique

The criticism of the upper-middle-class social milieu in the novel is mainly carried out by the representation of Clarissa. She is supposedly the epitome of ‘civilization,’ and yet at the same time Woolf is mocking at the frailty of the values by which her society lives. There is a degree of bitterness in the novel which centres on the idea that Septimus has sacrificed himself willingly during the War in an attempt to defend a society which is indifferent to his fate. Over the years Clarissa’s radicalism has disappeared as has her capacity for passion and love. The point is made explicit by the descriptions of her youth at Bourton which provide us with a way of judging the present. At that time she and Sally “sat hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out.” In contrast, when Peter visits Clarissa he sees her surrounded by symbols of affluence. He is surprised by her complacent acceptance of private property: “the inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the chair covers and the old valuable English prints.” And, as we discover later, Peter is uncompromising and unforgiving in his analysis of hypocrisy other than his own: “The All-judging, the All-merciful might excuse. Peter Walsh had no mercy.” We retain our sympathy for Clarissa throughout – but at the same time we see the validity of Peter’s point. After all, despite Clarissa’s unease about the way that her life has developed, she remains committed for reasons of self-preservation. However, it was an existence which Woolf deliberately portrays as superficial and consumed by trivialities. Her ‘social instinct’ triumphs over her capacity for self-knowledge and analysis. Furthermore, the reader often feels that her philosophy of decency towards others as a means of defeating the powers of destruction and chaos is woefully inadequate, particularly because it is so selective. This is established by Clarissa’s snobbish attitude towards Miss Doris Kilman (The tutor of Elizabeth Dalloway, the daughter of Richard and Clarissa. Kilman was in love with Elizabeth, an attraction that Clarissa finds repulsive. Clarissa thinks of Kilman as a monster and also poor, single, overeducated and ugly) and her distant cousin Ellie Henderson, who, in Clarissa’s eyes, is insignificant because of her lack of money and social grace. Sally Seton confirms this view of Clarissa when she remarks to Peter that Clarissa has never come to visit her in Manchester because she married a miner’s son.

It emerges once again in Clarissa's moment of triumph when she escorts the Prime Minister through her party and feels "that intoxication of the moment, that dilation of the nerves", particularly as part of the delight stems from Clarissa's feeling that others envy her. What she cannot see is that her triumph is empty because the Prime Minister is so ordinary; "You might have stood him behind a counter and bought biscuits – poor chap, all rigged up in goldlace."

By showing us these external perspectives, Woolf wants to stress the limitations of both her central character and the class which she represents. During her wanderings round London Clarissa shows a sharp awareness of the 'texture' of experience. Yet her role as a mirror of society succeeds in reflecting the superficially beguiling and attractive aspects of Clarissa's personality. Like the rest of her class, she has failed to perceive that she is an unthinking part of the 'civilisation' which victimizes people like Septimus. For her the war is over. But the reader is witness to Septimus's continued suffering and cannot help noticing that his death forces the society only into a momentary realisation of its responsibilities. To be fair, when Sir William smugly suggests to Richard Dalloway that there must be some legal provision for people suffering from the delayed effects of shell shock, Clarissa is the only person who seems capable of feeling sympathy for Septimus as a person rather than a faceless member of the society. However, even there Woolf is careful to show us that Clarissa's concern is merely a projection of her own inner worries. We feel that Woolf intends us to see Clarissa's self-absorption (despite her good qualities) as contemptible.

5.16.5 Virginia Woolf's Art of Characterisation

One of the reasons for the extreme complexity of *Mrs Dalloway* lies in the fact that the characters are revealed to us through others. We see what the characters think about each other, but at the same time we have to bear in mind their prejudices. However, Woolf does provide us with some external guidelines by showing how people reveal their own characters through their mannerisms, their eating habits, their obsessions and their behaviour towards others.

5.16.5.1 Clarissa Dalloway

Clarissa Dalloway, one of the major characters of the novel, struggles constantly to balance her internal life with the external world. Her world consists of glittering surfaces, such as fine fashion, parties, and high society, but as she moves through that world she probes beneath those surfaces in search of deeper meaning. Yearning for privacy, Clarissa has a

tendency toward introspection that gives her a profound capacity for emotion, which many other characters lack. However, she is always concerned with appearances and keeps herself tightly composed, seldom sharing her feelings with anyone. She uses a constant stream of cordial chatter and activity to keep her soul locked safely away, which can make her seem shallow even to those who know her well.

Constantly overlaying the past and the present, Clarissa strives to reconcile herself to life despite her potent memories. For most of the novel she considers aging and death with trepidation, even as she performs life-affirming actions, such as buying flowers. Though content, Clarissa never lets go of the doubt she feels about the decisions that have shaped her life, particularly her decision to marry Richard instead of Peter Walsh. She understands that life with Peter would have been difficult, but at the same time she is uneasily aware that she sacrificed passion for the security and tranquility of an upper-class life. At times she wishes for a chance to live life over again. She experiences a moment of clarity and peace when she watches her old neighbor through her window, and by the end of the day she has come to terms with the possibility of death. Like Septimus, Clarissa feels keenly the oppressive forces in life, and she accepts that the life she has is all she'll get. Her will to endure, however, prevails.

5.16.5.2 Septimus Warren Smith

Septimus, a veteran of World War I, suffers from shell shock and is lost within his own mind. He feels guilty even as he despises himself for being made numb by the war. His doctor has ordered Lucrezia, Septimus's wife, to make Septimus notice things outside himself, but Septimus has removed himself from the physical world. Instead, he lives in an internal world, wherein he sees and hears things that are not really there and he talks to his dead friend Evans. He is sometimes overcome with the beauty in the world, but he also fears that the people in it have no capacity for honesty or kindness. In her introduction to the Modern Library Edition of *Mrs Dalloway* written in 1928, Woolf was explicit: Septimus "is intended to be [Clarissa's] double". Woolf intended for Clarissa to speak the sane truth and Septimus the insane truth, and indeed Septimus's detachment enables him to judge other people more harshly than Clarissa is capable of. The world outside of Septimus is threatening, and the way Septimus sees that world offers little hope. On the surface, Septimus seems quite dissimilar to Clarissa, but he embodies many characteristics that Clarissa shares and thinks in much the same way she does. He could almost be her double in the novel. Septimus and Clarissa both have beak-noses, love Shakespeare, and fear oppression. More important, as Clarissa's double,

Septimus offers a contrast between the conscious struggle of a working-class veteran and the blind opulence of the upper class. His troubles call into question the legitimacy of the English society he fought to preserve during the war. Because his thoughts often run parallel to Clarissa's and echo hers in many ways, the thin line between what is considered sanity and insanity gets thinner and thinner. Septimus chooses to escape his problems by killing himself, a dramatic and tragic gesture that ultimately helps Clarissa to accept her own choices, as well as the society in which she lives.

5.16.6 *Mrs Dalloway* as a Feminist Text

Woolf has been sensitive to and concerned with issues relating to women but has never professed herself as a feminist. She has expressed unequivocally the need for women's empowerment through education and economic independence. Women should break free of passivity and assert their distinct identities and personal rights. Woolf resists unqualified feminism; furthermore, in both her criticism and her fiction art takes precedence over ideology. It is significant that right from the beginning, Clarissa seems to dominate the centre stage. Other characters assess her from their own perspectives. Woolf maintains impartiality and avoids gender politics. Clarissa's character attracts and repels at the same time and readers are free to form their own opinions. Clarissa's character is placed against significant male characters of the novel i.e. Septimus Smith, Peter Walsh and Richard Dalloway, and the contrast in their outlook and perspectives is made conspicuous throughout the novel. The psychological crisis being similar for Septimus and Clarissa, their response is different. More than gender difference guiding their thoughts, it was ideals and values which made their responses different.

Woolf is singular in breaking down rules and conventions in her fictional writings. Clarissa is neither rigid nor a modernist rebel trying to break free of existing sterile social rules. Clarissa is modern in outlook but introvert in nature. She cannot bear with the society's excessive preoccupation with the notion of 'proportion'. She feels suffocated by the role imposed on her. Here Woolf touches upon the sensitive issue of a woman experiencing identity crisis within the institution of marriage.

In spite of certain feminist traits in the novel, it cannot be narrowed down to be a manifestation of female grudge against a male-dominated society. There is a sense of isolation, disillusionment and emotional suffocation within but that is not created by patriarchy alone. Woolf also captures other aspects in the novel which are equally responsible for creating this dissatisfaction.

5.16.7 Use of Imagery

Although Clarissa Dalloway is only loosely connected to Septimus Smith through the plot of the novel, the link between them is made absolutely explicit through the images of wave and sea. At the beginning Clarissa leaves home thinking about the morning ‘fresh, as if issued to children on a beach’ and she takes the ‘plunge’ into the ‘waves of that divine vitality’. Again, after she hears of Septimus’s death, she uses the same phrase to show her admiration for retaining his sense of identity by choosing death: “But this young man who had killed himself – had he plunged holding this treasure?” Life is seen as being like a sea in which there can be joyful immersion at times such as when Clarissa escorts the Prime Minister through her party like ‘a creature floating in its element.’ And yet at other times the sea of life is threatening because of its unpredictability: “. . . and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl.” Unfortunately, some cannot be saved from drowning, as Clarissa recognises when she contrasts herself with Septimus. Throughout the novel Clarissa feels that it is only the security of her marriage which has kept her from the same fate, and yet as we see with the Bradshaws, marriage may involve one of the partners drowning in the ego of the other.

The sea stands for involvement with other people, a point which is delicately made when Peter Walsh stands watching people setting out for evening parties. the longing for the ‘caress’ of the sea, which offers them both comfort ‘hollowing them in its arched shell’, suggests that the sea has a dark side and is also linked (as Clarissa knows all too well) with spiritual death. Septimus makes the connection himself in Regent’s Park when he is thinking about his inability to feel. His close involvement with war and Evans’s death has left him emotionally drained and estranged from everything around him: “But he himself remained high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still, he begged” Later on, he regards his lack of connection with the world as an advantage because his inner sense of himself has not been corrupted. Clarissa’s enjoyment of ‘ebb and flow’ has a great deal to do with her desire to avoid facing the truth about herself.

The many appearances of Shakespeare specifically and poetry in general suggest hopefulness, the possibility of finding comfort in art, and the survival of the soul in *Mrs*

Dalloway. Clarissa quotes Shakespeare's plays many times throughout the day. When she shops for flowers at the beginning of the novel, she reads a few lines from a Shakespeare play, *Cymbeline*, in a book displayed in a shop window. The lines come from a funeral hymn in the play that suggests death should be embraced as a release from the constraints of life. Since Clarissa fears death for much of the novel, these lines suggest that an alternative, hopeful way of addressing the prospect of death exists. Clarissa also identifies with the title character in *Othello*, who loves his wife but kills her out of jealousy, then kills himself when he learns his jealousy was unwarranted. Clarissa shares with Othello the sense of having lost a love, especially when she thinks about Sally Seton. Before the war, Septimus appreciated Shakespeare as well, going so far as aspiring to be a poet. He no longer finds comfort in poetry after he returns. The presence of an appreciation for poetry reveals much about Clarissa and Septimus, just as the absence of such appreciation reveals much about the characters who differ from them, such as Richard Dalloway and Lady Bruton. Richard finds Shakespeare's sonnets indecent, and he compares reading them to listening in at a keyhole. Not surprisingly, Richard himself has a difficult time voicing his emotions. Lady Bruton never reads poetry either, and her demeanour is so rigid and impersonal that she has a reputation of caring more for politics than for people. Traditional English society promotes a suppression of visible emotion, and since Shakespeare and poetry promote a discussion of feeling and emotion, they belong to sensitive people like Clarissa, who are in many ways anti-establishment.

Tree and flower images abound in *Mrs Dalloway*. The colour, variety, and beauty of flowers suggest feeling and emotion, and those characters who are comfortable with flowers, such as Clarissa, have distinctly different personalities than those characters who are not, such as Richard and Lady Bruton. The first time we see Clarissa, a deep thinker, she is on her way to the flower shop, where she will revel in the flowers she sees. Richard and Hugh, more emotionally repressed representatives of the English establishment, offer traditional roses and carnations to Clarissa and Lady Bruton, respectively. Richard handles the bouquet of roses awkwardly, like a weapon. Lady Bruton accepts the flowers with a "grim smile" and lays them stiffly by her plate, also unsure of how to handle them. When she eventually stuffs them into her dress, the femininity and grace of the gesture are rare and unexpected. Trees, with their extensive root systems, suggest the vast reach of the human soul, and Clarissa and Septimus, who both struggle to protect their souls, revere them. Clarissa believes souls survive in trees after death, and Septimus, who has turned his back on patriarchal society, feels that cutting down a tree is the equivalent of committing murder.

Time imparts order to the fluid thoughts, memories, and encounters that make up *Mrs Dalloway*. Big Ben, a symbol of England and its might, sounds out the hour relentlessly, ensuring that the passage of time, and the awareness of eventual death, is always palpable. Clarissa, Septimus, Peter, and other characters are in the grip of time, and as they age they evaluate how they have spent their lives. Clarissa, in particular, senses the passage of time, and the appearance of Sally and Peter, friends from the past, emphasises how much time has gone by since Clarissa was young. Once the hour chimes, however, the sound disappears—its “leaden circles dissolved in the air.” This expression recurs many times throughout the novel, indicating how ephemeral time is, despite the pomp of Big Ben and despite people’s wary obsession with it. “It is time,” Rezia says to Septimus as they sit in the park waiting for the doctor’s appointment on Harley Street. The ancient woman at the Regent’s Park Tube station suggests that the human condition knows no boundaries of time, since she continues to sing the same song for what seems like eternity. She understands that life is circular, not merely linear, which is the only sort of time that Big Ben tracks. Time is so important to the themes, structure, and characters of this novel that Woolf almost named her book *The Hours*.

Consequently, the central images of the novel take on much more than a decorative role in the writing because they function as metaphors which illuminate its themes.

5.16.8 *Mrs Dalloway* as a Modernist text and its Narrative Technique

Virginia Woolf is closely associated with Stream of Consciousness technique. It is a modernist technique of representation. Just before her James Joyce (1882-1941) too experimented with it in his novel *Ulysses* (1922). In English fiction they are considered to be pioneers of the stream of consciousness technique. This made her literary approach nonlinear, fragmentary, and impressionistic. For that reason, her narrative has become more exploratory than descriptive. The conventional linear structure is conspicuous by its absence in her novels. Her fiction instead follows a patternless depiction, taking unexpected twists and turns, while investigating the grey areas of human experience. Likewise, dialogues and statements are mixed with other forms of expression such as monologue, daydreaming and fantasy. They lack cogency and appear anarchic. Sharply critical of logic and rational projection, Virginia Woolf experiments with images, pauses and sudden breaks. This is the preferred stance of modernist writing, rejecting viewpoints rooted in mainstream history.

