UTTAR PRADESH
RAJARSHI TANDON OPEN UNIVERSITY

MAEN-106
British Poetry

Block

1

THE ROMANTIC POETS: BLAKE, WORDSWORTH & COLERIDGE

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MAEN-106/3

MAE

BLOCK VI - INTRODUCTION

Late in the eighteenth century it was generally felt that the rhyming couplet had lost its vitality. To put it differently; it was not possible to improve upon the verse of Dryden and Pope. The medium, as it were, had exhausted its potential. Hence English poetry reverted once again to blank verse, the metre of Shakespeare and Milton. It was also felt that by following classical models alone such as those of Horace and Juvenal great poetry could not be written.

About the same time, a fast industrialising Europe demanded a more equitable social order. The French Revolution (1789) may be seen as the single most important event that expressed the *Zeitgeist* of the age which at the same time was its most momentous event.

The poets and writers of the Romantic period valued self-expression more than **balance, restraint, clarity** and **simplicity** - ideals of the neoclassical age. So they did not hesitate to go back to the middle ages for models and inspiration. What was dark and uncouth for a poet such as Pope was a rich site of mystery and meaning for Coleridge.

The major Romantic poets were unlike one another but William Blake, a mystic, was *sui generis*. He developed his own mythology which made his poetry often esoteric and remote for the common reader. He more than any other poet of his age questioned the world view based on the Newtonian and Lockean paradigm.

We will discuss the poetry of the second generation of the Romantic Poets - Shelley and Keats in the next block.

The frontspiece to this block - *Fishermen at Sea* (1796) was one of the earliest of Joseph Mallord William Turner's (1775-1851) oil paintings. Bernard Falk, Turner's biographer in this century, described him as an eccentric. Ruskin, his contemporary who could not write his biography that he had planned to told Walter Thornbury the journalist and biographer of Turner:

> Fix at the beginning the following main characteristics of Turner in your mind, as the keys to the secret of all he said and did: - Uprightness. Generosity. Tenderness of heart (extreme). Sensuality. Obstinacy (extreme). Irritability. Infidelity. And be sure that he knew his own power, and felt himself ulterly alone in the world from its not being understood. Don't try to mask the dark side.

Turner was a Romantic painter, not a man among men like Reynolds, but sure of his talents unrecognized by the world, lonely in his soaring ecstasy or abyss of gloom.

Editorial

UNIT 27 INTRODUCTION TO ROMANTIC POETRY

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27.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to:

1) provide a comprehensive view of the Romantic Movement, its beginnings, its sources of inspiration, its important features, its major figures and their contributions.
2) enable you to analyse, identify and appreciate Romantic poetry, and
3) make you realise the importance of the Romantic Movement in English literature as a significant and fruitful literary epoch.

27.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the Romantic Movement in England. It deals with the political, social, literary and other factors which brought about this movement; it considers various definitions of the term, 'Romanticism'; it devotes a good part to a discussion of the salient features of Romanticism. The work of the early romantic poets is covered in section 27.5. Then the major romantic poets and their

contribution to the movement are discussed in detail. After providing an account of Robert Burns's use of the folk song and William Blake's use of mysticism and symbolism, the unit moves on to the major figures of the Romantic Movement in England, William Wordsworth and Samuel Tylor Coleridge, who are deemed to be the pioneers of Romantic poetry in English. After a brief survey of Wordsworth's work, his theory of poetry as stated in the Preface (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads* is examined critically. The literary partnership between Wordsworth and Coleridge and their later differences are considered with reference to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria.* The deviations from his stated principles in the actual writing of Wordsworth's poetry are briefly illustrated. A section is set apart for Coleridge's poetry and criticism. The last section of the unit introduces you to the second generation of Romantic poets, Byron, Shelley and Keats.

The lesson provides self-check exercises at the end of each important section so that you can assess your comprehension of the material presented. Questions covering the entire lesson are given at the end of the unit.

The major points discussed in the lesson are recapitulated briefly in "Summing up". The unit concludes with a suggested reading list which is a selected and annotated bibliography relevant to the subject matter of the unit.

27.2 BACKGROUND TO THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

Historians of English Literature have designated the period from 1798 to 1832 as the Romantic period. Wordsworth and Coleridge published *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798; Sir Walter Scott died in 1832. Also, the Reform Bill which extended the right to vote to the middle class and labourers was passed by Parliament in 1832. During this period, England moved from a primarily agricultural to a modern industrialized society. Thus the balance of power passed on from the land-owning aristocracy to the owners of industrial units which employed large numbers of people. The mill-owners and their employees had developed different perspectives. In the political arena there were revolutions of far-reaching consequences to England. The American Revolution led to the Declaration of Independence (1776) by the thirteen colonies. The French Revolution was a shattering and sundering event which affected the whole of Western Europe in several ways.

The French Revolution received enthusiastic support in the beginning from the liberals and radicals in England. The Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French National Assembly was welcomed. Edmund Burke disapproved the events in France in his *Reflection on the Revolution in France* (1790). Tom Paine issued a spirited rejoinder to Burke in his *Rights of Man* (1791-92). Tom Paine pleaded for a democratic republic for England by peaceful or violent means. Another book, *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) by William Godwin made a great impact on Wordsworth, Shelley and others. Godwin predicted that eventually all property would be distributed equally and all government would disappear. Later events in the French Revolution, notably the execution of the royal family, the guillotine of innocent people during the Reign of Terror, and Napoleon's dictatorship disenchanted the early supporters.

The economic sphere also saw great convulsions. The manufacturing class became more powerful than the agricultural class. With the invention of James Watt's steam engine which replaced wind and water as sources of energy in 176., there was a revolutionary change in the means and pace of production. The population of England was becoming either owners and traders or wage earners without property. Thus the people were effectively divided into the rich and the poor. With the introduction of more machinery into industry, there was more unemployment. The soldiers demobilised after the French wars aggravated the labour market. There was an economic depression in 1815 caused by the fall in wartime demand for manufactured goods. These political, economic and social factors caused agitations

and riots by the working class. The ruling class responded by more repressive measures. The unrest culminated in passing the Reform Bill which met the political aspirations of at least some sections of the population.

There were important developments in other spheres also. Capt. James Cook circumnavigated the globe (1768-71) and discovered Australia and the Sandwich Islands. Fascinating accounts of life in the South Seas led to a re-thinking on the nature of society and the political systems. Ocean travel became safer with Cook's accurate charting of the coastlines.

The exploitation of new markets in India and elsewhere gave a fillip to commerce. This in turn led to the development of industry and technology. The dissemination of ideas kept pace with the improvements in the communications network. The pamphlet became a powerful means for debating controversial issues. For instance, the debate on the French Revolution was conducted through pamphlets. Eventually the pamphlet was replaced by the periodical for debate on political reforms further. Parliamentary Reform was inspired by the achievement of the middle class in France. Public opinion in England favoured representation to big towns leading to the passage of the Reform Bill.

The Romantic writers lived through such momentous changes in the political, economic, social and literary spheres. The idea of revolution informed the Romantic Movement from the beginning. Many major writers of this period were aware that great changes were taking place around them and that these changes would inevitably find their way into literature also. The French Revolution seemed to be the great divide and the beginning of a new era in the history of mankind. William Hazlitt rightly observed in his book, *The Spirit of the Age*. "There was a mighty ferment in the heads of statesmen and poets, kings and people.... It was a time of promise, a renewal of the world - and of letters".

The French Revolution swept away time-honoured hierarchies in different spheres. The new slogans, liberty, equality and fraternity promised a free and egalitarian society. Monarchy was abolished and the feudal structure was demolished. The principle of the dissolution of hierarchies carried into literature meant that the epic and tragedy which were at the top of the literary pyramid had to yield place to such forms as the lyric, the ode and the ballad. In language, the cultivated speech of the elite was sought to be replaced by the speech of the common people. In the choice of themes, great events had to make way for more commonplace incidents. The characters depicted in poetry need not be kings or queens; humbler folk like a leech-gatherer, or a highland lass, or even an idiot boy, is good enough for poetic composition. Thus the French Revolution caused a democratisation of literature in genre, in language, in themes and in characters. The spirit of the age demanded these changes and the creative writer responded enthusiastically.

Self-Check Exercise 1

1. Which years specify the Romantic period in English literature?

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2. What is the special significance of these years in English literary or political history?

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3. Name two important changes which occurred in the political and economic spheres in this period.