In her essay “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” (1924), Woolf reviewed the need for a new method for fiction because the work of psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud had made people newly aware of the complexities of the human personality. She suggested that “in or about December, 1910, human character changed”. The date was not arbitrary. It was then that her friend Roger Fry organised the first exhibition of post-Impressionist painting to London and the avant-garde began to understand, through the work of artists like Pablo Picasso, the ‘Modernist’ perception that people are not fixed entities who can be understood completely by an external observer. Woolf was far from alone in these thoughts about how a new method of writing could reflect the complexity of experience, showing both an internal and an external view of the central characters. Like Joyce, Woolf set aside traditional narrative forms and chose instead to use one day as a fixed, known point for the reader. Using this basic structure, she is able to move freely between inner and outer worlds. She can also suggest that there is a difference between external time – the passing of the hours of a day and the way that time is measured internally. For most of the characters the past is no less alive than the present.

Although Woolf is often spoken of as being a ‘stream of consciousness’ writer, the term must be used carefully because *Mrs Dalloway* avoids the extended internal monologues favoured by Joyce in which every thought of the character, no matter how incoherent, is presented. Instead, despite her protestations about wanting to show us life ‘with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible’, Woolf does in fact intervene through her use of what Ann Banfield has called a ‘free indirect style’ (See *Describing the Unobserved and Other Essays: Unspeakable Sentences after Unspeakable Sentences* by Ann Banfield, 2019. The term means a style of third person narration which uses some of the characteristics of third-person along with the essence of the first-person direct speech.) The internal monologues of a character combine with an external, unidentified voice to give us the impression that there is a narrator talking directly to the reader. For example, if we take the first three sentences of the novel it is obvious that the first of them sees Clarissa as external whilst the next two are both external statements which also express Clarissa’s thoughts. The method enables us to follow both the characters’ conscious, articulated thoughts and also their inner half-realised perceptions about themselves and the world around them. Woolf is not particularly interested in showing us all the absurdities and oddities of human thought patterns. She aims instead for a method which will allow her both fluidity and compression. Consequently, reading *Mrs Dalloway* is a rather odd experience because we feel that we are both inside and outside the characters at the same time. We are tricked into feeling that the author has

disappeared, while at the same time Woolf is able to select and manipulate the material which is put before us. The technique is similar to that used in films when the camera seems to rove innocently over a scene picking out incidental details: the scene before us seems entirely artless, but a viewer is being unconsciously influenced by having his attention focused on some things rather than others. Moreover, the fact that the point of view keeps changing (the method has been called 'multipersonal' by a number of critics) constantly forces the reader to see 'reality' through eyes and prejudices of persons other than his own.

By showing us both an external and an internal view of the central characters, Woolf is able to analyse the loneliness of the individuals in modern society and the ways in which people mistakenly judge and evaluate each other. This technique helps to create and dramatise many of the novel's themes. Above all, she wants to display the multi-faceted nature of human identity. In her diary for 4 July 1934 she noted of herself: "How queer to have so many selves," and it is this which she seeks to convey through her narrative method. Our approval is sought for Clarissa because she shows some awareness of the problem. Unlike most of the other characters, she refuses to judge others by external appearances (though she seems to make an exception in Miss Kilman's case) because she knows how badly she herself has been misjudged by others: "She would not say of anyone in the world now that they were this or were that." Similarly at the end of the novel Sally speculates about the Dalloways: "And were they happy together? ... for as she admitted, she knew nothing about them, only jumped to conclusions, as one does." Woolf presents the complexity of the 'real' Clarissa Dalloway by giving a number of subjective views, including that of Clarissa herself. There is, however, no objective view of her. Even at the end she remains something of a mystery, and thus the technique of the novel confirms Sally Seton's thought: "what can one know even of the people one lives with every day?"

Another major narrative strategy employed is that of the flashback. It has the advantage, as Woolf herself noted when talking about her discovery of the 'tunnelling process', that she can tell the past 'by instalments as I have need of it'. Thus, there is no need to go into lengthy explanations of the history of the major characters because the past is gradually revealed in so far as it continues to influence the present. It is important, too, from the writer's point of view that revelations about the past come out slowly, because the reader must never forget that the main focus of the novel is the present: 'life; London; this moment of June'.

Finally, we are asked to see that the novel's method embodies a truth about how we get to know other people. Despite our status as privileged observers we, like the characters in the novel, are still unable to balance all the different aspects of our knowledge about Clarissa,

Peter, and Septimus. Woolf's novel suggests that if art is to capture something of the feeling of real life then life in its full complexity, as we ourselves experience it when dealing with our friends and acquaintances, must be vividly placed before us. And it is this that the narrative technique of *Mrs Dalloway* so brilliantly does.

5.16.9 Summing up

This unit opened with a biocritical discussion of Virginia Woolf. After a critical summary of the novel, we proceeded to consider the importance of the First World War in the context of the fiction. It was followed by a discussion of the themes and issues that *Mrs Dalloway* projects such as love and madness, the life and death of the soul, the medical profession, the art of characterisation. We also analysed *Mrs Dalloway* as a feminist text and explored the significance of the images of the sea and waves in the text. We concluded with a discussion of the nature of Woolf's modernist narrative technique.

5.16.10 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type

1. What facets of the English social system does Virginia Woolf criticise?
2. “... I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side.” How and why does Woolf link the world of Clarissa Dalloway with that of Septimus Smith?
3. What part does the theme of marriage play in *Mrs Dalloway* ?
4. Show how Woolf uses the technique of *Mrs Dalloway* to create some of its themes.
5. Is *Mrs Dalloway* anything more than a simple social comedy told in an unnecessarily complex way?
6. Would you agree with the opinion that *Mrs Dalloway* is a bitter condemnation of the priorities of a society which has lost all sense of value and direction? Discuss.
7. What does *Mrs Dalloway* suggest about Woolf's views about how women were treated by society in the 1920s?
8. How successful is Woolf in creating the atmosphere of London during the years after the First World War?

Medium Length Answers

1. Discuss the character of Septimus Warren Smith?
2. How would you assess the character of Clarissa Dalloway?
3. Write a brief note on the imagery of time and the Big Ben.
4. How do flowers and trees provide a relevant image in the novel?
5. Discuss *Mrs Dalloway* as a feminist text.

Short Answer Type

1. How is love a major theme in the novel?
2. Who does the First World War affect the most? How?
3. Who is Doris Kilman?
4. Who was Doctor Bradshaw? Why is he critiqued in this novel?
5. How is this novel a social critique?

5.16.11 Suggested Readings

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Modern Critical Interpretations: Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*. New York: Chelsea House, 1988.

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Unit 17 □ James Joyce: “Araby”

Structure

- 5.17.1 Objectives
- 5.17.2 Introduction to James Joyce
- 5.17.3 *Dubliners* – A Brief Insight
- 5.17.4 “Araby” – Text with Annotations
- 5.17.5 Analysis
- 5.17.6 Key Issues in “Araby”
- 5.17.7 Summing Up
- 5.17.8 Comprehension Exercises
- 5.17.9 Suggested Readings

5.17.1 Objectives

In its present written form, the short story as a genre may be a relatively new entrant into the literary scene, but it has existed in diverse forms ever since the beginnings of human articulation. Yes, the instinct for story telling is a very old one, and as you have seen in earlier Courses, many of the famous novelists came to prominence by trying their hand at short stories. Our focus in this Unit is on how James Joyce’s formative years have been an important influence in the making of his fictional art. The significance of his short story collection *Dubliners* has also been briefly reckoned, before making a detailed study of “Araby”.

5.17.2 Introduction to James Joyce

It must be mentioned at the outset that the purpose of this introduction is only to trace the growth of James Joyce, the short story writer and the novelist. Born on 2nd February 1882, James Augustine Aloysius Joyce was the eldest surviving child of John Stanislaus Joyce and Mary Jane Murray Joyce. For his schooling he was sent to Clongowes Wood College and later to Belvedere College, Dublin where Joyce became both famous and infamous! His fame was as the most gifted pupil while his notoriety arose from the definite signs of irreligiosity

that he showed. He was a good student and a good linguist too, having already studied Latin, French and Italian. But he was always at Jesuit institutions and that brought Joyce repeatedly at odds with the authorities.

Such controversies continued brewing as Joyce began to mature – his open advocacy of art over morality or the praise of the new realistic drama of Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian dramatist, drew much flak from the Irish Catholic clergy. He in turn detested their slavish mentality. Though he was deeply influenced by Irish nationalistic tendencies and the literary revival, somewhere Joyce could not accept the ‘quaint’ provincialism that was grasping Ireland; he felt his land needed to be more continental in approach to greater issues about the Empire that had begun to emerge. His work is generally pervaded by a passionate love for Ireland, as profound as the love of his life Nora Barnacle and in particular we find an unflinching love for his ‘dear dirty Dublin’.

Paris, where the young Joyce first went to study medical science in 1902 has been a major influence in the course of his literary career. It was here that he came across Edouard Dujardin’s novel *Les Lauriers sont coupés* (The Bays are Sere) written in 1888, which helped him derive his singular idea of the interior monologue. After a brief spell back in Dublin, Joyce was again in Paris in 1903. By now he had given up all attempts to study medicine and devoted himself to writing poems and epiphanies in the course of shaping his own aesthetics on his journey to becoming a literary artist. It was in 1904 on the suggestion of George Russel that Joyce started writing some simple short stories for the magazine *Irish Homestead* and that marked the beginnings of work on the stories for *Dubliners*. Though most of his adult life was spent abroad, Joyce’s fictional universe does not extend beyond Dublin, and is populated largely by characters that closely resemble family members, enemies and friends at home. As he clarified after the publication of his masterpiece *Ulysses* in 1922, “For myself, I always write about Dublin, because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of all the cities of the world. In the particular is contained the universal” (1).

Joyce’s first published work was *Chamber Music* (1907), a book of lyrical verse written in his student days and suffused with the graceful melody of early 19th century poetry. This was followed by *Dubliners* (1914), a collection of 15 short stories set in the Dublin where he grew up. These stories are penetrating analyses of the stagnation and paralysis of Dublin society seen from different facades, coupled with the sensitivities of the adolescent growing up young boy and recounted in narration from a vantage point. Prof. Samir Kumar Mukhopadhyay (2) in his elaborate analysis notes that Joyce experienced great difficulty in

getting the stories published, but after publication they earned him critical admiration from major literary figures like Ezra Pound. *Exiles*, which was Joyce's only attempt at drama (though not well acclaimed then), was staged at Munich in 1918 and later performed in London in 1926. It is interesting to note that the play was revived and directed by none other than Harold Pinter in 1970, almost 30 years after the death of James Joyce.

Ulysses (which has been referred to earlier) was partly serialised in an American magazine *Little Review* which however stopped doing so in 1920 after being prosecuted by the Society for the Prevention of Vice. In fact just about 13 chapters had been published in serial form when the U.S Customs Court ruled it to be 'obscene' in 1921. Joyce's use of curse words and such radical techniques as the 'stream of consciousness' brought out inner truths that were perhaps too much of a realistic presentation for civil society to bear and live up to! Partly because of this controversy, Joyce found it difficult to get a publisher to accept the book, but it was first published in France in 1922 by Sylvia Beach from her well-known Rive Gauche bookshop, Shakespeare and Company. An English edition published the same year by Joyce's patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver, ran into further difficulties with the United States authorities, and 500 copies that were shipped to the States were seized and possibly destroyed. But censorship apart, the year 1922 was a remarkable one in the history of literary modernism, what with the appearance of both *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot's poem, "The Waste Land". In *Ulysses*, Joyce employs stream of consciousness, parody, jokes, and virtually every other established literary technique to present his characters. The action of the novel, which takes place in a single day, 16 June 1904, sets the characters and incidents of the *Odyssey* of Homer in modern Dublin and represents Odysseus (Ulysses), Penelope and Telemachus in the characters of Leopold Bloom, his wife Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, parodically contrasted with their lofty models. The book explores various areas of Dublin life, dwelling on its squalor and monotony. Nevertheless, the book is also an affectionately detailed study of the city, and Joyce claimed that if Dublin were to be destroyed in some catastrophe it could be rebuilt, brick by brick, using his work as a model! (3)

Earlier in 1904 Joyce had written an essay "A Portrait of the Artist" which was a recollection of the spiritual development of an unidentified but seemingly autobiographical hero. This had shaped into a novel called *Stephen Hero*, which was however then abandoned by the young writer. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) is almost a rewrite of this abandoned novel, the original manuscript of which Joyce is said to have attempted to burn in a fit of rage during an argument with his soul mate and later his wife Nora

Barnacle, though it was finally rescued by his sister. *Portrait* is presumably a heavily autobiographical, coming-of-age novel depicting the childhood and adolescence of the protagonist Stephen Dedalus and his gradual growth into artistic self-consciousness. Some hints of the techniques Joyce frequently employed in later works, such as stream of consciousness, interior monologue, and references to a character's psychic reality rather than to his external surroundings, are evident throughout this novel. This text has even been made into a film directed by Joseph Strick. Stephen Hero was subsequently published posthumously in 1944.

Joyce's last great work was *Finnegans Wake*, extracts of which appeared as *Work in Progress* in the magazine *Transition* and was finally published in 1939. While *Ulysses* was a day view of life, this book presented a night view of man's life and was acceptably written in a difficult style. But along with *Ulysses*, it is part of the canon of literature that definitely brought about a revolution in form, structure and linguistic frame of the novel in modernist literature.

5.17.3 *Dubliners* – A Brief Insight

Dubliners is a collection of 15 short stories by James Joyce, first published in 1914. They were meant to be a naturalistic depiction of Irish middle class life in and around Dublin in the early years of the 20th century. The implications of the term 'naturalistic' would best be understood in Joyce's own words on his collection that he wrote to the publisher of the book: "My intention was to write a moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis." He clarifies that the stories are grouped under four different aspects – childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life; and goes on to add:

I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, and still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard. I cannot do any more than this. I cannot alter what I have written. I cannot write without offending people. (4)

This is ample testimony to the fact that with *Dubliners*, Joyce was all set to pit the short story into an altogether new dimension; it was to become a virtual power house with a narrative intensity that has hardly even been surpassed. Naturally, he had a tough time getting a publisher for his work as his 'nicely polished looking glass' with 'the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal' (5) was too harsh a reality to accept. The stories were set at a time when

Irish nationalism was at its peak, and a search for a national identity and purpose was raging. Thus Ireland stood at the crossroads of history and culture – the struggle for Independence from Great Britain, the rise and fall of the nationalist leader Charles Stewart Parnell (1846 – 91), the mass risings in favour of Irish language and culture were all important happenings. Subsequently there were several socio-religious splits and it is these social forces that repeatedly find way by whatever means in Joyce’s writing. Against a very happening backdrop of events, Joyce situates his characters and traces their growth in different stages of life.

When after much persuasion, *Dubliners* did find a publisher in Grant Richards in 1914, it was discovered that the presentation of the spiritual ‘paralysis’ of the nasty city was laced with Chekhovian realism, blended with the naturalistic tradition of Emile Zola, Flaubert and Maupassant. But beyond all this, the skilful use of musical effects to add vividness to the reality was Joyce’s own device and this, according to Prof. Samir Kumar Mukhopadhyay, is one of the aspects of literary modernism. As we shall see in our reading of “Araby”, he is a master at presenting realities – ghastly and intensely emotional, alike – in a detached, impersonal and objective manner.

As has been mentioned earlier, *Dubliners* contains fifteen portraits of life in the Irish capital from where Joyce, the man, had never perhaps moved away psychologically, though all the stories were written overseas. With all their filth and squalor, the streets of Dublin are a persistent image, almost a motif that threads through all the 15 tales. The perfect focus could best be understood in Harry Levin’s words: he calls them ‘fifteen case histories’ (5). The author focuses on middle or lower middle class society – his characters are children and adults such as truant schoolboys, salesmen, timid and depressed housemaids, office clerks, music teachers, students, shop girls, swindlers, and out-of-luck businessmen most of them faced with disasters of sorts. In most of the stories, he uses a detached but highly perceptive narrative voice that displays these lives to the reader in precise detail. Rather than present intricate dramas with complex plots, these stories sketch daily situations in which not much seems to happen—a boy visits a bazaar, a woman buys sweets for holiday festivities, a man reunites with an old friend over a few drinks. Though these events may not appear as something very momentous, the characters are faced with intensely personal and often tragic revelations which are certainly important or defining moments in their lives. Joyce called such moments ‘epiphanic’, meaning that particular point of time when a character experiences self-understanding or illumination.

The stories in *Dubliners* peer into the homes, hearts, and minds of people whose lives connect and get woven up through the shared space and spirit of Dublin. A character from one story will mention the name of a character in another story, and stories often share common settings. Such minute connections create a sense of shared experience and evoke a map of Dublin life that Joyce would keep returning to in later works. This ‘map’ of Dublin is ever present in his choice of subsistence level life as the backdrop of the stories; this enables a poignant revelation of the drabness of living conditions so that squalor, sin, degeneration, defeat and despair become the common stay of all the stories. A student with some awareness of the development of literature on the continent will realise that Joyce’s Dublin is in many ways like Dante’s Florence which is full of envy and iniquity – a near parallel to what Joyce calls ‘paralysis’ in his collection. But then, there is of course in *Dubliners* a note of universality, for readers of a different place and time can of course identify themselves with Joyce’s characters in different phases of their lives. With superb economy of language and a perfect understanding of his created world, James Joyce, in *Dubliners*, gives us a pen picture of life that transcends space and time in its assertion of relevance.

5.17.4 “ARABY”

North Richmond Street, being blind¹, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers’ School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two stories stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste² room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memories of Vidocq*³. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes, under one of which I found the late tenant’s rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The

cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses, where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits⁴, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner, we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea, we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed, and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye, and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged. I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you⁵ about O'Donovan Rossa⁶, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises covered in a single sensation of life of me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and priases which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: O love! O love! many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby⁷. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazar, she said; she would love to go.

—And why can't you? I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent⁸. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps, and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head to wards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

—It's well for you, she said.

—If I go, I said, I will bring you something.

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go the bazar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason affair⁹. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

—Yes, boy, I know.

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high, cold, empty, gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old, garrulous woman, a pawn-broker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs. Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, cleanching my fists. My aunt said:

—I am afraid you may put off your bazar for this night of Our Lord¹⁰.

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the hall door. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hall-stand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go the bazar. He had forgotten.

—The people are in bed and after their first sleep now, he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

—Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is.

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time, he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*¹¹. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose

of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onwards among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girded at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant*¹² were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come, I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

—O, I never said such a thing!

—O, but you did!

—O, but I didn't!

—Didn't she say that?

—Yes, I heard her.

—O, there's a . . . fib!

Observing me, the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

—No, thank you.

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interests in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

ANNOTATIONS

1. North Richmond Street, being blind: Joyce and his family moved to 17 North Richmond Street, Dublin, in 1894 to a house corresponding exactly to the one described here. Earlier, Joyce had attended the nearby Christian Brothers' School, a school run by a Catholic religious community. North Richmond Street is a cul-de-sac: hence 'blind'.
2. waste : spare (this sense of 'waste' is rare in English usage).
3. *The Devout Communicant* : a Catholic manual. The Memoirs of Vidocq: Francois Eugene Vidocq (1775-1859) had a remarkable career in the oddly assorted roles of soldier, thief of the French detective force and private detective.
4. ashpits: where the refuse of the household would be thrown.
5. *come-all-you* : street-ballad, so called because these were its opening words.
6. O'Donovan Rossa : the popular name of the nineteenth-century Irish nationalist Jeremiah Donovan.
7. *Araby* : the name given to a 'Grand Oriental Fete' held in Dublin, 14 to 19 May 1894. a bazaar is very different, in English usage, from the oriental market so called : it is a special event at which goods are sold for the benefit of charities and sideshows are provided for amusement.
8. retreat.... her convent : a period at her Catholic Convent school devoted entirely to religious observance.
9. Freemason affair : the Freemasons are an old-established secret society, with branches (or 'lodges') throughout the world : his aunt's doubts are due to the Freemasons' reputation for anti-Catholicism.
10. this night of Our Lord : it is hard to establish exactly when this was; it was probably the Eve of Easter Sunday.

11. *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed* : a sentimental poem by the nineteenth-century minor poetess, Caroline Norton.
12. Cafe Chantant: 'singing cafe': a kind of cafe where musical entertainment was provided, in its heyday of popularity in the first decade of this century.

5.17.5 Analysis

It is difficult to paraphrase a story like "Araby", for it calls upon an essentially personalised experience of reading and understanding. In fact Ezra Pound seems closest to the truth when he points to its multi-dimensional texture and says that it is 'a vivid waiting'. So it makes sense to cast short glances at the significant movements of this short story. Yet, let us try and comprehend a few vital movements that drive the plot of this short story.

➤ The Setting

The story is set in a 'blind' lane – North Richmond Street that is quiet for most of the day, apart from the time when the Christian Brothers' School would give over. The phrasal verb 'set the boys free' is ironic as also interesting, because that immediately equates school with a prison in the sense that it inhibits the free flow of the young mind. The other details that specifically interest the boy narrator are equally noteworthy – the uninhabited house of two storeys at the end of the alley and the 'brown imperturbable faces' of the other houses. The boy mightily intuits (understanding that arises out of sensitivity) that these houses are inhabited by sombre looking people who implicitly have no understanding of the world of the child, for they live 'disciplined lives'.

In the opening paragraph of extremely economic naturalistic details, the multiple images of deathly quietness are offset against the single expression of liveliness – the imagined cries of exultation of the boys when the school would give over for the day. That "Araby" (written between September and December 1905) in specific and *Dubliners* in general is a recollection from a vantage point by the grown up Joyce is amply clear from the vividness of perceptions. The interplay of colour shades, the strong olfactory (related to the sense of smell) images of musty air, the liking for the quaint (curled, damp yellow pages of the books left over by the priest who was long dead) and the Adam syndrome (the boy loitering in the wild garden with the central apple tree behind the house) are all objects that must have been part of his psychic (of the mind) growing up. Unknowingly he must

have assimilated it all and now the mature writer gets beneath the skin of his boyhood days as he lets the narrator take over.

The ‘wild garden’ and the ‘stragglings bushes’ surrounding the apple tree thus virtually recreate an Eden from where the modern Adam begins his quest for a lost world of innocence and love. Joyce’s picturisation of adolescence is romantic to say the least and all romanticism has about it a degree of universalising. So the setting of “Araby” is not just spatial, it is intensely psychological too. The naturalistic details of the setting are also closely related with the activities of the band of boys and the hectic mental activity of the narrator as part of the group. The sombre looking houses in the winter dusk contrast with ‘the colour of ever-changing violet’ in the sky and the ‘feeble lanterns’ (hazy street lights) in the street.

Similarly, the pervasive silence of the place is animated with the shouts of the boys at play, trying to prolong their fun hours as much as possible and never at all minding the smelly and dingy nature of the place. In fact they are so used to it that the narrator almost takes it in his stride. The two human figures apart from the boys themselves mentioned in this episode are that of the narrator’s uncle who remains to him a sinister emblem of authority, and Mangan’s sister who is clearly the centre of all his dreams. The one he hides and escapes from, to the other he is drawn with magnetic charm and he revels in his make-believe world of adolescent fantasy – “She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door.” The setting of the story is therefore a mix of movements, for by the time we have read it we are almost initiated into the myriad moods of the boy narrator.

➤ **In love ... or is it even love!**

The shifts that Joyce introduces in the narrative framework are subtle but very effective. Almost unconsciously the collective ‘we’ has changed to the intensely subjective ‘I’ as the boy launches on his private viewing of Mangan’s sister; he is at once identified as being alone in the crowd!

The other significant shift is in the time frame – from the fading lights of dusk to bright mornings as he recounts – “Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. [...] When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped.” It is not the simple Wordsworthian leaping of the heart at ‘beholding’ a rainbow, for the feeling of love though unexpressed, becomes a virtual hymn for the boy. It sustains him amidst the tedium of his life ‘in places the most hostile to romance’; exalting him to a transcendental world of absolute innocence. That this trance is almost spiritual in nature is repeatedly insisted –

her name is like a 'summons' to all his foolish blood (the text is in the past tense because his foolishness, like all else, is a later/mature realisation); he perceives himself as straining to bear his 'chalice' to safety among marauders (here, it implies people are out to rob him of his sensitive feelings).

To readers Mangan's sister is kept a nameless but vibrant presence, but to the besotted boy she has her 'name' which moves him into an indescribable sensation of love bordering on worship: "Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom." This confused adoration of adolescent love defies or requires no logic, no physical co-relative in the sense of an equivalent, expects no returns in real terms; in its lyrical fervour it approximates the condition of music. So even though he has never spoken to her, yet his body in sync with his mind becomes the 'harp' while on wings of fancy her words and gestures are like fingers animating the wires.

The spiritual dimensions of such love are supplemented by deeply sensuous desires, but once again that is in the realm of a make-believe world constructed by the boy in the same abandoned back-drawing room that has been referred to in the setting. But now the musty air fosters the environment for a passionate 'communion' (act of sharing) with his beloved on a dark rainy evening. Through a broken pane on the window of this abandoned room, needles of water play up on the sodden beds and by a thin thread of imagination we realise that the boy is playing out his private erotic fantasies about his love. He is now thankful for the 'feeble lanterns' that shield him from any kind of public view and almost in delirium (excited frenzy) he trembles and presses the palms of his hands murmuring passionately 'O love! O love!'. Language has hardly ever been so evocatively used as in the spontaneous and intensely passionate erotic-spiritual communion of this adolescent priest of 'love'!

➤ **The moment cometh!!!**

From never having spoken beyond a few casual words with her, to when she asks him if he would be going to Araby, the boy is too enamoured to answer. Her words become mystic orders of the goddess to the devotee and the very word 'Araby' comes to denote an icon of his devotion. So he promises to get back something for her from the fair at Araby and this is more than a love-vow, it is the promise of bringing offerings. He almost begins to imagine it to be a magical place lifted out of the pages of some Oriental romance and therefore obviously different from the paralytic markets of Dublin that he has to frequent with his aunt. As they converse, Joyce constructs a vision that

inspires both sensuality and sanctity in the dreamer. Structurally, the high point of the story is reached, and in the next phase the boy slips into a bout of ‘destructive instinct’ which in Freudian terms means the desire to destroy anything that comes as an obstacle to the fulfillment of an ardent desire.

➤ **The Waiting commences**

Ezra Pound’s description of “Araby” as a tale of ‘vivid waiting’ finds manifold significance in this section of the story. Just as a pilgrimage is fraught with unknown hazards, so also the day of the boy’s intended visit to the fair begins on a bad note. His uncle, being in a sullen mood, does not give him the money to go to Araby before leaving for work; in waiting for the much needed money the boy gets late for the day and misses out his morning meeting with the girl of his dreams. His uncle is late in returning and he has to endure the gossip of the talkative Mrs Mercer. Even as he tries to luxuriate in fantasies of his beloved at her doorsteps, he realises that time is slowly but steadily slipping out of his hands. Significantly, we notice that the earlier self-contained and self-constructed world of romantic love is no longer there; rather the callous adult world has begun to infringe upon the autonomy of the boy’s emotional plane. Money as means of exchange now becomes a necessary pre-requisite for the fulfillment of his love interest, though it is still some time before the boy will come to a realisation of this paradox. By the time his uncle returns, tipsy and indifferent, gives him the money and the boy journeys to his exotic destination, it is well past nine and he has almost lost his grip on ‘the purpose of (his) journey’.

➤ **The Destination ...Is It**

When the boy finally comes to stand before the building that ‘display(s) the magical name’, it is almost ten minutes to ten. But his entry into the supposedly magical land soon becomes a disillusionment of sorts. Contrary to being the dreamland of his imagination, Araby is almost covered in darkness and among the handful of stalls that are still open; he finds scenes of crass commerce or heartless flirtation. This is definitely not the shrine he wanted to arrive at after his long wait. But since he has built up the mental image of Araby as the palpable icon of an alternative reality, nor can he dismantle it as easily into the marketplace of real life. On the contrary, the fervid votary of love himself gets transformed as he is forced to acknowledge the self-deception he has unleashed on himself for so long. For a while he still tries to keep up the show but that is more to save him the blushes of getting caught by the outside world. So he pretends to be a curious onlooker at the stall, but can carry on no longer. As he lets the two pennies fall against the sixpence into some obsolete corner

of his pocket, the moment is ripe for the epiphany: “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.”

The waiting ultimately turns meaningless, the destination has lost its purpose; the only experience that one gathers is perhaps that of the relentless march of the process of growing up, of losing out on innocence and childhood!

5.17.6 Key Issues in “Araby”

✓ Title of the Story

The title of a short story is expected to pinpoint at the central situation that the text unravels. As such “Araby” is a culmination of several strands of thought. It is, to begin with, a ‘Grand Oriental Fete’ held in Dublin from 14th to 19th May 1894. Michael Thorpe informs us that in English usage a bazaar would be something very different from what we understand by the term; it would signify a special event where goods are sold for the benefit of charities and sideshows are provided for amusement. So it would be quite a thing to look forward to, more so for the young people we find in this story. Mangan’s sister being a young girl, presumably tied to a life of domesticity where going out to school would perhaps be her only ‘excursion’ out of doors naturally has a great attraction for the fete where girlie things would be available aplenty. The boy narrator understands nothing of this, it just becomes for him a place where he hopes to find a palpable correlative to the depth of his feelings for the girl – perhaps a token of his love that he could bring back for his goddess. So from a mass commercial enterprise in the eyes of the common man, Araby becomes transmuted to a land of pilgrim’s dreams. These dreams are predestined to be shattered and so it happens. It is interesting how Joyce introduces an element of a second climax in the story in the epiphany the boy has in the nearly closed down hall. At once this connects the second part of the story to the first, the different states of consciousness explored in the story merge into a continuum and the title becomes a wonderful mirror to the mental upheaval that the boy is faced with.