4. What is Tom Paine's theme in *Rights of Man?*

5. What did Godwin predict in his book?

6. Explain briefly the impact of the French Revolution on literature.

27.3 DEFINITION OF ROMANTICISM

The term, 'Romanticism', is controversial. F.L. Lucas, in his book, *The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal* (1948), counted as many as 11,396 definitions. The term comes from the name, 'Rome'. In the seventh and eighth centuries there were three main languages in Europe;(1) lingua Latina which was the language of the scholars, (2) lingua barbara which was the language of Germanic tribes, and (3) lingua romana rustica which was a group of vulgar Latin dialects from which the Romance languages, namely, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Rumanian are derived. The term, 'Romantic', is related to the Romance languages, the peripheral tradition, rather than to Latin, the main tradition.

The term, 'romantic', was first used in the late seventeenth century to describe paintings with certain bizarre qualities. When Le Tourneur referred to Shakespeare as a romantic writer, he meant that the English playwright was not a neo-classic writer. What is meant by a romantic writer is one who insists, implicitly or otherwise, on his own uniqueness. In the Age of Reason, many writers said that they represented their age. This was not so with the Romantics. Wordsworth and Coleridge who worked together for sometime never applied the term, "romantic", to themselves. Goethe defined "classic" as good health and "romantic" as sickness. This distinction is more psychological than aesthetic and it has received much currency. Around 1800, when Madame de Staël introduced German romantic literature into France, she stressed the medieval and christian qualities in that literature. These qualities replaced rationalism and agnosticism of the Age of Reason. She felt that the aridity of the eighteenth century was over and that the new literature celebrated the open heart. Heine, the German poet, held an opposite view. Victor Hugo described romanticism as 'liberalism in literature'. The important point is that romanticism has political overtones.

The term implies a literary and philosophical theory which tends to see the individual at the very center of all life and all experience. The individual is placed at the center of art. Literature is therefore an expression of his unique feelings and particular attitudes.

As Thrall and his associates say, romanticism, "places a high premium upon the creative function of the imagination seeing art as a formulation of intuitive imaginative perceptions that tend to speak a nobler truth than that of fact, logic, or the here and now." Romanticism spread through most of Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It affected literature, art, music, philosophy, religion and politics.

It may be more easy to understand the term, 'romanticism', by examining its salient features in the next section.

Self-Check Exercise 2

1. Explain the origin of the term, 'Romantic'.

2. What was implied in Le Tourneur's description of Shakespeare as a romantic?

3. How did Goethe differentiate the two terms, 'Classic', and 'romantic'?

4. What features of romanticism did Madame de Staél identify in German romantic literature?

5. What is Victor Hugo's definition of romanticism?

27.4 SALIENT FEATURES OF ROMANTICISM

Romanticism is opposed to the artificial conventions, the reigning literary tradition and the poetic establishment. The Neo-classical theory of poetry conceived it as imitation and as something acquired by training. The function of poetry, according to this view, is to instruct and to please. Art is a mirror in which we find a reflection of life. For the Romantics, the source of poetry is the poet himself. As Wordsworth puts it, poetry is a "sportaneous overflow of powerful feelings". It is an inborn gift and not something acquired. Poetry is the expression of emotion. The poet's imagination creates poetry. The traditional view that poetry is a painstaking endeavour is discarded by the Romantics. Blake thought that poetry comes from inspiration, vision and prophecy. Keats said that poetry should come "as naturally as the leaves of a tree".

Romantic poets made daring innovations, in the themes, forms, language and style of poetry. Lowly and eccentric characters like an idiot boy or a leech gatherer are material for poetic treatment by Wordsworth. Supernatural themes are used by Coleridge (*The Ancient Mariner*) and Keats (*The Eve of St. Agnes*). Romantic poetry often deals with the "far away and long ago", exotic places and forgotten events figure in Romantic Poetry. It draws inspiration from folk literature and the literature of the Middle Ages and of classical antiquity. Yet another innovation is the use of symbolist techniques, notably, by Blake and Shelley. The latter poet's "West Wind" and "Skylark" are good examples.

The Romantic poets displaced humanity by external nature as poetic subject-matter. Thus the description of landscape and its aspects become prominent. In fact, poets like Wordsworth saw in nature the power to chasten and subdue. While neoclassic poetry is written on other people - Pope's *The Rape of Lock* is an example - Romantic poetry is about the poet himself. The latter is highly subjective. The Romantic poets also had a fascination for solitary figures, social non-conformists, outcasts and rebels such as Prometheus, Cain, Don Juan and Satan.

Another significant innovation is the use of everyday speech of ordinary people instead of lofty poetic diction. We shall discuss this in detail later. The Romantic poets looked for new metres and stanzas to replace traditional forms. The heroic couplet gave place to the ballad, the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza and other experimental verse forms. Rural life is idealized in Romantic poetry. The wild, the irregular and the grotesque in Nature and art fascinated the Romantic poets. Taboo themes like incest are used without any inhibition. Conformity to tradition and decorum as observed by the earlier generation are no longer respected.

Classicism and Romanticism are generally considered somewhat antithetical. Classicism is concerned with the social, the formal, the intellectual and the static whereas Romanticism is concerned with the individual, the informal, the emotional and the dynamic. For instance, the common qualities, not the differences, of individuals figures in classical literature. Joseph Addison's Sir Roger is a basic human type. But the Romantics took their cue from Rousseau who said, "If I'm not better than other people, at least I'm different". The Neo-classical writers were interested in conformity, formality, acceptance of approved standards and patterns of behaviour. Careful workmanship is the hallmark of classicism. The unities are preserved by the classical writers whereas the Romantic writers do not observe them. Classicism focusses on the intellectual, romanticism on the emotional. The former is interested in describing static scenes in Greek sculpture whereas the latter attempts to catch the transient moments. Keat's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" depicts the activities of people etched on a static urn.

Thus the Romantic Movement was a revolutionary movement in many ways.

Self-Check Exercise 3

1. Explain the basic difference between the Neoclassical and Romantic theories of poetry.

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Name two important innovations in Romantic poetry.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What type of themes and characters are chosen by the Romantic poets?

4. What Poetic forms were favoured by the Romantics?

5. Explain the antithetical relationship between classicism and Romanticism.

27.5 EARLY ROMANTIC POETS

Some of the features of Romanticism which we discussed above are seen much earlier than 1798 in a number of poets:

27.5.1 James Thomson (1700-1748) took a deep interest in nature. His poem, "*The Seasons*" (1730), evokes interest in the processes of nature. He is fascinated by the fearful aspects of nature such as floods and storms. He is described as "a poet of pictorical landscape". He speaks of the interactions between man and Nature in "*The Seasons*". The great variety and beauty of Nature move him deeply. The following lines remind us of Wordsworth:

Now the soft Hour
Of walking comes for him who lonely loves
To seek the distant Hills, and there converse
With Nature, there to harmonize his Heart,
And in pathetic Song of breathe around
The harmony to Others.
("*The Seasons*", II, 1379-84)

27.5.2 Mark Akenside (1721-1770) was another fore-runner of Wordsworth. He attempted to revive the Greek forms of the lyric. His most important poem, "*The Pleasure of Imagination*" (1744) is at once didactic and descriptive. The poet sees that the beauty and harmony of all nature is shown directly to the purified intellect:

Once more search, undismayed, the dark profound
Where nature works in secret; view the beds
Of min'ral treasure, and th'eternal vault
That bounds the hoary ocean; trace the forms
Of atoms moving with incessant change.
Their elemental round; behold the seeds
Of being, and the energy of life
Kindling the mass with ever-active flame:
Them to the secrets of the working mind
Attentive turn;
"*The Pleasure of Imagination*". Book I ,11 512-52.

27.5.3 Joseph Warton's (1722-1800) "*The Enthusiast*" (1744) presents Rousseau's primitivism and the Romantics' love of the antique. It speaks of the communion with nature, the superiority of the Noble Savage and the idyllic innocence of the New World:

Happy the first of Men, ere yet confin'd
To smoky cities; who in sheltering Groves,
Warm caves, and deep-sunk Vallies liv'd and lov'd
By Cares unwounded.

"*The Enthusiast*", 11. 78-81)

27.5.4 William Collins (1721-1759) exercised pervasive influence on almost all the Romantic poets. He finds that landscape evokes ideas and emotions. He particularly loves Nature at twilight. His "Ode to Evening" is the forerunner of Keats's "To Autumn". Romantic tendencies such as a return to the past and anti-intellectualism may be noticed in his "Ode on Popular Superstitions". Coleridge is impressed with Collins's use of superstitions and classical legends. Collins's favourtie theme of the twilight scene is illustrated in the following lines:

Now Air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd Bat,
With short shrill Shriek flits by on leathern Wing,
Or where the Beetle winds
His small but sullen Horn,
As oft he rises 'midst the twilight Path,
Against the Pilgrim born in heedless Hum:
"*Ode to Evening*", 11.9-14

27.5.5 Thomas Gray's (1716-71) well-known poem, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, pays attention to nature and humble life which are dear to the Romantic poets:

Now folds the glimmering landscape on the sight,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
(11.5-8)

Gray's later writings indicate the swing in the taste towards Medieval literature and Scandinavian folklore. His letters anticipate the Romantics' love of scenery and nature. He records the different moods of nature in charming detail. Such descriptions paved the way for Wordsworth's memorable descriptions of nature. Here is a short piece from Gray:

"In the evening walked alone down to the lake by the side of *Crow Park* after sunset and saw the solemn colouring of night draw on, the last gleam of fading away on the hill-tops, the deep serene of the waters, and the long shadows of the mountains thrown across them, till they nearly touched the hithermost shore. At distance heard the murmur of many waterfalls not audible in the daytime".
(*Journal in the Lakes*)

27.5.6 William Cowper (1731-1800) is yet another precursor of romanticism. For him, love of Nature and religious worship are related activities. He believes that contemplation in the midst of Nature will bestow wisdom more easily than will reading of books. He prefers the beauty of the countryside, he portrays Nature in his poems. Cowper also attacks Alexander Pope for his "smoothness" and advocates the 'manly rough line'. This idea is later developed by Wordsworth. Cowper 'anticipated the romantic generation in his political liberalism, in his humanitarianism, and most of all in his sympathetic and faithful rendering of external nature". Contracting the rural with the urban scene, he wrote:

God made the country, and man made the town,
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught

That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threatn'd in the fields and groves?
("*The Task*", Book I.11.749-753).

Self-Check Exercise 4

1. What particular features make Thomson akin to Romantic poets?

2. What Romantic trait is noticeable in Akenside's poetry?

3. Which principle of Rousseau do you observe in Warton?

4. What Romantic tendencies in Collins won the appreciation of Coleridge?

5. In what particulars can Gray's *Elegy* be called Romantic?

6. What is the justification for calling Cowper a precursor of Romanticism?

27.6 ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796)

Burns is the most beloved poet of the Scots; he is also a symbol of their national spirit. He was interested in a number of things which were later considered essentially romantic tendencies. He was steeped in Scottish folklore; he loved freedom; he respected the common man; He was attracted by nature; swimming against the current in his time, he believed that emotion was a better guide than reason.

27.6.1 The Use of Folk Song

Scottish patriotism in the eighteenth century longed for independence and unity. It seized upon any symbol of its uniqueness. Burns went in search of the Scottish ballad tradition both to oppose and reject the English culture. He is probably the best eighteenth century example of the influence of folk poetry on the mainstream English poetry. There are two tendencies in Burns's life:

1. the cultivated tradition of polite poetry in the eighteenth century.
2. peasant poetry about peasants among whom he lived.

Burns did not believe in any rules of composition. His poetry was strongly influenced by folk poetry. The folk elements in his poetry are:

27.6.2 Themes

The themes are generally death, birth, youth, old age, love and grief. Seasonal activities like harvesting and May dances and seasonal changes like snowfall are also used. Settings and dramatic situations are often stylized. Tableaus repeating certain fixed scenes occur in folk poetry.

27.6.3 Form

The form of folk poetry is that of a debate, a series of riddles or tests. Birds and flowers are given human qualities. Number three is significant; three riddles, three actions, etc.

27.6.4 Vocabulary

The vocabulary is simple. Many stock phrases are used. Because of the oral origins of folk poetry, stock phrases and patterns aided the memory of the oral poet. Formal devices such as the refrain impose limits on language in folk poetry and indicate its origin in dance.

27.6.5 Rhyme

Folk poetry is not rigid in its use of rhyme as Neoclassical poetry was. Assonance, alliteration and internal rhyme are common in this poetry. Observe these poetic devices in the following line of Burns:

> There Wild Woods *grow* and rivers *row*.
> There is variety in rhyme schemes. The metre in folk poetry is flexible.

Burns wrote many traditional and also original songs, but he wrote only three long poems. There was a movement favouring the short, pointed lyric.

Burns wrote a poem entitled "To a Mouse", which is certainly a lowly subject. Writing on such subjects was against the grain of Neo-classicism. Another poem, "The Cotter's Saturday Night", shows his interest in the humble people. He had sympathy for the oppressed, sharing the ideals of the French Revolution. He had expressed dangerous sentiments such as the following just before the Revolution:

> A fig for those by law protected!
> Liberty's a glorious feast!
> Courts for cowards were erected,
> Churches built to please the priest.
>
> ("*The Jolly Beggars*", 11.292 ff)

Burns expressed strong patriotism for Scotland: he revolted against religious orthodoxy; he satirized Presbyterian and Calvinist faith in Scotland in his poems. "Holy Willie's Prayer" and "The Holy Fair". He is thus a precursor of the later Romantic poets like Shelley who re-examined religious belief in a more serious way.

27.6.6 Love Poems

Burns's greatest poems are his love poems. They are also influenced by folk poetry. Repetition as a poetic device to produce an incantatory effect may be found in: My

Luve is like a Red, Red Rose". Neo-classical poets like Pope avoided repetition for the sake of economy and for the progression of ideas.

Another poem of Burns, "Ye Flowery Banks" is a lament which presents a native view of nature. In this girl's song, the traditional rose-thorn image is used to indicate loss of chastity. Happy nature is contrasted with the melancholy speaker and there is a return to the place of former happiness. Burns resorts to suggestion rather than direct statement in this as well as in other poems. These are all intimations of Romanticism.

The range of Burns's love-songs is great. He could write of love from his personal experience and from a woman's point of view. He could write of love in old age with equal charm. Male protectiveness appears repetitively in many of his love songs including "A Red, Red Rose". Patriotism is another recurring theme in his songs. "Auld Lang Syne" is called "the world's greatest song of human fellowship and friendship".

Though Burns's poetry is based on local people and situations, he is not a 'regional' poet in any narrow sense. He stresses the elemental, the universal and the permanent moods and thoughts in all humanity. He used the real language of man as he found it in the folk literature of his country and thus showed the path to Wordsworth. His use of lowly subjects and simple diction was a worthwhile example to Wordsworth and through him to other Romantic poets.

Self-Check Exercise 5

1. What Romantic tendencies are present in Burns's poetry?

2. To which age did Burns belong chronologically?

3. Mention one symbol of Scottish patriotism which Burns sought passionately.

4. What are the contradictory but concurrent tendencies in Burns's poetry?

5. What are the principal themes of folk poetry.

6. Explain briefly the formal features of folk poetry.

7. What is the purpose of using stock phrases in folk poetry?

8. What poetic devices are frequently found in folk poetry?

9. How can we say that Burns sympathised with the French Revolution?

10. What intimations of Romanticism do you find in Burns's love poems?

27.7 WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

We shall now discuss William Blake, but only briefly, because there is a separate unit on him in his block. He was hardly known in his lifetime, but now he has a respectable place among English poets and artists. He was an engraver at a time when that art was losing its popularity.

Blake was a man of vision who saw ultimate truth at moments of great illumination. Vision is for him the great secret of life. His entire work - poetry or painting - is an attempt to develop this faculty of vision so that man may see to understand and thereby forgive and act rightly.

His *Songs of Innocence* (1789), created through a new process called "illuminated printing", are examples of originality. He equated his extreme sense of freedom and happiness to the condition of childhood. In these poems, he says that childhood is the original state of happiness, self-enjoyment and unity. In his *Songs of Experience* (1794) he expresses his deep indignation at the hypocrisy and cruelty in the world. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he affirms the re-integration of the human soul divided by Innocence (Heaven) and Experience (Hell) through Imagination.

Blake's poetry and painting are didactic. He wanted people to free themselves from convention and tradition and to depend on their own intuition to realize their potential. The mystical tone, the symbols, the revolutionary ideas and the newness of his art made people think that he was a lunatic. He was more revolutionary in themes, diction and technique than Burns or Wordsworth, but his genius was not recognised in his lifetime. He carved a place for himself in World literature because he swam against the current by defying reason in an age of Reason and because he gave importance to intuition and imagination in an age of scientific skepticism.

Self-Check Exercise 6

1. What, in Blake's view, is the importance of the faculty of vision?

2. What is the relationship between innocence and experience as Blake sees it?

3. How did Blake's views go against the prevailing ideas?

27.8 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)

Wordsworth is a prominent leader of the Romantic Movement in England. He supported the French Revolution in its early phase, but his liberalism gradually dwindled. In 1795, he met S.T. Coleridge and this meeting was beneficial to both of them. They jointly authored *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) which is considered to be the beginning of the Romantic Movement in England. On the urging of Coleridge, Wordsworth explained the guiding principles of this new movement in his preface to the second edition of the book published in 1800. (We shall discuss the preface in detail in the next section). In addition to many lyrics, Wordsworth wrote *The Prelude* (1850), a sort of spiritual autobiography as its subtitle, "The Growth of a Poet's Mind," indicates. As the title suggests the *Prelude* is the first of a three-part poem *The Recluse.* The second part entitled *The Excursion* was published in 1814, but the third part was never written.