✓ Psychological Probe

Joyce’s exploration of the adolescent mind from a vantage point makes “Araby” a great mix of memory and imagination. On the one hand there are vivid recollections of childhood incidents and on the other, these remembrances are laced with a mature artist’s understanding of the sights, symbols and colours of life. The aim of the analysis in the preceding section has been to capture, among other things, the psychological growth of the boy. It is also interesting how through his eyes, Joyce has also made a very subtle study of the people who willy nilly

fill his life – the girl of his dreams, the band of boys, the aunt who somewhat understands his pains but cannot do much and of course the adult world that is very indifferent and largely unconcerned about the sensitivities of the mind of the growing up. Above all, the concluding section of the story is a superb psychological study of the protagonist and it leaves us somewhat baffled and hunting for final answers. Is psychological growth all about the conscious elimination of fancy? Does the darkness from which he seeks relief in the opening section get reinforced with a peculiar permanence at the end? Can he at all take the epiphany as a journey to consciousness or are the ‘anguish’ and ‘anger’ a momentary response that will once again fade when he sees the girl amidst his own drab surroundings? Will he or won’t he still seek his private heaven in her? The answers might vary but there is no denying that hardly has any writer so poignantly captured the essence of the mind of an adolescent in the growing up years.

✓ **Symbolism**

The use of symbols is central to the edifice of Joyce’s story. We could identify three major symbols in course of the narrative, apart from several others that are scattered.

The first and the most obvious is the play of light and darkness. The story both begins and ends in darkness, at both these junctures the boy narrator is enmeshed in the fathomless pits of life, of which he can make no meaning. As dusk engulfs the setting at the beginning, the lives of the boys is visualised in terms of lengthening shadows, dark muddy lanes, dark dripping gardens and dark odorous stables. In contrast to this pervasive darkness, there is a ray of light that illuminates the figure of Mangan’s sister in a sensuous way, just as the boy’s mornings, bright and sunny, are spent in stealing glances at her. She is mostly mute but remains an eloquent presence of his creation. Again it is a ‘dark rainy evening when the boy’s emotions surge up and he indulges in a psycho-sexual act. When he reaches Araby it is already half plunged in darkness and the silence is that of a ‘church after service’. In the over-arching darkness of his individual psyche, the flirtatious and hollow conversation of the shop girl and the young men act as an ironic counterpoint against the hallowed image of ‘his’ girl in the mind of the boy. Thus the gathering darkness of evening, paradoxically a passage to self- discovery, climaxes in the darkness of full realisation. Or an illumination even!

The second major symbol is that of the boy’s journey to Araby. He undertakes it in the spirit of a questing medieval knight in search of a coefficient of his notion of ideal beauty. In the process he dissociates himself from all natural activities that befit his age and position and faces hindrances one too many in the course of his journey. The innocence and impressive nature of the boy raises our pathos for we foresee what he does not. As apprehended, this sufferance of an isolated pilgrimage leads him to the nearly dark hall where his dreams are

shattered. The journey thus becomes a powerful symbol of hope turned into despair and the resultant painful process of growing up that must be faced by all in life. In effect therefore, the journey symbol has universal connotations and readers may identify their own individual loss of paradise with that of the impressionable young boy. The metaphor of ‘waiting’ that Pound identified as a major aspect of the story could also be fitted into this symbol of the journey.

The Biblical/religious references that have been identified in course of the discussion on the text form another important symbolic pattern in the story. The garden behind the house, the Adam figure of the boy, the concept of the chalice, the priest’s books and the goddess devotee-prayer triad of relationships between the boy and Mangan’s sister – all add up to the religious symbolism that constitutes a major rubric of the story. It also lifts the tale above the dreary intercourse of life and gives a touch of spiritual quest to the boy’s narrative.

Besides these, there are several other scattered symbolic usages that have been discussed in the detailed analysis of the text.

5.17.7 Summing Up

In this Unit, therefore, we have briefly introduced you to James Joyce, the short story writer and novelist who may rightly be seen as one of the pioneers of the modernist movement in prose fiction. Part from that, through a detailed analysis of the story “Araby”, you have also been equipped on the ways in which to approach a modern short story. Of special interest in this is of course the element of psychological study that motivates characters in a big way. We hope the acumen gained here will stand you in good stead in the forthcoming courses where you will be introduced to even greater complexities that literature has increasingly come to represent.

5.17.8 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. On what grounds would you call “Araby” a modern short story?
2. How does Joyce use the setting as a fitting background in “Araby”?
3. Trace the psychological growth of the boy in “Araby”.
4. What is an epiphany? What impact does the epiphany create in Joyce’s short story?

5. Make a comparative study of Dublin market and Araby as you find these depicted in the story.
6. Justify how the title of Joyce's story relates to the element of a 'vivid waiting'.

Medium Length Answer Type Questions:

1. What aspects of the dead priest's room attract the boy and why?
2. Attempt a vivid description of North Richmond Street by dusk.
3. Trace the sensuous elements in the boy's stolen glimpses of Mangan's sister. How does it attain spiritual overtones with time?

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Comment on Joyce's use of symbols with reference to any two major examples.
2. Give a brief description of the train journey to Araby.
3. Bring out the difference in the boy's mental state before and after he has spoken to Mangan's sister.
4. Write notes on: Mangan's sister, The old priest, The boy's uncle, Mrs Mercer, The shop girl at Araby

5.17.9 Suggested Readings

Adams, David. *Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel*. Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 84.

Demming, Robert H, ed, *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, reprint 1986, Vol. 1 (1902-27), p 67.

Levin, Harry, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, Faber & Faber, 1942,

Mukhopadhyay, Samir Kumar, "James Joyce:" "Araby", in *Narrative and Narration*, ed. Jayati Gupta, Anthem Press, 2008.

Unit 18 □ Katherine Mansfield: “The Fly”

Structure

- 5.18.1 Objectives
- 5.18.2 Katherine Mansfield – An Introduction
- 5.18.3 The Art of Katherine Mansfield
- 5.18.4 On “The Fly”
- 5.18.5 “The Fly” – Text with Annotations
- 5.18.6 Analysis
- 5.18.7 Key Issues
- 5.18.8 Summing Up
- 5.18.9 Comprehension Exercises
- 5.18.10 Suggested Reading

5.18.1 Objectives

A close reading of “The Fly” is the obvious aim of this Unit. But prior to that, the development of Katherine Mansfield as a literary artist will also be discussed. This is because it is felt that the diverse cultural conditions that she was exposed to, had a major role to play in her growth as a powerful exponent of the short story form.

5.18.2 Katherine Mansfield—An Introduction

Katherine Mansfield is one of those rare writers who concentrated only on this genre and took it to such heights that almost a century after her death, she still remains a literary phenomenon to reckon with. Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp was born in ‘an ordinary, middle class, colonial home’ (1) in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1888. She was an adventurous and ambitious schoolgirl who began to try out her writing skills as early as 1898-99 for the *High School Reporter*, the school magazine at Wellington Girls’ High School. At the young age of fifteen she was sent to Queen’s College School, London and was there for four years. Though she did return to her homeland after that, she was always at odds with the country of her birth and ever eager to distance herself from New Zealand. There was in

her a dislike for the poverty and illiteracy of the indigenous Maori population and a discontent at the lack of opportunities for pursuing a career of her choice – as a cellist or as a person of literature. In course of a stormy personal life, she stayed in places as diverse as Germany, France and even Switzerland; apart from London of course, which was more than home to her. Her closeness with Middleton Murry, the leading critic and editor, around 1912 in London was a great turning point in Mansfield's literary career. They married in 1918 and, as Michael Thorpe says, with him “she found as much happiness as was possible for her”. She died of tuberculosis in January 1923, aged only 35.

5.18.3 The Art of Katherine Mansfield

Given that a writer who worked exquisitely on the short story mode still remains relevant so as to be syllabised, it would make interesting study to have some insight into the development of her literary acumen. We have already spoken of and perhaps even wondered at the rather unusual distance she maintained from her homeland. Like Joyce, for whom distance from his native Dublin was never a hindrance in making his beloved city the backdrop of most of his work, Mansfield too, perhaps unknowingly, drew much creative sustenance from this distancing from her geo-cultural environment. Her letters to her friend Ida Baker written around 1922 are proof of how she felt ‘little bits’ of herself still sticking out of her past. Naturally, the role of memory is immense in the work of Mansfield, and this is seen in stories like “At the Bay” and “Prelude”. With Murry she collaborated in editing the literary periodical *Rhythm* and also its successor *The Blue Review*.

The loss of her brother Leslie in the First World War (1914-1918) was a devastating experience for Mansfield and it actually drove her to recreate memories of home that she had shared with him. She called it a ‘sacred debt’ she paid to her country, not only because she and her brother were born there but because in her thoughts she ranged with him over all the remembered places. So the stories of this phase, that are considered among the richest literature ever set in New Zealand, are inspired not by nationalist thought but essentially driven by personal emotions. Many of these are found in her second volume, *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) (her first volume of sketches was titled *In a German Pension*, published in 1911). However, the later volumes – *The Garden Party* (1922) and *The Dove's Nest* (1923)– reflect London and the European world of Mansfield's mature years.

In order to get a feel of a short story like “The Fly”, we need to understand the nuances of Mansfield's fictional art. While being greatly influenced by Chekov as a short story writer,

she also felt the need for a new structure and form of expression that would adequately express the changed conditions of life in a post-war world. In fact, as early as 1910, a visit to the first ever post-Impressionist visual arts exhibition in London brought in her an awareness that the reality of life no longer lay in the blind belief in a static, unchanging objective reality. She began to be increasingly convinced that human experience was to be found not just in externalities but they could as well be interiorised ones. As H. E. Bates correctly points, she ‘saw the possibilities of telling (a) story by what was left out as much as by what was left in, or alternately describing one set of events and consequences while really indicating another’ (2).

Secondly, she resorted to techniques like mental soliloquy that became fluttery, gossipy and almost breathless with questions and answers. Besides, Mansfield was also apt in creating an intense atmosphere through clear observation and suggestive detailing. She could be said to practise what came to be known as the ‘stream of consciousness’ technique that was perfected by Virginia Woolf in her novels. Most often in a Mansfield story we thus find no hectic action, no high drama; rather there is a moving presentation of the lives of ordinary, lonely and pathetic people. The author seems so well versed in placing a sensitive finger on the pulse of the lives she describes – she grasps the very essence of their existence at the exact moment as it were.

As learners, you are advised to identify similarities between the story in this present Unit and Virginia Woolf’s novel (Unit 16) to understand how the stream of consciousness technique unfolds itself.

5.18.4 On “The Fly”

The first thing that strikes readers is the insignificance of the object that is focussed upon in the title. But this apparent feeling of a puny creature is deceptive, as is the inordinately short length of the story. “The Fly” has in fact been described as one of the fifteen finest short stories ever written. Whether it is or not may be debatable, but Thorpe puts it very intelligently when he says, “it must surely be the shortest of good short stories”. It was included in the collection *The Dove’s Nest* and was completed, according to Mansfield’s own records, by 20 February 1922. The story was written while she lived in the Victoria Palace Hotel in Paris, the same place where she had witnessed heavy bombing by the Germans in 1918. This historical detail somewhat lends credence to the fact that the particular incident of the death of Mansfield’s brother Leslie Heron Beauchamp in the war and the general perception of angst could have

found creative expression in “The Fly”. This should not, however, lead the reader to expect a story of the battle in progress; far from it, the story, as Anthony Alpers (3) says, is the author’s “profound symbolic treatment of post-war sadism and grief and loss”. Thus the story is an intense probe into human reactions of individual losses and beyond, of course in the aftermath of the war. It is now proper that the learner first goes through the story and then formulates responses to it.

5.18.5 THE FLY

‘Y’are very snug in here’, piped old Mr. Woodifield, and he peered out of the great, green-leather armchair by his friend the boss’s desk as a baby peers of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his.... stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the houses every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesday he was dressed and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City’ for the day. Though what he did there the wife and girls couldn’t imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to the friends, they supposed . . . Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him.

Wastfully, admiringly, the old voice added, ‘It’s snug in here, upon my word!’

‘Yes, it’s comfortable enough’, agreed the boss, and he flipped the *Financial Times* with a paper-knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

‘I’ve had it done up lately’, he explained, as he had explained for the past - how many?— weeks. ‘New carpet’, and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. ‘New furniture’, and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and the table with legs like twisted treacle. ‘Electric heating!’ He waved almost exultantly towards the five transparent, pearly sausages glowing so softly in the tiled copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodifield’s attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform² standing in one of those spectral photographers’ parks with photographers’ storm-clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

‘There was something I wanted to tell you’, said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. ‘Now what was it? I had it in my mind when I started out this morning.’ His hands began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

Poor old chap, he's on his last pins, thought the boss. And feeling kindly, he winked at the old man, and said jokingly, 'I tell you what. I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff. It wouldn't hurt a child.' He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. 'That's the medicine', said he. 'And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q.T.³ it came from the cellars at Windsor Castle'⁴

Old Woodifield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

'It's whisky, ain't it?', He piped fe up at the boss wonderingly, 'they won't let me touch it at home.' And he looked as though he was going to cry.

'Ah, that's where we know a bit mroe than the ladies', cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on the table with the water-bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each. 'Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!' He tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his moustaches, and cocked an eye at old Woodifield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, 'It's nutty!'

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain—he remembered.

'That was it', he said, having himself out of his chair. 'I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggies's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They're quite near each other, it seems.'

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made to reply. Only a quiver in his eyelids showed that he heard.

'The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept', piped the old voice. 'Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home. You've not been across, have yer?'

'No, no!' For various reasons the boss had not been across.

'There's miles of it', quavered old woodifield, 'and it's all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths'. It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.

The pause came again. Then the old man brightened wonderfully.

'D' You know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?, he piped. 'Ten fracs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn't taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach'em a lesson. Quite right, too; it's trading on our feelings. They think

because we're over there having a look round we're ready to pay anything. That's what it is.' And he turned towards the door.

'Quite right, quite right!' cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea. He came round by his desk, followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the grey-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubby-hole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run. Then: 'I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey', said the boss. 'Understand? Nobody at all.'

'Very good sir.'

The door shut, the firm heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep . . .

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for every. 'My son!' groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, but not he. How was it possible?

His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him; it had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all those years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvelously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jack⁵ of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoilt. No he was just his bright natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, 'Simply splendid!'

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. 'Deeply regret to inform you. . . .' And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

Six years ago, six years . . . how quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face: he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favourite photograph of his, the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his board inkpot, and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! Help! said those struggling legs. But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it on to a piece of blotting-paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it. Then the front legs waved, took hold, and pulling its small, sodden body up, it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other. It succeeded at last, and, sitting down, it began, like a minute cat, to clean its face. Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over, it had escaped; it was ready for life again.

But just then the boss had an idea. He plunged his pen back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting-paper, and as the fly tried its wings down came great heavy blot. What would it make of that? What indeed! The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

He's a plucky little devil, thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of. . . But the fly had again finished its laborious task, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But behold, the front legs were again waving; the boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, 'You artful little b...' And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying

process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen deep into the ink-pot.

It was. The last blot, fell on the soaked blotting-paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

‘Come on’, said the boss. ‘Look sharp!’ And he stirred it with his pen - in vain, Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper-knife and flung it into the waste-paper basket. But such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

‘Bring me some fresh blotting-paper’, he said sternly, ‘and look sharp about it.’ And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was . . . He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.

ANNOTATIONS

1. The City : ‘The City’ is a familiar term for the ‘business’ area of London where many of the leading banks, insurance companies, stockbrokers etc. are concentrated (largely grouped in the area near the Bank of England).
2. Grave-looking boy in uniform: the boss’s son, like Katherine Mansfield’s brother, was killed in the 1914-18 war.
3. Q.T.: quiet (sl); ‘on the strict Q.T.’—‘in the strictest confidence’, not to be repeated to anyone.
4. Windsor Castle: one of the principal residences of the English Royal Family.
5. Man jack: ‘every man jack’—‘every one of the them’; Jack is a familiar form of John and is sometimes used to refer loosely to any ordinary man, whose specific name is not important to the speaker.

5.18.6 Analysis

➤ The Setting

In a striking contrast to the dull setting of “Araby” in Unit 17, the action of “The Fly” is set in the well-furnished and decorated office chamber of the Boss. The Boss makes it a point to mention that he has had the room redecorated very recently, talking specifically of the

carpet, the furniture, the electric heating and even draws his listener's attention to the 'pearly sausages' glowing in the copper pan. There is a copy of the *Financial Times*, a leading business daily, that he flips through with a paper-knife.

But significantly, he does not draw the attention of Mr. Woodifield to the photograph of his son that is placed on the table. Woodifield, who has come to visit him, is his former colleague. It is not new; we are told it has been there for over six years now. Is it because it is something different from the rest of the décor that he does not talk of it in the same breath? Or is it that the photograph is symbolic of a common memory that the two men share – a common loss, the implications of which go without mentioning? These are vital questions, the answers to which we have to discover in course of reading the story. And there can be no universally acceptable answer to this, for "The Fly" is very much an open-ended story and each reader is left to formulate his own responses to it. The extremely plush setting of the story, for one, should be taken carefully; there is definitely more to it than meets the eye at a first glance. Quite unlike conventional narrative strategies therefore, the setting of this short story itself has the potential to be complex.

➤ **The Characters**

To a conventional understanding of character, there are three of them present in the story – Mr Woodifield, the Boss and his greyhaired office messenger Macey. There are however several non-present characters as well – Woodifield's wife, his daughters and the sons of the two men, both dead in the war. We shall come to the second set later.

Woodifield is presented by Mansfield largely through the eyes of the Boss. The common experience that the two share is that both are bereaved fathers, having lost their sons in the war. But their long standing reactions to this loss are strikingly different. We are told that Woodifield has suffered a stroke and has been forced to take a pre-mature retirement from his position in this office. He now leads a mostly domesticated life and keeps coming back to the office every now and then, much to the displeasure of his family, in search of pleasures he has had to give up somewhat suddenly. Clearly the Boss shows a condescending attitude towards him. The image of him that is given is that of a grown up baby, clearly a misfit in this plushly done up office and the Boss seems to derive some apparent pleasure in contrasting himself with his ex-employee. Note the words like 'piped', 'peered', the 'green-leather armchair' in which he seems to sink, and the only too obvious point of similarity – 'as a baby peers out of its pram'.

In contrast, the boss seems quite in control of the situation for a major part of the story, at least as long as he is in the company of Woodifield. He patronises Woodifield when the latter cannot remember what he wanted to say, offers him whisky to get energised and even

shows his acute consciousness of the material things of life by displaying the label. But once Woodifield has spoken of the graves in Belgium, the boss seems to be making a retreat. The 'quiver' in his eyelids is the only pointer to the fact that he is hearing what is being said. After all that Woodifield garrulously babbles out, the boss only says a cribbed 'No, no!' and this is supplemented by the narrator's cryptic comment – 'For various reasons the boss had not been across.' He hardly listens to what Woodifield says next, waits for him to depart and then closes himself out of the public world for 'half an hour'. He then plunges into recollections of his dead son – the way he had been bringing up the son, the moment of the crisis and then his own way of coming to terms with it in the years that have followed.

The fly episode which follows next will be taken up for detailed discussion in the following sections, but for the moment it suffices to say that there is a radical evolution in the characterisation of the boss in Mansfield's story. He is one person in public view – very much the boss; and a completely different entity in privacy. The unravelling of the private chambers of the boss' mind is indeed the high point of "The Fly". In this story we must therefore also keep in mind that the use of names for characters is an interesting study – the boss remaining un-named is a pretty good strategy that the author employs to hint at the fact that often in life, there are differences between what 'appears' and what 'is'. This could be a preliminary hint in understanding the complexity that underlies the character of the boss.

The role of the office boy Macey is purely functional – he knows his boss in and out, and has seen him undergo all the suffering on the death of his son from very close quarters. For it was Macey who had handed him the telegram six years back, and though Mansfield does not explicitly say so, yet we realise that he has some idea of what the boss could do in moments of such intense psychic suffering.

The non-present characters play an equally important role in the story. Woodifield's wife and daughters are not favourably disposed to the idea of his outings to the city; they feel he would be making a nuisance of himself to his friends. More than that, it is the visit of his daughters to the graveyard at Belgium that becomes the occasion for the story. A garrulous old man that he is, Woodifield had actually forgotten that he had come to tell the boss of this visit of his daughters and that they had also seen the grave of the boss' son. Their delight at how well maintained the place was, or their concern over being charged a wee bit too much for the pot of jam – all suggest that Woodifield's family members have perhaps accepted the death of their son/brother as a fact beyond reversal and moved on in life. Of course, much of this narration is provided by Woodifield himself and could lead us to believe that he has perhaps assimilated the sorrow within himself with his stroke and his incessant speaking about it.

The two dead boys – the sons of Woodifield and the Boss, though non-present, are

perhaps the pivotal characters in the story. Woodifield's son has a name, Reggie; but like the boss, his son is also un-named. While nothing much is told about Reggie, Mansfield, through the boss' recollection, gives a fairly elaborate picture of his own son. He was bright, well mannered, exuberant and a quick learner at work. But now it is all a thing of the past as he lies cold and dead, or perhaps reduced to a heap of bones at the mass cemetery in Belgium.

➤ **The 'Action'**

As we have suggested earlier, the 'action' in a story in the stream of consciousness technique is more of interiorised than appears to the external eye. Here too, as you read the section that follows, you will find that element of suggestiveness unfolding.

A drink offered by the boss on the sly revives Woodifield's sagging spirits and he narrates the visit of his daughters to the cemetery in Belgium where both their sons, who fell to their death in the war, are buried. The two graves are quite near to each other. To Woodifield's question, the boss says rather peremptorily (with a sense of decisive finality) that he has never been to the grave, but that does not deter the talkative old man from waxing eloquent (to go on and on) on how wonderfully the place is maintained. He also talks about how they charge extra for trivial things like a pot of jam before he finally leaves the room.

Two things are notable here. At the beginning of the story, Woodifield is in discomfort and the boss is in command of the situation – sympathising and patronising him. But as the whisky warms up Woodifield, he begins and continues to speak on things that are not necessarily related. He is never really in control of the situation but somehow manages to resurrect (here, to pull up again) himself from what he looks like at the beginning of the story. In contrast, the boss who has been so flamboyant (elaborate/colourful behaviour) early on, gradually seems to be withdrawing into a shell, so much so that he actually loses track of whatever Woodifield says before departing – “Quite right, quite right!” cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea.” Left all alone, the boss shuts himself off from the outside world, goes over to his desk with 'firm heavy steps', lets his bodyweight sink on the spring chair and covers his face with his hands. Mansfield piquantly (provocative/suggestive) says: 'He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep ...'.

From here begins the second movement of the story which is actually also the beginning of complexities. Unlike Woodifield who is a private individual, the boss has always had to move in life with multiple concerns related to his business, the security of his employees and so on. So if Woodifield has taken the shock of the death of his son by succumbing to a stroke, taking voluntary retirement and now through occasional visits to the city, it has been a personal/private response to grief. It is unfair to conclude that he loved his son more and so

all this happened to him; contrarily the boss is a money-minded person who has relegated the memory of his dead son to some remote corner of his mind and concentrated again on his enterprise. We must realise that for both these men, as with all human beings, any event happy or sad, brings out certain responses, the expressed intensity of which definitely lessens with time. So in the early years when the boss would say that he could never live down the sorrow of his son's death, it was a genuinely felt utterance at that point of time. After all, like many parents who expect to find in their children's lives a vicarious fulfilment of their own dreams, he too had been rearing his boy as his successor in business and from this point of view both father and son are perhaps universal figures, hence one possible reason why they are not given proper names.

In the intervening six years he had wept his heart out in private whenever he felt heavy with the memory of his son. So, as opposed to the talkativeness of Woodfield, the boss' is a silent muted response to bereavement (generally grief caused by the death of a near one) – and both are absolutely valid and acceptable as individual reactions, they cannot be compared. But all grief does get internalised after a period of time, the span of which again will vary from person to person. This is not to say that the grief or the suffering is lived down, it is just that external manifestation no longer perhaps occurs. Mansfield has captured the boss at one such sensitive moment of his life. So long he was used to crying out, being relieved and putting on the mantle (here, something that covers) of the 'boss' and readily taking the world. So he wants, intends and arranges to weep. But however much he groans, tears refuse to come out and he is tyrannised at the thought that he has overcome the grief of the death of his 'only son'. The author almost reads into the mind of the character as he questions himself – 'How was it possible?'

It is at this point of time that the boss notices the fly fallen into his inkpot and trying desperately to extricate (to make oneself free) itself and his attention gets diverted momentarily. The 'fly episode' is the third movement of the story and definitely the most complicated. Apparently it might seem a digression (act of straying from the main action) and in fact it is so for a few moments as the boss finds respite from the angst (a feeling of fear/ insecurity). Or so he thinks, for the memory of the son and the need for weeping are temporarily suspended from his conscious mind. On a sudden impulse the boss picks up the fly from the ink-pot and places it on the blotting paper to dry itself. As the poor creature dries itself with meticulous care, the boss, with a desire to test its tenacity for survival, sprinkles not one, not two but three drops of ink after the fly has dried itself each time. It is a strange psychological-physical war between two unevenly matched forces – the boss acting Fate on the fly and the puny creature representing through its incessant (continuous) attempts

the various crises and onslaughts that the boss himself has had to encounter in his daily life. Subconsciously the boss sees his own fight in the resistance offered by the fly. The drops of ink are the constant reminders of his son that are inflicted on him and that which comes in the garb of sympathy or accidental references, like Woodifield has just done. Thus his own attempts to conquer grief and present a brave façade (artificial effect) are typified by the fly's efforts to save its life. For this reason he encourages the fly by saying: 'That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of ...'. Inadvertently (without knowing) he wants to see his own positive attitude in the fly's resolve and spirit and thinks that such fortitude (mental strength) will give the fly – as it has supposedly given him, everlasting strength to challenge and defeat fate. Therefore he emerges as the destiny of the fly and kills it.

But with its death the boss realises that after all, human endurance has its limits, beyond which it gets maimed (very seriously injured). There is thus a striking similarity between the dessication (drying up) of his feelings of grief to external manifestation and the fly being divested of dear life. Alternately, the fly might also symbolise the boss' son, the thread to this thought being the words – 'You artful little b...' said tenderly by the boss himself. As the fly waves its teeny weeny front legs, perhaps the boss has reminiscences of his child as a kid babbling the first mutterings of life! The idea here is that just as the fly was under the complete control of the boss and yet pushed aside the domination as sham and died; so too the boss once controlled the life of his son but had to leave him nevertheless.

Thus there could be an infinite number of interpretations of the fly episode; each would be valid if supported by an authentic reading of the text. If we take the drops of ink falling on the fly as the continuous encounters with life that blur the boss' memory/grief for his son, then the final moment comes with the stopping of the fly's stirrings. He feels he is divested of all traits of grief and hence tears do not come out. So on the one hand the *tete-a-tete* (private conversation between two persons) with Woodifield has welled up the boss' latent grief, on the other he cannot get purged (to get rid of) of his emotional upsurge through tears. Hence the boss is frightened and he just cannot remember what it was that he was thinking. There is a kind of mental black-out and he is tormented by the wild drift of his own mind.

5.18.7 Key Issues

✓ Title

Usually the title of a story is a pointer to the central situation of the narrative. So when Mansfield chooses an apparently un-'organic' (in the sense of integrally related) episode as

the title, it is clear that she is seeing the implications of the story at a symbolic level. As the text is structured, the fly episode comes in the form of a climax that takes the boss off the hook and brings out the deeper meanings of the story in retrospective (here, starting from the present and going to the past) effect. No discussion on the story can thus be complete without referring to this episode. It is, to use T.S Eliot's term, an 'objective correlative' that brings out the complex emotional turmoil of the boss. (The manifold implications of the fly episode have already been discussed in analysing the text. Learners are encouraged to formulate their individual responses as well, after going through the text very minutely). Not only the boss' character, the episode also helps to place the perspectives of the other characters and certain general observations on life in clearer understanding. It goes to the author's credit that she can weave out such multiple significations from a seemingly trivial incident.

✓ **Symbolism**

It is commonly held that in "The Fly", Mansfield converts the personal trauma of her brother's death in World War I and her father's artificial grief over it into an art form of the highest quality. The translation of personal experience into art follows the Chekhovian method of hints, suggestions and symbolism. Symbols are used in this story mainly to indicate one set of situations while stating something else.

For instance, the plush décor of the boss' office is not so much about the furnishing as it is to indicate that the flow of time has stopped for him. The showing off to Woodifield is thus as much revenge as self-defence. In contrast, the presentation of Woodifield as childlike proves a misnomer as the same helpless person soon proves to be the agent of nemesis (fate) for the boss.