Wordsworth is better known for his short poems like "Tintern Abbey" and "Immortality Ode" than for his long and ambitious works. "Tintern Abbey" recounts three stages in the development of the poet's love of nature; (1) sensuous animal passion, (2) moral influence, and (3) mystical communion. "Michael" deals with the sturdiness of character and nature's healing power. The five "Lucy Poems" are also popular. In "Ode on Intimations of Immortality", Wordsworth attributes a child's wisdom and glory to the unconscious memory of a previous life. "Resolution and Independence" is yet another memorable poem. Wordsworth influenced modern thinking on the natural goodness of childhood, the moral value of simple living and the inspiring and healing powers of nature. Wordsworth seems to have attempted to translate into action both in his life and in his work the principle: "Simple living and high thinking". (A separate unit on Wordsworth discusses in detail his poetic achievement).

27.8.1 Wordsworth's Theory of Poetry

Wordsworth's observations prefixed to *Lyrical Ballads,* generally called "Preface" to the second edition of 1800, is his manifesto in which he discusses a number of issues related to the art of poetry. These issues include the nature of poetry, the creation of poetry, the impact of the poem on the reader, and the difference between the language of prose and the language of poetry. The poet's views on these important topics are scattered throughout the preface and we have to piece together what he had said on each question.

First, the question of the subject matter. "Incidents and situations from common life" are chosen. Wordsworth thought that rustic and humble life is better suited for "the essential passions of the heart". He believed that the emotions of the rural people are simpler, purer and perhaps better than those of the city-dweller. He also thought that people living in the midst of nature have a better moral attitude, and they become part of the sense of divinity present in nature.

The second innovation is the use of "a selection of language really used by men". Wordsworth attacked the so-called poetic diction of an earlier generation. Poetic diction is a painstaking invention and hence far removed from the living speech of ordinary people. The common speech or a selection of it, Wordsworth felt, is more appropriate to describe the incidents and situations from common life. Throughout the preface Wordsworth repeatedly states that "simple and unelaborated expressions" as his choice. "My purpose was to imitate, and as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and such personifications [of abstract ideas] do not make any natural or regular part of that language."

Wordsworth finds a moral justification for poetry. The aim of the poet, in his view, is to correct men's feelings, to render these feelings more consonant with eternal nature. A poet provides us with spiritual exercises in order to give us new feelings and make our feelings more sane and pure.

The creative process is explained by Wordsworth in the following words:

"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on."

Implicit in this explanation of how poetry is created is a psychological approach.

Wordsworth discussed the difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose. He says: "It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." This is a major point of disagreement between Wordsworth and Coleridge. Similarly, Wordsworth's views on metre are questioned by Coleridge. According to Wordsworth metre is a kind of restraining influence. By its regularity, metre holds passion in check. Also, metre seems to give poetry a kind of unreality:

"The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure... Now the co-presence of something regular...cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion".

The Romantics give a high place to the poet; they endow him with the ability to speak to other men. Wordsworth asserts:

"He [the poet] is a man speaking to men; a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind;"

A poet is related to other men who have the same ingredients, but the poet has them in greater measure.

Thus the preface discusses a wide range of topics concerning poetry and the innovations which *Lyrical Ballads* has introduced.

Self-Check Exercise 7

1. What are the three stages in the development of Wordsworth's attitude to nature in "Tintern Abbey?"

2. Why did Wordsworth choose rustic life as his subject matter?

3. Explain Wordsworth's views on the use of the language of common people.

4. What, according to Wordsworth, is the aim of the poet?

5. How did Wordsworth explain the creative process of poetry?

6. What is the difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose in Wordsworth's view? Is it valid?

7. What is the role of meter in poetry, according to the "preface"?

8. What is the position of a poet in society? How does he compare with ordinary men?

27.8.2 Wordsworth's Practice of his Theory

For all his commitment to "the language really used by men" Wordsworth could not help using archaisms, words of Latin origin, and inversion of normal word order in several of his well-known poems including "Immortality Ode" and ***The Prelude.*** For instance in "Immortality Ode", he used "apparelled" and "celestial", in ***The Prelude*** he used "recreant", "inscrutable", "discordant" which are polysyllabic words derived from Latin. Then there are archaisms like 'shod' (shoe) 'deigned (desired) 'springles' (traps). There are also inversions, of word order in plurases like "by the vision splendid" for the sake of rhyme. In "Resolution and Independence", we have:

"Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,"
Or again, "Motionless as a cloud that old Man stood".

Wordsworth must have realized that the demands of his poetic art are more important than a rigid adherence to his theory as enunciated in the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*.

27.8.3 Wordsworth's Partnership with Coleridge

Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge met in 1795. Coleridge spotted talent in Wordsworth and praised him as "the best poet of the age". The two friends met almost daily, discussed poetry, and composed large quantities of poetry. Their association was so close that the same phrases occur in the poems of both. They collaborated in some poems; they exchanged thoughts and lines of poetry. Coleridge helped Wordsworth in completing the latter's unfinished poems. *Lyrical Ballads* was the fruit of this extraordinary partnership. The famous "Preface" of 1800 was also a result of consultation between the two poets.

Of the two sorts of poetry based on the theme, Coleridge agreed to choose the supernatural and Wordsworth the ordinary. Accordingly, Coleridge wrote "The Ancient Mariner" and Wordsworth wrote many of his poems for the *Lyrical Ballads*.

However, serious differences developed between the two on important questions. Coleridge did not agree with many parts of the "Preface". He objected to them as he considered them "erroneous". Some of Wordsworth's statements appeared to contradict "other parts of the same preface and the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves". One such question was the difference between the language of poetry and that of prose. Wordsworth thought that there was no essential difference between the two. Coleridge thought they were different. He argued that metre is essential for poetry which implies passion.

27.9 S. T. COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

Since there is a separate unit on Coleridge, we shall briefly touch upon the major achievements of Coleridge here. He was a man of many parts; poet, philosopher, journalist, preacher, lecturer, playwright, literary critic and literary theorist. He pioneered a movement against the mechanistic psychology of the eighteenth century. More than the other Romantics, he recognised the supremacy of imagination as a creative power. *Biographia Literaria* (1817), is a seminal work dealing with his philosophy of poetry and a critical statement of Romantic ideas. It is in this book that he explains how he had dealt with the supernatural in his poetry. He attempted to give "a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith".

Coleridge tries to differentiate between the two key terms, 'fancy' and 'imagination' in the same book. He called *imagination* the "shaping and modifying" power, *fancy*, the "aggregative and associative" power. The former "struggles to idealize and to unify", while the latter is only "a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space". To illustrate his point, Coleridge said that Milton had a highly imaginative mind whereas Cowley had a fanciful one. Imagination itself is of two kinds, *primary* and *secondary*. Primary imagination, in Coleridge's view, is the organ of common perception through the senses, secondary imagination is poetic vision. The latter one is the faculty that the poet ideally exercises. Fancy seems to correspond with the eighteenth century notion of wit in poetry the faculty that enables the poet to put together metaphors and similes. Coleridge criticizes the mechanical sort of apparatus in poetry, exemplified by the fancy, which the imagination transcends. The use of the secondary imagination is a mystical operation. The secondary imagination mediates between man and nature and indicated the organic unity of the universe. Coleridge's discussion of Wordsworth's faults and merits is a balanced presentation. His criticism of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights is of great value. He attempted to find "the essences of Shakespeare's ideas to discover the laws that a great work of art creates within itself". He explained the nature of poetic expression and sought to

answer the question 'What is poetry"? His views on criticism are particularly significant as he was also an accomplished poet.

Coleridge is remembered for three poems, *The Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan* and *Christabel.* All the three have the stamp of originality, all of them arise from the world of dreams, the subsonscious. *The Ancient Mariner* is a ballad with memorable images and phrases. *Kubla Khan* is a vision poem seen in an opium dream. *Christabel* is a poetic fragment which evokes the medieval atmosphere through suggestion.

As a literary theorist and as a poet, Coleridge made original contributions and his influence in these two areas is permanent.

Self-Check Exercise 8

1. What are Wordsworth's shortcomings in practising his theory?

2. What are the positive aspects of Wordsworth's collaboration with Coleridge?

3. What are the points of disagreement between Wordsworth and Coleridge?

4. Explain Coleridge's ideas on fancy and imagination.

5. What is Coleridge's contribution to criticism?

27.10 THE SECOND GENERATION OF ROMANTIC POETS

Three poets Byron, Shelley and Keats, belong to the second generation of Romantic poets. Although they do not belong to a school, they have many resemblances. They were all "rebellious geniuses" who were not recognized or understood in their country and time. All of them died young before they could realize their full potential. They are thus "the inheritors of unfulfilled renown".

27.10.1 Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Byron's reputation as a poet and as a personality outside his own country was immense. He had influenced several French and German poets. His life itself was like a romantic poem and he is the hero of his poems. The 'Byronic hero" has

become a critical term to describe a youthful, daring, passionate, cynical, moody and rebellious figure. This type appeared first in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* a long poem which describes in Spenserian stanza, a tour in which the hero contemplates on the decaying monuments of European civilization and on human achievement. Byron describes the famous Coliseum in the following words:

> Arches on arches! as it were that Rome,
> Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
> Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
> Her Coliseum stands.
>
> (CXXVIII)

An example of Byron's cynical view of history is given below:

> There is the moral of all human tales;
> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
> First Freedom, and then Glory - when that fails,
> Wealth, Vice, Corruption - barbarism at last.
>
> (CVIII)

Byron was unlike other Romantic poets except, perhaps, Shelley. Also, he did not have much respect for the others because of his aristocratic background. Augustan wit and elegance suited his elitist tastes better than rustic life and common speech. He had great admiration for Alexander Pope unlike several romantic poets. He felt that measured against the poetic practice of Pope, he and his contemporaries were "al in the wrong, one as much as another... we are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself".

Byron's *forte* is his verse satire which is not surprising because of his admiration for Pope and other Augustan writers. *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) written in the popular Augustan verse form of the heroic couplet is brilliant. *Don Juan* (1818-21) written in *ottava rima* is an unfinished satire. It is described as a picaresque novel in verse in which a variety of themes, styles and tones are used. Considered Byron's best, *Don Juan* is a criticism of life. Goethe called it "a work of a boundless genius". Byron states his poetical preferences and prejudices thus:

> Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope,
> Thou shall not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey,
> Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
> The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy
> With Crabbe it may be difficulty to cope,
>
> (CCIV)

The tone of the poem is characteristic of Byron's verse satires. In *Don Juan* "he sought to depict life in the comic spirit, to strip off the tinsel of sentiment and illusion".

His other verse satires are *Beppo* and *The Vision of Judgment.* He also wrote two powerful dramas, *Manfred* and *Cain*. Russell Noyes says: "By the measure of his titanic energy and his impassioned self assertion, Byron has given us a more potent expression of 'raw and naked humanity' than all the romantic poets put together...He has given us masterly pictures of love, hate, patriotism, honour, disdain, revenge, remorse, despair, awe, mockery".

27.10.2 P.B. Shelley (1792-1822)

Shelley had very radical ideas; he was an idealist. He believed that mankind can be made perfect; tyranny can be abolished, freedom can flourish in all walks of life. He has hardly any equal as a lyric singer.

The main theme of much of his work is that when tyranny and suffering are eliminated from this world and reason and love are given importance, then the Soul of the Universe, The Spirit of Love would be reveled. This is the theme of his most ambitious work, *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-19).

Shelley, like Blake, was a poet of prophecy and of vision. "Ode to the West Wind" concludes with the prophecy:

> If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Adonais (1821) is a pastoral elegy written in Spenserian stanzas on the death of Keats. Genius like that of Keats, unfortunately, is misunderstood. The critics hated Keats and that killed him. *Adonais* is regarded as one of the two or three great elegies in English.

Like Wordsworth Shelley spent a good deal of time in the contemplation of natural phenomena. He believed that Nature was the outward manifestation of the inner, divine beauty. He called the inner reality, 'Light', 'Beauty' of 'Sustaining Love' and he tried to identify himself with this.

Shelley was fascinated with clouds, wind, waterfalls and such other natural phenomena. They became symbols of great significance to him. The cloud represents the cyclic mutation of water and it also symbolises mutability and permanence inherent in the human spirit.

Light and sound attracted him. He found music everywhere; in fact, he heard a 'vast universal symphony'. His own aspirations, his own poetic fervour are like the skylark which soars above scorning the ground. And the music of the skylark's song would inspire

> Such harmonious madness
> From my lips would flow
> The World should listen then.

Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" written as a response to Thomas Love Peacock's. "The Four Ages of Poetry", supplements Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*. Shelley's Platonic ideas find expression in the "Defence". He says that the poet reveals the noumenal World to mankind. The word, 'poet' as used by Shelley, includes all artists, and even philosophers. The artist is a superior being. Art improves imagination and so it is useful. Shelley asserts in the "Defence". "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World".

(There are two units on Shelley in the next block).

27.10.3 John Keats (1795-1821)

Among the Romantic poets, John Keats's dedication to poetry was total. Wordsworth and Coleridge were both interested in philosophy which deflected their attention; Blake's didactic intention coloured much of his work; Byron moved away from poetry to active participation in the liberation of Greece; Shelley's poetry and political beliefs were closely linked. But Keats strove hard throughout his brief career to achieve the essence of poetry.

"On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" written in his twenty-first year may be called his poetic efflorescence. In "Sleep and Poetry" he spoke of his poetic aspirations and his dedication to poetry. "Endymion" was written to compete with Shelley in writing a long poem. "Hyperion" was an ambitious venture a la *Paradise Lost*.

Keats wrote his most important poems in a period of nine months, January to September 1819. These are: *The Eve of St. Agnes, La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, all the six great odes, and *Lamia.*

Keats presents all experience as a mass of inseparable and irreconcilable opposites: Melancholy dwells with Beauty; the dividing line between love and death is thin. He believes that the great end of poetry is

that it should be a friend
To sooth the cares and lift the thoughts of man.

Keats's letters are an "indispensable accompaniment to [his] poetry". They contain some of his germinal ideas such as "negative capability". In a letter to his brothers, he says" "The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth". His letters also show his concern for suffering and evil in the World. He does not accept traditional philosophy or institutional religion as an adequate palliative for the "complexity and contradictions of experience."

Not many poets including Shakespeare and Milton could write such distinguished poetry at the age of twenty-four when Keats's poetic career practically came to an end.

Keats published fifty-four poems in his life-time, another ninety-six works were published posthumously; his letters number about 300. This is an unmatched achievement within a short period of three years. Keats attempted a variety of poetic forms; Romance in *Hyperion* and *The Eve of St. Agnes,* epic in *Hyperion*. He wrote different kinds of lyric: Hymn in *Hymn* to *Pan*, the ballad in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci,* the sonnet in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and in the famous odes. *Lamia* was composed in heroic couplets in the manner of Dryden.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement owes its origin to Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci.* Browning, Tennyson, Hopkins and Yeats have acknowledged their debt to Keats. Because of his achievement as a poet and his wide-ranging and ever-growing influence Keats deserves to be called the "Poet's Poet" an appellation Charles Lamb gave Edmund Spenser in a different context.

Self-Check Exercise 9

1. How is Byron different from the other Romantic poets?

2. What are Byron's affinities with the Augustan Poets?

3. What are some of the basic beliefs of Shelley?

4. What does the cloud represent for Shelley?

5. What is the usefulness of poetry as stated by Shelley in his "Defence"?

6. What, according to Keats, is the aim of poetry?

7. What is the usefulness of Keats's letters?

8. What is the justification for calling Keats, the "Poet's Poet"?

27.11 SUMMING UP

This unit makes an attempt to give you a comprehensive and concise view of the Romantic Movement in England.

Keep the definition and features of Romanticism in mind while reading the poems of the Romantics. Also, try to examine Wordsworth's principles and his actual practices.

You may also notice that although the Romantic poets have something in common, each of them is unique in his own way. Each of them made his own distinctive contribution to Romantic poetry.

27.12 QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Discuss the political, social, economic and other factors responsible for the Romantic Movement.
2. Explain the salient features of Romanticism.
3. Show how Thomson, Akenside and Collins are precursors of Romanticism.
4. What early intimations of Romanticism do you find in Robert Burns?
5. Discuss Wordsworth's theory of poetry.
6. Write a note on Coleridge's contribution to poetry and criticism.
7. Comment on the uniqueness of Byron and Shelley.
8. Write a note on Keats's achievement.

27.13 SUGGESTED READING

The following books/articles will be useful for understanding the Romantic Movement:

Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 1953 (An original work of criticism, Discusses Romantic theory and critical tradition).

"The Romantic Period". *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, II* 1962. (Useful introduction to the Romantic Movement).

Bloom, Harold. *The Visionary Company*, 1960. (Brief discussions of the important poems are given).

Cazamian, Louis. "The Romantic Period". *A History of English Literature*, Part II, Book V, 1947.

(An insightful discussion of the features of romanticism and its practitioners).

Coleridge, S.T. *Biographia Literaria*, 1817, Chapters XIV and XVIII.
Required reading for students of Romanticism. Coleridge dwells on his disagreements with Wordsworth.

Ford, Boris (ed.) *From Blake to Byron. The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, Vol. 5, 1957. Extremely useful for the study of the Romantic period.