The whiskey with which the boss steadies Woodifield is an interesting symbol. It shows the boss' total control over his former employee as the former forces the latter to go against his doctor's prescription and his family's instructions. Thus the consumption of the whiskey by Woodifield symbolises the boss' successful attempt at making him a psychic slave. The grave and the graveyard as mentioned by Woodifield are symbols of both his latent desire for everything around and for everything straight. Clearly the picturesque surroundings have attracted all his attention, removing his son from his focal point.

A gap of six years is indeed enough for memory to turn painless in representation, yet stay alive in the mind. The photograph of the boss' son standing on his table is a very important symbol. In it the boy looks 'grave', though the boss feels his son 'never looked like that'. Besides, the photograph faces away from the boss and he has to get up to have a look at it. This strange way of keeping the image of his beloved son raises several questions. The 'grave' look is perhaps an accusation that haunts the father who has tried to rob the boy of

his naturalness by trying to determine his life for him. It is perhaps this denial of choice that drove him to enlist for the army, for it was not compulsory service in World War 1. Thus the photograph taken during enlistment shows a grave look! This look further disturbs the boss by being a constant reminder that he has in a way killed his son by creating such circumstances that he went on to join the war. This conjecture (supposition) is vindicated by the fact that the dead body of the fly is referred to as corpse (human dead body) and not carcass (animal dead body).

In the fly episode which naturally follows in this symbolic study (and has been discussed earlier), the boss not only sees his son in the dead fly, he also sees himself as the virtual murderer. Thus these two symbols – the photograph and the fly – are of great importance in bringing about the self-realisation of the boss. The final picture of an important man sitting helplessly, unable to remember a thing and passing his handkerchief inside his collar to mark his discomfiture is a symbolic role reversal – from the position of ‘still going strong, still at the helm’ to a pitiful figure much like Woodfield whom he despised and even sympathised with.

5.18.8 Summing Up

In this Unit therefore, we have introduced you to the unfolding of the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ technique in literature, with reference to Mansfield’s short story. You would gain greater insights on this if you relate your reading of the story to the literature of the First World War at large, as has been indicated in Unit 2 of this Course.

5.18.9 Comprehension Exercises

Long Answer Type

1. Bring out the elements of modernity in “The Fly”.
2. How would you relate the ‘Fly’ episode to the general drift of the story?
3. Justify the idea that in “The Fly”, Mansfield works by suggestion and not by explicit statement.

Medium Answer Type

1. Describe the interior décor of the Boss’ chamber.
2. Attempt a description of the cemetery in Belgium as narrated by Woodfield’s

daughters.

3. Give an account of the 'encounter' between the Boss and the fly.
4. How did the Boss react on hearing the news of his son's death? Show how his reactions underwent change with time.

Short Answer Type

1. What did Woodfield do on most Tuesdays?
2. How, according to the Boss, did his son look in the framed photograph?
3. Write in brief about the demeanour of Macey.
4. What does the Boss do at the end of the story?
5. What is 'stream of consciousness' technique?

5.18.10 Suggested Reading

Alpers, Anthony, *The Stories of Katherine Mansfield*, Oxford University Press, 1984, "Preface", p. xxviii.

Auddy, Manu, "Katherine Mansfield: The Fly", *Narrative and Narration*, ed. Jayati Gupta, Anthem Press, 2008.

Bates, H. E, *The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey*, Penguin, 1940.

Unit 19 □ George Orwell: Shooting an Elephant

Structure

- 5.19.1 Objectives**
- 5.19.2 Introduction to George Orwell**
- 5.19.3 ‘Shooting an Elephant’: Text with Annotations**
- 5.19.4 Critical Analysis**
- 5.19.5 Summing Up**
- 5.19.6 Comprehension Exercises**
- 5.19.7 Suggested Reading**

5.19.1 Objectives

This Unit aims to encourage learners to read an important non-fictional prose piece by one of the greatest thinking writers and critics of British modernity – George Orwell. Such reading will help to contextualise the essay which dates around 1936; that is, the period just before the 2nd World War, when England’s colonial dominations had reached their zenith. The unit will offer an in-depth study of Orwell’s essay as a commentary on the picture of the coloniser in the colony that is worth pondering over, even in the time when erstwhile colonies keep writing back to the empire, whether as history or as literary representation.

5.19.2 Introduction to George Orwell

You will find it interesting to know George Orwell, whose real name was Eric Hugh Blair. He was born in 1903 in Motihari which was in the Bengal Presidency of India. His mother, Ida Mabel Blair spent her childhood in Moulmein Burma – the locale for this piece, where her father had certain ventures. Orwell was, however, taken to England when still a very small child, though in 1922 he came back at a mature age to serve as part of the imperial administration in Burma for five years. In 1929, he returned to England, took up diverse jobs of a teacher, a bookseller’s assistant and even as a tramp – all of which perhaps gave him the makings of the writer that he was to become in due course. Prior to this of course, he went to Eton in 1916 where he had the privilege of being taught by the likes of A. S. F Gow,

Aldous Huxley and Steven Runciman.

While Orwell made a mark with his linguistic flair, he never showed much interest in academic studies and finally left Eton in 1921. It was his romantic ideas about the East that made the family decide upon a career in the Imperial Police for Orwell, and that is how he landed in Burma. Orwell's first full length work of non-fiction, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), a record of 'low-life' based on first-hand experience, clearly shows his socialist tendencies voiced with strong moral authority. His next work *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) was a similarly moving account of the lives of miners in Northern England. *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) is a record of Orwell's disillusionments with Communist factions, acquired during his own experience of the Spanish Civil War in which he participated as a fighter on the Republican side. Apart from his early works of fiction like *Burmese Days* (1934), *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (1936) and *Coming Up for Air* (1939), Orwell is mostly remembered for his later works *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). An admirer of Jonathan Swift that he was, Orwell's mature work shows the use of a sharp and clean prose style which cuts deep. Though strongly committed to the Communist cause, the writer in him rose above party bias to make a mark as "a writer of exceptional integrity" (Thorpe). The essence of Orwell's writing finds expression in his own words – "To write in plain, vigorous language, one has to think fearlessly, and if one thinks fearlessly, one cannot be politically orthodox" (qtd. in Thorpe 190). We leave this Introduction at that, but with the rejoinder that the words quoted from Orwell himself must be kept in mind, not just in analysing his own work but that of most modern writers.

5.19.3 "Shooting an Elephant": Text with Annotations

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people — the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was

at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically — and secretly, of course — I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that, you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos — all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evilspirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in *saecula saeculorum*¹, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism — the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem.² Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone 'must'. It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of 'must' is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and

escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violence upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palm leaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of 'Go away, child! Go away this instant!' and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile

some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant — I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary — and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant — it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery — and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of 'must' was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first

grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd — seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality, I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the 'natives', and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing — no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also, I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then, I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of 'natives'; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought

in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger, I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time — it might have been five seconds, I dare say — he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him, he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open — I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally, I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood

welled out of him like red velvet, but still, he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dash and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee³ coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

➤ **Annotations**

1. Meaning for generation after generation. The reference is obviously to prolonged colonial rule.
2. As a warning. Orwell's initial response was to find a way that could frighten the elephant into leaving the locality where it was said to be on a rampage.
3. A colloquial term used to refer to Indians, mainly people from South India.

5.19.4 Critical Analysis

On reading the essay, you realise it is an account of an imperial officer in the British colony of Burma. For the historical record, the British conquered Burma over a period of sixty-two years (1823-1886) during which time there were as many as three Anglo-Burmese wars. It was initially incorporated into the Indian Empire and continued to be administered as a province of India, till as late as 1937. You find evidence of this in the

reference to Indians in Burma in Orwell's essay. Post 1937, Burma became a separate, self-governing colony and remained so till it attained independence in 1948. You have learnt from the earlier section on Orwell's life that he held the position of Assistant Superintendent in the British Indian Imperial Police in Burma in the 1920s, though this is not adequate proof to substantiate that the account of the shooting of the elephant is an autobiographical one. What is, however, sure is that it is a terse account of the nature of the colonial mission from an insider's perspective. More than the events described in "Shooting an Elephant", it is the workings of the mind of the author, and the candid conversational style of narration that give the essay abiding importance. From the textual point of view, you can sum up the drift of happenings in the following way:

- The narrator, a colonial officer in Moulmein, a place in lower Burma that was known for the use of elephants for hauling logs in timber firms, receives report of an elephant having run wild and causing rampage.
- The narrator reaches the bazar, armed with his paltry rifle, but the very sight of him with his ammunition raises hopes in the minds of the assembled natives that the elephant would now be undone.
- The elephant is sighted in the paddy fields, and the mob that enthusiastically follows the narrator is expectant that the animal will now be shot. More than the damage it has caused to human life and property, it is the expectation of the spectacle that seems to drive the Burmese locals.
- The narrator realises that it is gradually becoming incumbent upon him to kill the animal, though he knows full well that no sanity warrants such an act.
- He shoots the elephant again and again, and the animal dies a painful death well after the last shot has been fired.
- It is reported that by end of day, the dead elephant has been skinned and its flesh done with – all that is left is the skeleton.
- Opinion was divided on the rightness of the act of killing, but in the face of an action taken by an imperial officer, there was little that the Indian owner could have done.

Having read the point-wise details above, if you go back to the text of the essay, you will find that this is only one half of what Orwell has written. The other half, and the more important one, is the account of the constantly running interiorised thoughts of the narrator – and these are thought of an individual instead of the narrator's public pose as an imperial officer.

From this second and more pervasive point of view, ‘Shooting an Elephant’ is actually a modernist critique of the entire imperial mission from an insider’s point of view. If you notice the very opening lines of the essay, you will find that Orwell is clearly demarcating the dividing lines between the narrator as an individual and as a part of the imperial machinery. So, he knows full well the hatred that “large numbers of people” in Moulmein have for him, in his capacity as sub-divisional police officer of the town. The hatred of the coloured for the white skinned is a basic aspect – manifest in the treatment that a native dishes out to a European woman in the bazaars when she is alone. And when it is a government official like the narrator is, the obvious increase in the degree of hatred is understandable.

The split between the narrator’s private and public selves is evident in Orwell’s essay. As one who sees the workings of the imperial machinery from close quarters, the narrator realizes both the futility and the inhumanity of it all. You can find a similar introspective narration in the words of Marlow in Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*, as he sees the workings of the colonial project in his journey up the Congo River.

In Orwell, however, we have a clear picture of how the imperial venture destroys not just the conquered, but the conqueror as well. The entire essay is one long exposition of the fact of the inherent problem of hegemony – far from being in absolute control of situations, the conqueror is actually subject to the will of the conquered people in that the former’s actions are, more often than not, a violation of self-reason and performed with the only objective of saving face.

Once you understand this paradox, you will see that it is hardly the shooting of the elephant that is the main subject of the essay. Rather, it is possible to read “Shooting an Elephant” as an extended dialogue with the self, undertaken by an individual who is self-critical of the culture that he represents. It is also one long attempt at justifying the very cause of his existence, his profession, and the hollow sham of appearing as the representative of authority in the public eye.

With these pointers, and with help from your counselor, you should now be able to identify the double layer on which Orwell’s text operates. Notice particularly, the closing lines of the essay where the narrator, despite official sanction, is at pains to justify the act of cruelty to himself. It goes to such an extent that the fact of the elephant having killed a native, becomes a veritable instrument of ratifying the act of having shot the elephant.

If a text like this interests you, try reading other works of George Orwell. Consider particularly the fact that Orwell was born in India and spent a part of his life in active

service of British imperial interests. Consider if these facts have had some bearings on the way the writer thought and wrote out his iconoclastic works during his entire literary career.

5.19.5 Summing Up

Orwell in “Shooting an Elephant” exposes the hollowness of the imperial enterprise. The interesting aspect in this text is that the criticisms are from writers who are themselves part of the society they are critiquing. This is one significant aspect of the modernist enterprise. In this sense of course, major novelists and poets of the Victorian period too have insistently questioned the dominant trends of the period. In the present context, what matters is the spirit of a genuine desire for the liberty and equality of all people – whether the master class or the governed – that drives both Shaw and Orwell.

5.19.6 Comprehension Exercises

● **Long Answer Type Questions:**

1. Show how Orwell formulates a critique of imperialism in “Shooting an Elephant”.
2. How does Orwell’s narrative art become a rhetorical device in “Shooting an Elephant”?

● **Medium Length Answer Type Questions:**

1. Give an account of the narrator’s impression of how the mob builds up psychological pressure to shoot the elephant.
2. How does the narrator balance his inherent questioning self with his justifying self on the issue of shooting the elephant?
3. “A white man mustn’t be frightened in front of ‘natives’; and so, in general, he isn’t frightened.” How does this statement become the key issue in “Shooting an Elephant”?

● **Short Questions:**

1. Give some instances from the text that show the general hatred of the native Burmese towards their European masters.
2. What actual damage had the elephant caused?

Unit 20 □ Towards Postmodernism

Structure

- 5.20.1 Objectives**
- 5.20.2 Introduction**
- 5.20.3 The Term ‘Postmodernism’**
- 5.20.4 Precursors of the Postmodernist Tendency**
- 5.20.5 The Postmodern Condition**
- 5.20.6 Postmodernism in Art**
- 5.20.7 Postmodernism in Literature**
- 5.20.8 Postmodernism in Literary Theory**
- 5.20.9 Postmodernism and Popular Culture**
- 5.20.10 Summing Up**
- 5.20.11 Comprehension Exercises**
- 5.20.12 Suggested Reading**

5.20.1 Objectives

This Unit will expectedly help learners to:

- understand what postmodernism is
- differentiate between modernism and postmodernism
- appreciate the literary techniques associated with postmodernism

A thorough understanding of this Unit should equip you with a basic acquaintance of the new turns in literature and literary studies from the second half of the 20th century in general. It will also enable you to place subsequent courses both in the schema of Core and Discipline Specific Electives that you will take up in subsequent semesters.

5.20.2 Introduction

After reading about Modernism in the previous Units, here you will read about Postmodernism. It will naturally strike you as learners that if we are talking of post-modernism,

does that mean the end of modernism? As stated in the previous Unit, to talk of Postmodernism is not to imply that we are over and done with modernism. You may on a broad scale look upon it as a general intensification of the traits of modernism in a way that seemed difficult to contain under the same bracket; hence the new term. The term “postmodernism” first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by the French philosopher, sociologist and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard. That postmodernism is undefinable is a truism. However, it can be described as a set of critical practices employed in architecture, art, literature and culture of the late 20th century. J. A. Cuddon in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* describes post-modernism as characterised by “an eclectic approach, aleatory writing, parody and pastiche”. By “eclectic” he means the use of fragmented forms, whereas “aleatory writing” suggests the incorporation of chance and randomness. “Parody” and “Pastiche” suggest the abandonment of divine authorship. As you proceed along this Unit you will find an in-depth analysis of these terms and thereby arrive at an understanding of what the journey “Towards Postmodernity” actually means.