Noyes, Russell. "Introductory Survey". *English Romantic Poetry and Prose*. 1956.
(Valuable and comprehensive introduction.)

Weinberg, Kurt. "Romanticism" in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*.
Ed. Alex Preminger, Enlarged edn. 1974.
(Comprehensive account of Romanticism throughout Europe.)

Wordsworth, William. "Preface" (1800) to *Lyrical Ballads*.
(A seminal statement reprinted in many anthologies of criticism.)

27.14 ANSWER TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise 1

1. 1798 to 1832
2. See 27.2, first four lines.
3. Extending voting rights to the middle class Growing importance of the manufacturing class.
4. Tom Paine advocated a democratic republic for England through peaceful or violent means.
5. See 27.2,second paragraph.
6. See 27.2 last paragraph.

Self-Check Exercise 2

1. See 27.3, first paragraph
2. See 27.3, second paragraph
3. See 27.3, second paragraph
4. See 27.3, second paragraph
5. See 27.3, second paragraph

Self-Check Exercise 3

1. See 27.4, first paragraph
2. Read 27.4, second paragraph
3. Read 27.4, second paragraph
4. Read 27.4, fourth paragraph
5. Read 27.4, fifth paragraph

Self-Check Exercise 4

1. See 27.5.1
2. See 27.5.2

3. See 27.5.3
4. See 27.5.4
5. See 27.5.5 first paragraph
6. See 27.5.6

Self-Check Exercise 5

1. See 27.6
2. The Augustan Age
3. The ballad
4. See 27.6.1
5. See 27.6.1.1
6. See 27.6.1.2
7. See 27.6.1.3
8. See 27.6.1.4, first paragraph
9. See 27.6.1.4 fourth paragraph
10. See 27.6.2, third paragraph

Self-Check Exercise 6

1. See 27.7, second paragraph
2. See 27.7, third paragraph
3. See 27.7, fourth paragraph

Self-Check Exercise 7

1. See 27.8, second paragraph
2. See 27.8.1, second paragraph
3. See 27.8.1, third paragraph
4. See 27.8.1, fourth paragraph
5. See 27.8.1, fifth paragraph
6. See 27.8.1, seventh paragraph
7. See 27.8.1, seventh paragraph
8. See 27.8.1, concluding paragraphs.

Self-Check Exercise 8

1. See 27.8.2, first paragraph
2. See 27.8.3, first paragraph
3. See 27.8.3, last paragraph
4. See 27.9, second paragraph
5. See 27.9, second paragraph

Self-Check Exercise 9

1. See 27.10.1, second paragraph
2. See 27.10.1, third paragraph
3. See 27.10.2, first paragraph
4. See 27.10.2, fifth paragraph
5. See 27.10.2, last paragraph
6. See 27.10.3, fourth paragraph
7. See 27.10.3, fifth paragraph
8. See 27,10.3, last paragraph.

UNIT 28 WILLIAM BLAKE

Structure

28.0 Objectives
28.1 Introduction
28.2 Blake's Visions
28.3 Blake's Revolutionary Views
  28.3.1 Blake as an Anarchist
  28.3.2 Blake's Views on Christianity
  28.3.3 Blake's Anti-classicism
28.4 Blake's Interpretation of History
  28.4.1 Blake's Triadic Division of Poetry
28.5 Approaches to Blake's Poetry
  28.5.1 Four Levels of Meaning
  28.5.2 Blake's Search for New Forms
28.6 The New Process of Printing
28.7 *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*
  28.7.1 Introduction
  28.7.2 Notes on *Songs of Innocence*
  28.7.3 Notes on *Songs of Experience*
  28.7.4 Comments on Both the Collections
  28.7.5 *Songs of Innocence*: Study of Some Poems
    'The Lamb' : Text and Discussion
    'The Chimney Sweeper' : Text and Discussion
    'The Divine Image' : Text and Discussion
  28.7.6 *Songs of Experience* : Study of Some Poems
    'The Sick Rose': Text and Discussion
    'London': Text and Discussion
    'The Tyger': Text and Discussion
28.8 Blake's Contribution to the Romantic Movement
28.9 Questions for Comprehension
28.10 Summing Up
28.11 Suggested Reading
28.12 Answers to Exercise

28.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to

1. give you an idea of the range and variety of Blake's artistic and other interests.
2. enable you to analyze and interpret some of his important poems, and
3. make you appreciate the uniqueness of Blake.

28.1 INTRODUCTION



We have briefly discussed William Blake in 27.7 and indicated his interest and his place in World literature. In this unit, we shall devote our attention to an understanding of Blake the man and the artist. We shall also attempt a detailed study of a few of his poems to understand his genius.

Blake was known only to a few people in his lifetime. He was original, strongly individualistic, and mostly a solitary figure. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, through his edition of Blake's poems, brought him to public attention. A. C. Swinburne wrote an essay in 1868, and W.B. Yeats played a part in making Blake's work known to a large public. Under these circumstances, Blake could not have influenced his contemporaries.

Blake was a genius who distinguished himself in poetry, engraving and painting. He lived in London unlike many other poets who lived in the countryside. He had little of formal education, but he taught himself. He was steeped in the Bible, Elizabethan literature and Milton. He knew many languages including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Italian.

28.2 BLAKE'S VISIONS

Blake saw visions even when he was a small boy of four. As a child he started screaming when God pressed his face to the window. At eight, Ezekiel appeared to him, and at nine, he saw angels on a tree. Blake cultivated his faculty carefully. He had a strongly visual mind and be could see whatever be imagined. This rare gift of experiencing visions or images is known as eidetic imagery. The sensory organ of sight which be called the "Corporeal or Vegetative Eye" stimulates "the Divine Arts of Imagination–Imagination, the real and eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint Shadow". Physical objects like a rose or a tiger conveyed mystical or spiritual meanings to him:

> With my inward Eye, 'tis an old Man gray;
> With my outward, a Thistle across my way.

He claims to have had threefold or fourfold visions unlike the rationalist who sees only one. These images (or visions) illuminated his poetry and his paintings.

28.3 BLAKE'S REVOLUTIONARY VIEWS

Blake's views on politics, religion, literature and science were revolutionary. He could not accept the prevailing culture of the eighteenth century. He opposed the mechanistic view of the universe of his time. He despised the tendency to analyze rather than synthesize. He ridicules Voltaire and Rousseau:

> Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau:
> Mock on, Mock on, 'tis all in vain!
> You throw the sand against the wind,
> And the wind blows it back again.

Again, in *Reason and Imagination*, he says:

> I come in self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration
> To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour,
> To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
> To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albion's covering,
> To take off his filthy garments & clothe him with Imagination:

He held reason in contempt because he thought it imprisons the mind.

28.3.1 Blake as an Anarchist

Blake was attracted by revolutions. He was eighteen when the Declaration of Independence by the American Colonies inspired idealists all over Europe. He was an eye-witness to the burning of Newgate Prison (1780) as an expression of the hatred of authority. He sympathized with the French Revolution. He was incensed when Tom Paine was attacked in 1798. With such a political background, Blake became a sort of anarchist. He hated all political systems and favoured complete personal freedom. He admired Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. Several radicals were his friends: Godwin, Dr. Price (who was the first Englishman to support the French Revolution) and Tom Paine. He despised tyranny of every sort. Although he did not develop a coherent political theory, he wanted freedom and love for all. He was opposed to private property, any established church, formal government, the prevailing laws, and machinery.

28.3.2 Blake's Views on Christianity

Blake hated traditional Christianity. The Romantics attempted a re-evaluation of Christian values after the French Revolution. Some Romantics said that godless philosophers formented the Revolution. But Blake believed that all churches are a kind of prison. He attacked the lack of individual freedom in the Church in his poem, *The Garden of Love:*

> I went to the Garden of Love,
> And saw what I have never seen;
> A Chapel was built in the midst,
> Where I used to play on the green.
>
> And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
> And binding with brairs my joys & desires.

Blake's political radicalism combined with his Christian Non-Conformity inspires the politics of the left even now.

28.3.3 Blake's Anti-classicism

Blake hated the classics and in this be foreshadowed a common romantic tendency. The established cultural tradition was shattered in the Romantic period. Newly

popular cultural lore was introduced paving way to primitivism and Orientalism. This is in line with the Protestant rejection of the classics as shown in Milton's *Paradise Regained.* Here Christ rejects the classics and prefers the Psalms. Blake is forthright in his Preface to *Milton*:

"The Stolen and Perverted writings of Homer & Ovid, of Plato & Cicero, which all men ought to contemn, are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible ... We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just and true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever in Jesus our Lord".

Another reason for Blake's detestation of the classics is that they, in his opinion, are related to the adult world of experience, and represented intellect. He favoured an intuitive and imaginative view of the world. Blake's attitude to society was conditioned by his anarchism, non-conformism, anti-rationalism and anti-classicism.