5.20.3 The Term ‘Postmodernism’

From your reading of the previous Units you must already know that Modernism is of crucial importance in the understanding of twentieth-century culture. Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* writes, “Modernism was that earthquake in the arts which brought down much of the structure of pre-twentieth century practice in music, painting, literature, and architecture.” So if Modernism was an earthquake it is important to trace its epicentre. One of the important epicentres was the artistic and cultural developments in Vienna from 1890 to 1910 whose effects can still be felt today. It successfully toppled several structures which were impossible to rebuild. However, due to the economic and political crisis perpetrated by successive World Wars and the attendant developments, Modernism started to retreat considerably in the 1950’s. This phase was marked by people’s change in attitude and critical thinking. Several critics therefore began to use the term ‘Postmodernism’ to refer to the socio-historical condition and a change in people’s perception from 1950’s onwards that was highly influenced by:

- Emergence of media (television, video, computers)
- Globalisation
- Consumerism
- Popular Culture (rock music, TV soaps, horror stories, science fiction)

- Tremendous growth in information and communication technology

In simpler terms postmodern literature and culture, should be understood as a vision of the world influenced by socio-historical conditions of the post-World War II period and marked by a rapid growth of advanced technology, mass society, media, popular culture influencing individual's vision of the world as manifested in arts and culture especially of the post-1950s period. You realise that at once we are talking of something highly negative as the devastation of war, and something positive in the sense of advancements in terms of culture, thought, technology communication and so on. It is basically this hiatus between the two – in other words the indeterminacy of life – that is broadly the subject of the postmodern condition.

The term Postmodernism, however, was used at different times and with different meanings. Let us trace the evolutionary history of the term:

- In 1870 an English painter Chapman wanted to launch a Postmodern painting which was meant to be a reaction to French Impressionism. However, the term was not used systematically and gradually went out of use.
- The first person to use the term Postmodernism was sociologist Rudolf Panwitz who in his work *The Crisis of the European Culture* (1917) tried to define “a postmodern man” as one who in his view was self-conscious, religious and nationally aware individual. Panwitz wanted his “postmodern man” to overcome the crisis of Modernity.
- In 1934, Frederico De Onis used the term to chart a new tendency in Latin American Hispanic literature. He went on to use the term “postmodernismo” (1905-1914) as a successor of “modernismo” (1896-1905) and a predecessor of “ultramodernismo” (1914-1932) but then again failed to express the term as it is used today.
- Charles Olson, a leading poet of 1940s was the first to use the term in poetry which is closer to its contemporary understanding.
- In 1947, a British historian and philosopher Arnold Toynbee published his *A Study of History* where he used the term to mark the transition from nation state to globalising relationships.
- In 1949 the term came to be associated with architecture when a British architect Joseph Hudnut published his work *The Post-Modern House*.
- Leslie Fiedler in 1965 started to use the term in context of literature. He used it as a term for the emergence of the new literature which he found was very different from that of Eliot, Joyce, Proust and Kafka. He found this new literature to be a

celebration of popular culture as opposed to the more academic and difficult Modernist works.

- The term, however, began to be used more systematically in literature with publication of **Ihab Hassan's** work *PostmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography* where he tried to bring out the difference between Modernist and Postmodernist literature. In another work *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1971) that was later reprinted in *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology* (1998), Hassan came out with his famous table of differences between Modernism and Postmodernism, that has hence been the subject of much controversy.
- François Lyotard in his work *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) treated the term as a philosophical concept and tried to theorise the nature of science and knowledge and their legitimacy in the period of Modernism and Postmodernism.

5.20.4 Precursors of the Postmodernist Tendency

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a Danish philosopher, poet, social critic and religious author who is considered the first Existentialist philosopher. He wrote critical texts on religion, ethics, morality and psychology. He had a fondness for metaphor, irony and parables.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher, poet, philologist, critic whose works have exerted tremendous influence on Western philosophy and modern intellectual history. Nietzsche's work deals with art, philology, religion, history, culture, science and tragedy.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a German scientist, philosopher, economist, journalist and revolutionary social thinker. He is known for his most influential work *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). His work has largely influenced economic and political theory, and has ever since been the foundation of the anti-capitalist bloc.

The philosophical Modernism at issue in Postmodernism begins with Immanuel Kant's "Copernican revolution". Kant assumes that we cannot know things in themselves and that objects of knowledge must conform to our faculties of representation. Ideas such as God, freedom, immortality, the world, first beginning, and final ending only have a regulative function for knowledge because they cannot find fulfilling instances among objects of our daily experiences. With the growth of mass communication and transportation in the later nineteenth century, the human perceptions were reshaped. They lost distinction between natural and artificial experience. Postmodernists challenge the viability of such a distinction. A consequence

of Modernism is what Postmodernists refer to as de-realisation. De-realisation affects both the subject and the object of experience, such that their sense of identity and constancy is either upset or dissolved. Important precursors to this notion are found in Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche.

Nietzsche can be considered as an important precursor for postmodernism for his analysis of the fundamental concept of Western metaphysics, the “I”. According to Nietzsche, this concept of “I” arises out of our moral sense to be responsible for our actions. In order to be responsible, we must acknowledge that we are the cause of our actions and both reward and punishment are the consequences of our actions. In this way, the concept of the “I” comes about as a social construction and moral illusion. According to Nietzsche, the moral sense of the “I” as an identical cause is projected onto events in the world, where the identity of things, causes, effects, et cetera, takes shape in easily communicable representation. Thus logic is born from the demand to adhere to common social norms which shape humanity into a society of knowing and acting subjects. For Postmodernists, Nietzsche’s concepts in *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* is also an important reference where he attempts to provide a critique of the contemporary considerations of truth and concepts.

In Nietzsche’s view, the life of an individual and a culture largely depends on their ability to repeat an unhistorical moment, a kind of forgetfulness, along with their continuous development through time. The study of history ought therefore to emphasise how each person or culture attains and repeats this moment. Historical repetition is not linear, but each age worthy of its designation repeats the unhistorical moment that is its own present as “new”. In this respect, Nietzsche would agree with Charles Baudelaire, who describes modernity as “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent” that is repeated in all ages, and postmodernists read Nietzsche’s remarks on eternal return accordingly. Nietzsche presents these concepts of his in *The Gay Science* and develops it in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This concept of Nietzsche is taken up by many as an identical repetition of everything in the Universe, such that nothing occurs that has not already occurred an infinite number of times before. Postmodernists read these theories of Nietzsche in conjunction that history is always the repetition of a specific moment, the moment that is always new in each case, meaning the new always eternally repeats itself as new and therefore recurrence is a matter of difference rather than identity. Postmodernists join the concept of eternal return with the loss of distinction between the real and the apparent world.

5.20.5 The Postmodern Condition

Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) was a French philosopher, sociologist and literary theorist. He is best known for his work *The Postmodern Condition* where he analyses the impact of postmodernity on the human condition. Lyotard's work continues to be important in politics, philosophy, literature, art and cultural studies.

Jean-François Lyotard's influential work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* has been viewed by many as the "bible" of Postmodernism. In this work Lyotard analyses how the processing of knowledge has changed in the twentieth century with the rapid growth in computer science. The postmodern condition is the fundamentally different outlook on knowledge post Enlightenment and especially after the World War II. As said before, the word "postmodern" came into the lexicon with the publication of Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (English: *The Postmodern Condition*). Lyotard was heavily influenced by Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and based this work on his model of language games. He took Wittgenstein's concept from speech act theory to account for what he calls change in the rules of game for science, art and literature since the end of nineteenth century. He calls his work a combination of two very different language games, i.e., of the philosopher and the expert. According to his theory, the expert knows what he knows but the philosopher knows nothing and poses questions.

Lyotard claims in his work that in the age of computers knowledge has been transformed to information. This proposition basically explains the whole concept of the postmodern condition as the absence of certainties and a loss of what was earlier considered heroic and celebratory. Knowledge is thus downscaled into becoming nothing more than just a coded message within the system of communication. To analyse this knowledge, it is important to comprehend the pragmatics of communication. This in turn means that communication is a process that includes coding the message, selecting the mode of transmission and finally its reception. This process or the order of it must be followed by the one who judges them. However, Lyotard believes the position of the judge is also within this language game which in turn raises the question of legitimation. The languages of science and that of politics and ethics are strongly interlinked. Science is always dependent on government and administration for huge amount of capital and infrastructure required for research. Science plays the language game by displacing the narrative knowledge including the meta-narratives of philosophy. This is the result of the rapid growth in technologies and techniques in the second half of twentieth century, where the emphasis of knowledge has shifted from ends of human action to its means.

Lyotard says, “I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward meta-narratives”. ‘Meta’ in Greek stands for an idea that is transcendent and ‘narrative’ is a story characterised by its telling. Lyotard used the term to show that postmodernism was basically characterised by a mistrust of the grand narratives that had formed an essential part of modernity. In his view, meta-narratives should give way to localised narratives, which can replace grand narratives by bringing into focus the specific local context.

In Lyotard’s view Postmodern sensibility does not lament the loss of narrative coherence any more than the loss of being. However, the dissolution of narrative leaves the field of legitimation to a new unifying criterion: the performativity of the knowledge-producing system whose form of capital is information. The performativity criterion threatens anything not meeting its requirements, such as speculative narratives, which perform the functions of de-legitimation and exclusion. Nevertheless, capital also demands the continual re-invention of the “new” in the form of new language games and new denotative statements, and so, paradoxically, a certain “paralogy” is required by the system itself. By the term “paralogy”, Lyotard meant a flood of good ideas that are inspired by conversation. According to Lyotard, the Postmoderns have a quest for “paralogy”. In the given context, this means a hunger for stimulating conversations and ideas that work in a satisfying way. To get those ideas, paralogists often share an irreverent attitude towards well accepted theories, breaking them up and recombining them in a revolutionary new way. The point of paralogy is to help us shake ourselves loose of stultifying traditional frameworks that we have come to take for granted in order to enhance our spontaneous creativity.

Marcel Proust: (1871-1922) French novelist, critic, and essayist best known for his work *Remembrance of Things Past*.

In “What is Postmodernism?” which appears as an appendix to the English edition of *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard addresses the importance of avant-garde art in terms of the aesthetic of the sublime. Modern art, he says, is emblematic of a sublime sensibility, that is, a sensibility that there is something non-presentable demanding to be fit into sensible form and yet overwhelms all attempts to do so. But where modern art presents the unrepresentable as a missing content within a beautiful form, as in Marcel Proust, postmodern art exemplified by James Joyce, puts forward the unrepresentable by foregoing beautiful form itself, thus denying what Kant would call the consensus of taste. Furthermore, Lyotard says that a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern, for postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, that is, at the moment it attempts to present the unrepresentable, “and this state is constant”. The Postmodern then, is a repetition of the modern as the “new,” and this means the ever-new demand for another repetition.

5.20.6 Postmodernism in Art

In this sub-section you will see how Postmodern art questioned the idea that there was only one inherent meaning to a piece of work and that is determined by the artist at the time of creation. For Postmodern art, the viewer became the determiner of meaning. They aimed at breaking distinctions between “high” and “low” art. Postmodern artists intended to incorporate popular culture in their paintings as Pablo Picasso often did by including the lyrics of popular songs on his canvases. Postmodern artists wanted to uphold the idea that no formal or aesthetic training is required to enjoy a piece of visual art. The artists challenged any traditional demarcations of “high” or “low” art and focused on the importance of consumerism in the 1960s. This idea was successfully put forward by Barbara Kruger in her artistic work *I shop therefore I am* (1987) where she juxtaposes photographs with aggressive slogans and visuals from advertisements. Kruger’s work was basically a photolithograph medium that she used on paper shopping bags. The title of her work subverts ‘René Descartes’ philosophical claim “I think therefore I am”, thereby critically showcasing how consumerism shapes a person’s identity more than their inner selves in a Postmodern world.

An earlier example of such postmodernist art could be found in Andy Warhol’s popular work *The Marilyn Diptych* (1962) became another icon of postmodern art. This again was a silk screen painting by an American pop artist. The work is a collage of fifty images of Marilyn Monroe based on her film *Niagara* (1953). Twenty-five pictures of the actress on the left side of the diptych are brightly coloured, while the twenty five on the right are in black and white. This image suggests the multiplicity of meanings in Monroe’s life and legacy.

However, the most important aspect of Postmodern art is the introduction of Surrealism in paintings. Surrealism was officially introduced by the writer André Breton with his publication of *The Manifesto of Surrealism* in 1924. This movement was characterised by a profound disillusionment with the Western emphasis on logic and reason. Sigmund Freud’s theory of the unconscious influenced this movement to a great degree as the surrealist artists aimed to tap the dream-world of the subliminal mind, visualizing its secrets and mysteries. Eminent surrealist artists include Salvador Dali, René Magrite, Max Ernst and Man Ray among others. Dali’s most influential and iconic artwork *The Persistence of Memory* introduced a surrealist image of soft, melting pocket watches which rejected the rigid and deterministic concept of time. Surrealism served as an important precursor to the late 20th century artistic developments such as Neo-Dada, Nouveau Realisme and Institutional Critique.

5.20.7 Postmodernism in Literature

While postmodernism as a cultural wave came only in the 20th century, you will be surprised to know that in literature, the elements of postmodernism appeared as early as in Laurence Sterne's novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759). However, given the complexity of the postmodern milieu, we can hardly consider Sterne's work to be a typical postmodern work if we take it as a whole and if read against its socio-historical context. All the same, we need to remember that *Tristram Shandy* represents an exception in the development of the 18th century English realistic novel. This novel, did not have its followers until the 20th century and it did not form a more systematic movement or tendency as the works of American and other postmodernists in the 1960's.

Ihab Hassan sees the roots and early beginnings of post modernism in Nietzsche's philosophy, Einstein's theory of relativity, and the beginning of the postmodern age around 1939 with such works as James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*, and *The Counterfeiters* by André Gide. Hassan further emphasises the principle of uncertainty, doubt, fragmentation and radical pluralism to be the most important features of postmodern literature. By pluralism he means not only a plurality of different forms and genres juxtaposed and used within a single literary work, equality of meaning each of these forms creates, formal and thematic diversity, but also the plurality of meaning secured by the openness of a literary work which leaves a space for a reader to be involved in the completion of the literary work.