Self-Check Exercise 1

1. Explain the nature of Blake's visions.

2. Why did Blake criticize Voltaire and Rousseau?

3. Enumerate the events which influenced Blake's political views.

4. What are Blake's political beliefs?

5. What are Blake's views on traditional Christianity?

6. Why did Blake hate the classics?

28.4 BLAKE'S INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

Blake's hostile attitude towards traditional Christianity also influenced his interpretation of history. As he did not have any formal education his reading was perhaps uneven. He read the works by quakers and the Gnostics. He also read

mystics like Swedenborg (whom he attacked later), Jakob Böhme, and the New Platonists. His view of history was shaped by his reading in religious literature. He identified three stages in history which corresponded to three stages in the life of an individual. The first stage corresponds to that of the Garden of Eden, or of primal innocence. The second stage was the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree or the Fall. The third stage was that of achieving a higher state of innocence or redemption. Blake also divided history into a number of periods corresponding to the historical divisions in the Bible. For example, the first period was the Druid period, which corresponded to the period of Lucifer and Moloch which he found in the Bible.

28.4.1 Blake's Triadic Division of Poetry

Blake extended his scheme of the triadic division to poetry also. He thought that the function of poetry was to regain a kind of oneness with life which had been lost. The eighteenth century represented the Fall. The Age of Reason which emphasized the intellect, in his view, was equivalent to the eating of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. The intellectual approach had destroyed man's early modes of perception. Blake believed that the function of poetry is to restore our early ways of seeing and to revive the heart. His comprehensive view of the role of poetry is stated in *Auguries of Innocence:*

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And Heaven in a wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.

Blake presents not the actual world of our normal experience, but a world before the Fall. He enables us to see the world in its beauty and horror and gives us the hope that the apocalypse can be attained. His prophetic books such as *Jerusalem* are not merely allegories, but pure visions in which light is shed on something so that the poet and the reader can together see it.

Self-Check Exercise 2

1. What are the three stages in Blake's interpretation of history?

2. What relationship did Blake see between an individual's life and the progress of history?

3. What is Blake's triadic division of poetry?

4. What is the function of poetry according to Blake?

28.5 APPROACHES TO BLAKE'S POETRY

Blake's poem are simple and direct; there is no sentimentality which makes poetry distateful. One may approach Blake as a child or as a scholar. Blake's poems, particularly the short lyrics, can be enjoyed by children. But we need to analyze and synthesize the meaning for a better understanding. As scholars, we have to consider his views and how they form a consistent system. Blake writes in metaphors or pure images. Concept or ideas are pre-dominant in much popular poetry. We have to figure out Blake's meaning by examining his metaphors or images.

Blake's poems can be read in several ways : as direct statements, as indirect statements, or as clusters of images. Our understanding of his poems depends on how we wish to study his poems.

28.5.1 Four Levels of Meaning

Again, Blake's poems can be read on four levels, the levels which Dante had suggested for the interpretation of his *Divine Comedy*. These are:

1. *Literal* : On this level, the poem can be read simply as a sequence of actions, situations, descriptions, and so on.
2. *Moral*: On this level, the poem may be read as a series of moral commands, both positive and negative. A system of rewards for right actions and punishments for wrong deeds is given in Dante's poem.
3. *Allegorical*: On this level, all actions are interpreted in terms of some dogma.
4. *Anagogical*: On this highest level, a poem can be given a mystical reading.

The use of these four levels of interpretation of a given theme or poem may be illustrated in the following way. Jerusalem may stand for different things depending on the choice of the level of interpretation. On the literal level it is a city in Palestine, allegorically it may mean the Church; morally it may mean the believing soul; anagogically it may imply the City of God.

These four levels are helpful in reading Blake's poems. The literal meaning is very simple in many of his poems. The moral aspect is evident in Blake's criticism of social evils which the readers are encouraged to set right. The allegorical approach is useful in the interpretation of some poems. But the anagogical level seems to be appropriate for understanding the full import of Blake's poems because Blake's poems were composed on the basis of mystical experiences.

28.5.2 Blake's Search for New Forms

Although Blake had lived in the neoclassical age, he was out of sympathy with its poetic themes, forms and techniques. He sought new verse forms and fresh techniques. He went back to the Elizabethan and early seventeenth century poets, to the Ossianic poems, Collins, and other eighteenth century writers outside the main stream poetic tradition of Alexander Pope and Dr. Samuel Johnson for his lyric models. He also introduced partial rhymes and new rhythms and used daring figures of speech.

28.6 THE NEW PROCESS OF PRINTING

Blake used an entirely original process for printing his poems, starting with *Songs of Innocence*. He engraved the text and the related illustration on a copper plate in varnish. The letters and designs were then made to stand out after an acid has lowered the surface of the copper plate. Impressions of these were taken from the raised etchings and then painted in water colours by hand. Thus he could give his visions substance through all the arts at his command. Most of Blake's well-known works were produced through this process called 'illuminated printing'. The new

method of printing enabled Blake to present 'a unique fusion of text, picture, and decoration'. In the printed text we read only words, but in the original version, the words and designs are mutually illuminating. Thus, Blake's message is conveyed through words, engraving and painting, and this triple process reinforcws Blake's meaning.

Self-Check Exercise 3

1. What are the different approaches to the study of Blake's poetry?

2. Explain the relevance of Dante's four levels to an understanding of Blake's poems.

3. What new forms did Blake seek for his poetry?

4. Explain Blake's invention of "illuminated printing".

5. What is the advantage of the new process of printing?

28.7 *SONGS OF INNOCENCE* AND *SONGS OF EXPERIENCE*

28.7.1 Introduction

Now let us examine closely some of the poems of Blake. Let us see how these poems exemplify the qualities of his poetry and convey his message.

Songs of Innocence was published in 1789 and *Songs of Experience* in 1794. Although these are epoch-making in more ways than one, they hardly made an impact then. Jacob Bronowski says: "They were as formative for the culture of the 20th century in Europe and America as the Bible and *The Pilgrim's Progress* have been for an earlier age". Blake saw clearly the shape of things to come; the problems of urban living, the power structures, the animosities among nations and the bitter rivalries among industrial societies. Blake's prophetic insights made no sense to his contemporaries, but we are in a better position to understand the terrible truths conveyed in his poems.

Blake has chosen simple models for these "songs". They are the hymns of Charles Wesley, the moral verse of Isaac Watts and other Nonconformists. But there is one

important difference. Blake reverses the roles of the poet and the child and makes the child teach the poet. Broadly, in *Songs of Innocence*, the child narrates the joys of life in nature; in *Songs of Experience*, the child is trapped in prisons of state and Church.

28.7.2 Note on *Songs of Innocence*

The former are happy songs written to and about children, the latter depict, to use Blake's own words, the "contrary state of the human soul". *Songs of Innocence* is a statement of the reaffirmation of the New Testament doctrine, "Lest ye become again as a little child ye cannot hope to enter the kingdom of heaven". This is underscored by Blake's use of pastoral Christian symbols (the Christ child, the lamb, the shepherd, etc.) As Russell Noyes observes: "The poet has left out all art, all moralizing, all pretending. The theme of loss and finding runs through the songs and the gaiety and laughter of children fills them."

28.7.3 Note on *Songs of Experience*

Having experienced the hypocrisy and cruelty of the world personally, Blake was indignant in *Songs of Experience.* If Innocence is Heaven, Experience is Hell. Love and joy are suppressed by selfishness and by restrictions imposed by the priests (*The Garden of Love*). The children's laughter is silenced by adults; the children are exploited by an insensitive world (*The Chimney-Sweeper*). The Church and the State, two pillars of society, are indifferent. Sometimes they even connive, to cause suffering to children. Blake thought that these social evils were shameful. As a poet be could speak out with indignation and compassion. Russell Noyes says:"These songs reverberated the intensity of his feeling in brilliant denunciatory phrases, tight rhythms, and searing imagery. The best of them are rarely to be matched elsewhere in Blake, or (for that matter) in their kind in anyone else".

28.7.4 Comments on Both the Collections

It is interesting to note that many poems in these two collections represent parallel situations, presenting two sides of the same coin. *Holy Thursday* and *Nurse's Song* are titles in both collections of songs, but the situations they describe are different. The shift from innocence to experience can be seen also in the change from the lamb to the tiger, the blossom to the sick rose, the piper to the bard, the divine image to the human abstract. The world of innocence is the world of childhood, and childhood conveys suggestions of the Christ child. The world of experience is the adult world. It is urban and it is opposed to the natural world of childhood. The pure simple love of innocence becomes lust and depraved sexuality in the world of experience. In Blake's poetry there is generally a dominant symbolic pattern based on these two worlds. The child is good, and he represents the world of innocence. The father, who represents the adult world of experience is evil.