Postmodern literature is characterised by its depiction of the postmodern life and culture. Through its works postmodern literature tries to bring to the forefront a crisis of identity of human being (ethnic, social, cultural and sexual). There can be no doubt that these themes were previously treated in Western literature but started to be taken more seriously after the Civil Rights Movement in the USA in the 1960's, the Vietnam War, and student protests in Europe and the US. The result of these protests led to the democratisation of public life, and provided education and publishing opportunities for the minorities of the Western nations. As a result, new authors got opportunities to be published. Authors coming from different cultural backgrounds, specially from former British colonies started to appear. Examples of such writers include Ben Okri, Kazuo Ishiguro, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Quereshi in British literature; Collin Johnson, Kath Walker, Sam Watson and Kim Scott in Australian literature.

This period also saw the rise of the Beat Generation which included authors like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Snyder, Gregory Corso and others. These authors expressed strong negative attitudes towards Western

civilisation and excessive growth of industrialisation. They emphasised oriental philosophy for a peaceful way of life with an appreciation of drugs and alcohol as a liberating alternative to the Western hypocrisy. They wrote poems not for reading at home but to be recited in public places accompanied by pop, jazz, and blues music.

Another literary phenomenon that surfaced during this period which the journalists conceptualised for the mass public with the phrase “Angry Young Man”. It included writers like Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, Alan Sillitoe, John Braine and Kingsley Amis. The anger of these writers were directed against age old establishment, middle class society and was marked by their disillusionment of the Labour Party that rose to power. Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* (performed 1956, published 1957) supplied the tone and the title for the movement. Kingsley Amis’ *Lucky Jim* (1954) provides an effective metaphor for the protesting young men. In his work a young university teacher tries to break the rules of his social class to connect with the working class, who experience a different life from the one he knows and who he believes have stronger and deeper feelings than the people living around him. Other examples of Angry Young Man drama include John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957) and Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958).

The 1950s also saw the emergence of the theatre of Absurd with the publication of Albert Camus’ essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). The term eventually came to be applied to a group of dramatists in 1950s who shared a common attitude towards the predicament of the man in the Universe. Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953) is considered as a masterpiece of absurd theatre. It is a two act play about two characters Estragon and Vladimir – for ever waiting for the arrival of someone named Godot but as Vladimir points out “nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful.” The play remains absurd as it is comic and irrational at the same time. Apart from Beckett’s work, Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* is also considered as an important absurd work. Albee’s work marked a more naturalistic departure and showed an interest in closely observed human relationships. Other writers associated with absurd theatre were Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter, Jean Genet. You are advised to have a close reading of their works which will provide a better understanding of the workings of the Absurdists.

Postmodernism in literature can be characterised by:

Irony and Black Humour: Use of irony in their works became a hallmark of Postmodern writers. The Postmodern writers were frustrated by the World War II, the Cold War and the conspiracy theories. They tried to amalgamate it in different ways and therefore took the path of irony and black humour. In fact, several

postmodern novelists were initially labelled as black humorists. Examples include John Barth, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, William Gaddis among others. Irony often gave way to radical irony. Radical irony does not necessarily manifest itself on verbal level but sometimes on the level of the text as whole, in juxtaposition of different styles creating an ironic effect or in the use of burlesque or travesty as a part of parodic mode. A best example of this can be Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* where the phrase Catch-22 bears idiomatic irony. Also, the narrative is structured around a long series of similar ironies.

Metafiction: Metafiction is a dominant literary feature of Postmodern works. To a simplistic understanding, it is that "metafiction is a fiction about fiction". However Postmodern fictional work is more about issues than only about fiction. Patricia Waugh's definition of metafiction provides a most suitable understanding of the term in Postmodern literature. In Waugh's view metafiction is "...a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictitiousness of the world outside the literary/fictional text".

By using metafictional elements, the postmodern authors point out a difference between reality and its linguistic representation and they emphasize the fact that a language works on different principles than reality. At the same, the use of metafictional elements points out to the fictionalities of fiction, involve a reader in a creation of meaning of the literary (artistic) text, and shows a difference between the past and contemporary forms of art. For example, the first chapters of British author 'John Fowles' novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) begin as a traditional Victorian realistic novel, but later a narrator suddenly breaks a narrative and directly addresses the reader by commenting on the previous plot, possible development of the story and on the writing techniques. Later, as readers learn, the characters from this novel overlap with the characters in a film based on this book and a story of a Victorian love is left unfinished (in both the book and a film) and left to the reader's interpretation. Thus direct addressing a reader and the comments on the fictionality of fiction become metafictional elements. Like Fowles, another Postmodern author, Italo Calvino in his work *If on A winter's Night a Traveller* emphasises the

fictionality of his fiction and draws the reader to participate in the construction of meaning.

Intertextuality: One of the most important aspect of postmodern literary work connected with metafiction is intertextuality. The term was coined by French theorist Julia Kristeva in 1966. Kristeva derives her theory of intertextuality from Michael Bakhtin's idea of a "polyphonic novel" as one that is open to various voices and interpretations and understands a literary text as part of other literary texts in the history of the literary tradition. Thus, what stems from it is the undermining of the idea of authorship—the text is not a product of an author, but exists within specific literary and cultural contexts and thus is open to various understandings and interpretations. In this sense, the role of an author is diminished, as is the study of his biography as in traditional criticism. Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or adoption of a style. A good example of intertextuality in Postmodern literature is its references to Medieval romance of Don Quixote. Don Quixote is a common reference with Postmodernists, for example Kathy Acker's novel *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream*. Another example of intertextuality in Postmodernism is John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* which deals with Ebenezer Cooke's poem of the same name. Often intertextuality is more complicated than a single reference to another text. An example of this is Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* which takes on the form of a detective novel and makes references to authors such as Aristotle, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Borges.

Pastiche: Related to Postmodern intertextuality, pastiche means to combine or paste. It comes from the Italian word "pasticcio" meaning "a medley of various ingredients: a hotchpotch, a farrago, jumble". This implies a similarity with a Postmodern literary work consisting of different styles, genres, narrative voices. In Postmodern literature the authors combined or pasted elements of previous genres or styles to create a new narrative style, or to comment on their contemporaries. For example, Margaret Atwood uses science fiction and fairy tales. Thomas Pynchon uses elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction. However, pastiche always does not refer to narrative technique but also to compositional technique. One of the commonest examples of a pastiche is B. S. Johnson's 1969 novel *The Unfortunates*. Johnson released his book in a box with no binding so that readers could assemble it in whatever way they

chose. You will definitely understand from this, the heights to which indeterminacy can get in the grip of postmodernity!

Magic Realism: Considered to be one of the most important Postmodern literary technique, Magic Realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative in ways that they begin to seem real or normal. Magic realist novels include fairies and dreams, wild time shifts, myths as a part of the narrative structure. Magic realism has its roots in the works of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* serve as the finest examples of this technique.

Palimpsest: Postmodern authors often use a palimpsest technique. It is a way of rewriting of the old texts by putting them in different linguistic and cultural contexts. Palimpsest was originally "A paper or parchment on which the original text has been partly erased or effaced to allow a new text to be written, leaving fragments of the original still visible". A French theorist Gerard Genette first used the term in reference to Proust's works. As in the postmodern authors' works, palimpsestic technique of writing means the writing of a new text on the layers of the old, traditional (pre) text by the operation of which it acquires a new meaning. In his chapter on Literary Text in Context from his book written jointly with Silvia Pokrivèáková *Understanding Literature*, Anton Pokrivèák gives a fine survey of the use of the term palimpsest and different kinds of textuality.

Postmodern Literature : An example

You have by now definitely understood that unreliability of language is an important theme explored by Postmodernists in their work. Language, according to Postmodernists, is based on arbitrary signs that can be interpreted differently. To take an example from your syllabised authors, Harold Pinter used the scepticism of language and communication extensively in his plays. The play in your syllabus – *The Birthday Party* (1957), was Pinter's second play and it deals with the acute rupture in human communication. In the play as you will find, language fails to connect people as the characters in the play do not have much to say to each other. They use language only to talk and not to converse. Pinter uses the language game to comment on the emptiness of relationships among the characters. The best example from the play is that of Stanley's narration of his successful piano concert to Meg. When Meg narrates Stanley's story to Goldberg she produces a completely different version of the story. In Pinter's play language is thus used to confuse and puzzle instead of informing. Questions are answered with

further questions as can be seen in Act 1 in the conversation between Mc Cann and Goldberg regarding finding the right house. Use of absurd language leads the play to another facet of Postmodernism, i.e., ambiguity. In the play, Stanley, Lulu, Meg, Goldberg all have an ambiguous past. The problem of identity surfaces with Goldberg being called “Nut”, “Benny” and “Simey” and McCann is referred both as “Demerot” and “Seamis”. Irony being an important characteristic of Postmodern writing, it is used to glory by the playwright in the title of the play itself. The Birthday Party is an occasion of celebration and happiness, but the play is about the mental breakdown of the protagonist. As you will further notice, Pinter also plays with the idea of the traditional ending. The play closes with the same tone of banality with which it opened. Stanley’s departure raises innumerable questions in the mind of the audience/reader. The ending builds up the suspense instead of bringing all the issues to a close as we expect in traditional dramaturgy.

5.20.8 Postmodernism in Literary Theory

A major theorist of Postmodernism is the French writer Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard’s book *Simulations* (1981) is considered one of the most influential works in Postmodern literary criticism. According to Baudrillard there has been “the loss of real” in contemporary life with infiltration of popular culture in every sector of private life. It has led to a loss of distinction between real and imagined and has given birth to what he famously called “hyper-reality”, in which distinctions between these are eroded. Baudrillard goes on to say that if a sign is not an index of an underlying reality, but of some other signs, then the system becomes what he calls “simulacrum”. He then proposes a four-stage model of how sign works.

- First stage: The sign represents a basic reality.
- Second stage: The sign misrepresents or distorts the reality behind it.
- Third Stage: The sign disguises the fact that there is no corresponding reality underneath.
- Fourth Stage: The sign bears no relation to any reality at all.

Baudrillard himself provides an example of the third stage by bringing a reference to Disneyland. He tells that “Disneyland” is presented as “imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real”. Disneyland has the effect of “concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle”. Postmodernism, in fact blurs the distinction between real and unreal and leads us to a “hyperreal” world as Baudrillard calls it.

The work of Postmodernist critics:

1. Discover Postmodernist themes and tendencies in literary work
2. To find out the intertextual elements in Postmodern works; i.e.; to find out the use of parody, irony, meta-fiction, allusion, pastiche that are at work.
3. Postmodern critics challenge the distinctions between high and low culture.

5.20.9 Postmodernism and Popular Culture

With the rapid growth in commercialisation, globalisation and the pervasive impact of international capital, Postmodernism got closely connected with popular culture. This section will tell you how Postmodernism got connected with the popular culture of the late 20th century.

Film: Postmodern films explore elements of surrealism by using bizarre images and symbols to provoke emotional reactions within the audience, which otherwise would have been difficult to create using a realistic plot. Luis Buñuel's film *Un Chien Andalou* (English: *The Andalusian Dog*) written by Buñuel and Dali can be considered as a cult in Postmodern cinema. As such the film lacks a plot, in the conventional sense of the word and is a chronology of disjointed and unconnected events that follows a dream logic in the narrative. Other filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino, Stanley Kubric, David Lynch use postmodern influences in their work. **Kubrick** in his film *The Shining* (based on *The Shining* by Stephen King) designs his set abnormally to bring out the sense of madness in his characters and disorientate the audience. Other examples of Postmodern cinema include David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and *Eraserhead*, David Fincher's *Fight Club*, Spike Jonez's *Her*, QuentinTarantino's *Pulp Fiction*.

Music: Popular music experimented with fragmentation in its chronology. They used disoriented and unconventional orchestral pieces that challenged the perception of time. For example, David Bowe, an influential musician of the period uses several fragmented songs and composes one long song in an effort to disorient the listeners. Postmodern trends in musical compositions can also be noted in the works of Beatles, Pink Floyd, Radiohead, Courtney Love, Michael Jackson, Madonna, among others.

Sports: With the spread of international capital, Postmodern world has seen the commercialisation of sport stars. They are often used as a face of advertisements to promote distribution and sales of the particular brand they are endorsing. The sports stars' outfits of the club or national team are manufactured by brands like Reebok and Nike which sell it as a casual wear to the sports fanatics which in turn actually eradicating the distinctions between high and low cultures.

This eradication of a former distinction between high and low culture in literature and culture connects literature to the emerging field of cultural studies which tries to place literature within the context of a broader cultural product.

Activity For the Learner

1. The preceding sub-section tries to provide certain examples of postmodern art, to place your understanding of Postmodernism in perspective. With the help of your counsellor try to look up the pictures with reference to the examples provided in this section. You are also encouraged to find out more such examples of Postmodern artworks. This will provide you a better understanding of Postmodernism, far more than any conventional text book!
2. This unit gives you a rough idea of what postmodernism is all about. However, there have been controversies galore regarding the nature(s) of postmodernism and the extent of its influence. The whole issue stems from the fact that while several critics believe that it was a reaction to modernism, there are yet many others who look upon it as a continuation of the former. For example, Charles Jencks who is understood to be one of the most significant representatives of postmodernism in architecture and architectural thinking claims that postmodernism started exactly on July 15th, 1972 at 3:32 p.m. in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, when a residential quarter Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, a typical symbol of modernism, was blown up. This residential quarter was built in keeping with rationalist and pragmatic thinking of modernism and modernist architecture. While these are unending debates, you can on your part, with help from your counsellor, engage in discussions on the scope and nature of postmodernism. In the present days of neo-colonialism that is the ensuing stage of postcolonialism, the aspect of the postmodern renders itself anew to interpretations and reinterpretations that are radical to say the least. You will thus find that it all remains an open-ended proposition.

5.20.10 Summing Up

The purpose of this Unit has been to acquaint you with the key features of Postmodernism. It is a movement that initially began in art and architecture and moved on to literature, literary criticism popular culture. You are advised to constantly go back to the section on Modernism in the previous Units because Postmodernism can be best understood in relation to Modernism.

5.20.11 Comprehension Exercises

- **Long Answer Type Questions:**

1. What are the important features of Postmodern literature?
2. In your opinion how can Lyotard be seen as an important figure of Postmodernism?
3. How did the term Postmodernism come into existence?

- **Medium Length Answer Type Questions:**

1. In your opinion how did Postmodernism get connected with Popular Culture?
2. How did Postmodernism begin as a movement in art?
3. How can Baudrillard be seen as a key figure in Postmodern Literary criticism?

- **Short Questions:**

1. Comment on Baudrillard's four stage model of signs.
2. How is pastiche used in Postmodern literature? Elucidate with examples.
3. Meta-fiction or meta-narrative has been an important characteristic of Postmodern literature. How far do you agree with this statement?

5.20.12 Suggested Reading

Benjamin, Andrew, ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. New Jersey: Blackwell, 1977.

Bhatnagar, M.K. and M. Rajeshwar, ed. *Post-modernism and English Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1996.

Connor, Steven. *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*. New Jersey: Blackwell, 1996.

Docherty, Thomas, ed. *Postmodernism: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