28.7.5 *Songs of Innocence*: Study of Some Poems

Let us examine three poems from *Songs of Innocence* and three from *Songs of Experience*. The first poem from *Songs of Innocence* is reproduced below for your convenience :

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight
Softest clothing, wooly, bright;
Gave thee such tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee :

He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.

Little Lamb, God bless thee !
Little Lamb, God bless thee !

This short poem describes innocence and refers to the mystery of creation. The speaker in the poem is an innocent child who asks the lamb a series of rhetorical questions concerning its birth and upbringing. The first stanza of ten lines mirrors the child-like quality of innocence. There is an air of gaiety which is expressed in words like 'delight', 'bright', 'rejoice'. The lamb's own "gentle" nature is indicated by words like 'softest', 'wooly', 'tender'. The speaker who is himself tender, young and gentle is delighted by the sight of the lamb. There is a parallel in that the lamb and the child share the same qualities. The second stanza of ten lines attempts to answer the questions posed to the innocent lamb. Without naming Christ, the speaker says that the maker (or creator) calls himself a lamb. He shares the qualities of meekness and mildness with the lamb and becomes a child. The lamb, the child and Christ are one. There is the same divinity that hedges a child and a lamb as it does Christ.

The diction used in this poem is very simple and it is appropriate to a child; the rhythm is like lisping numbers of a child. If the first stanza stresses the beauty, gentleness and tenderness of the innocent lamb, the second stanza attributes similar qualities to the creator. And the creator calls himself lamb or child.

The Chimney Sweeper

Now let us read another poem from *Songs of Innocence*:

The Chimney Sweeper

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.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved: so I said
"Hush, Tom ! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair".

And so he was quiet and that very night
As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight !
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun.

The naked and white, all their bags left behind,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
And then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run ,
And Wash in a river, and Shine in the Sun

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold. Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

This poem was inspired by the agitation in Blake's time against the employment of children as chimney sweepers. The agitators demanded the passing of laws against this inhuman practice. The speaker in this poem is a small child who is himself a chimney sweeper. Hence the point of view is that of an innocent child. And the child accepts without protest the appalling conditions into which he is forced.

The pathetic condition of a child who was sold to be used as a chimney sweeper even before he could learn to speak the word 'sweep' ('weep' in line 3 is child's lisping for 'sweep') correctly is heart-rending. The pathos is reinforced when the speaker says that he sleeps in the soot. Children are innocent and meek like lambs. The children who worked as chimney sweepers were shaved. The implicit comparison is with the lamb shorn of its wool. The lamb cannot protest; it has to accept what is done to it. So also the child has to meekly accept. There is biting irory in line 8 when the speaker says that the soot of the chimneys cannot spoil a tonsured head. The spirit of acceptance may be noted in Tom's dream in the third, fourth and fifth stanzas. A chimney sweeper is like a body in a coffin. As the child is innocent, an Angel sets him free so he can wash himself clean and enjoy himself in the green plains in the Sun. In Tom's dream, the Angel tells him that he could enjoy endlessly if he is a good boy. God would be his father, his protector. But this is only a dream. When Tom woke up, it was business as usual; they had to get back to sweeping chimneys. In spite of the cold and discomfort, Tom was happy because he had learnt that doing his duty was its own reward. The conclusion of the poem is rather strange and unexpected, but the poem as a whole is an exposé of an evil practice in the poet's day.

The Divine Image

The third poem we shall read is given below :

THE DIVINE IMAGE

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues to delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love human form,
Is heathen, turk, or jew;
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

This poem presents the four virtues of mercy, pity, peace and love in direct terms. The simplicity of its statement and its ballad metre remind us of the hymns of Isaac Watts and other hymn writers who influenced Blake. These qualities are identified with God and his child, man. God dwells in man. Hence the human form is divine. Loving men is loving God.

The poem should be read with "The Human Abstract" in *Songs of Experience* which is a more difficult poem. The virtues listed above become perverted in the second poem; they are now false virtues. Human experience perverts the brain.

Self Check Exercise - 4

1. Why are the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* epoch - making ?

2. What are the models for the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience?*

3. Which New Testament doctrine do the *Songs of Innocence* affirm?

4. Explain how the *Songs of Experience* show the contrary state of the human soul.

5. What qualities are shared by the lamb, the child and Christ?

6. What is the context of *The Chimney Sweeper*?

7. What is the comparison between Tom and the lamb?

8. Describe Tom's dream.

9. Why was Tom happy after his dream?

10. What was the Angel's message to Tom?

28.7.6 *Songs of Experience* : Study of Some Poems

Now let us read three *Songs of Experience*: The first one is given below:

28.7.6.1 The Sick Rose

O Rose, thou art sick
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of Crimson joy :
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy

In this short and beautihl poem, Blake uses symbols connecting the sensuous with the emotional and the moral meanings. As a visionary poet he uses symbols in an elusive way. Poems such as these cannot be fully understood, although we enjoy I I reading them. The three levels - physical, emotional and moral - are experienced at I I the same time. Apparently the poem is about p rose and a worm, but it is obvious that I thre is a hidden meaning in the poem. The thiags and the situation described in the , poem are all symbolic. They imply something more than what they are. Blake uses I contrast as a poetic device to convey his meaning. Thus 'rose' and 'worm' 'joy', and I 'destroy' are paired off. The second word in each pair suggests evil while the first I word in each pair suggests beauty and happiness, The implication seems to be that the dark secret lover, travelling in the stormy night stealthily found out the happy I state, "bed of crimson joy," of the rose and destroys its life, While good or virtue is 1 indicated by "bed of crimson joy," evil is indicated by a number of words: sick, , worm, night, howling storm, dark, secret, destroy. A liberal use of words suggesting I evil as against a single phrase suggesting happiness, perhaps shows that good is 1 surrounded by evil.

Again, although we know that the worm stands for evil, we do not know the nature of that evil. It may be lust, sin, destruction, or death. The mystery is compounded

because the worm is described as "invisible". It is engaged in secret activities: finding out the bed, expressing 'dark secret love'.

The rose which stands for purity or innocence is perhaps ruined by (the worm) experience; the rose which is a symbol of love is perhaps destroyed by selfishness; the rose which is a thing of beauty is wrecked by jealousy.

Harold Bloom finds a human parallel in this allegorical poem. According to his view, the poem attacks the myth of female flight and male pursuit, of female resistance and male destruction. Where the rose's 'crimson bed' is concealed, the destruction (rape-marriage) becomes a social ritual.

The rose is employed by the poet as a personal symbol which is capable of different interpretations. The poem makes one thing clear. A crimson rose has been entered and sickened and destroyed by a worm secretly. This destruction may symbolize the destruction caused by secrecy, deceit, hypocrisy and pain.

Now let us turn to another poem born of Blake's bitter experience.

28.7.6.2 London

LONDON

I wander thro' each charter'd street
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

This poem, on the literal level, is rather easy to understand. It is clear that it is a social and economic protest. But the poem is more complicated than this, for the "mind-forged manacles" must be approached on the allegorical and anagogical levels. Man has forged these manacles himself.

Reason, which has an important place in the 18th century, exercises tyranny and hence "mind-forged manacles". Reason, nature and society which are highly valued in that age have forged their own tyrannies. These are the "triple goddess of destruction". Everyone and everything, the streets and the river, are "charter'd", that is, used commercially. The word "ban" may refer to Pitt's ban on people's liberties. The nation is sick as weakness, woe and fear "bight" it. The child chimney - sweeper, the adult soldier, the young prostitute are living testimony to the neglect of Christian ideals and humane personal relationships. Blake saw marriage as an institution invented by fallen man. Like any other institution, it also limits freedom. Hence marriage is a 'hearse'.

Finally, let us consider Blake's well-known poem, "The Tyger".

THE TYGER

Tyger ! Tyger ! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry ?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes ?
On what wings dare he aspire ?
What the hand dare seize the fire ?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of Thy heart ?
And when Thy heart began to beat
What dread hand, & what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burnign bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

This is not only Blake's most famous poem, but one of the great poems in the English language.

The first thing we notice in this poem is the unusual spelling of the word, "Tyger". Although Dr. Samuel Johnson mentioned it as an alternative form of the more common spelling, "Tiger", Blake's spelling conveys a unique feeling. In this context, it is important to remember that for Blake a poem is not a group of words presented in a linear fashion on a page, but a poem is a visual object. His engraving and painting are integral parts of his verbal art. Thus a poem by Blake is meant to be seen and read. Only then is its full impact felt. So the unconventional spelling reinforces our sense of wonder at the beauty, fierceness and strength of the tiger.

Our astonishment is expressed through a series of fourteen questions in a span of twenty-four short lines. Eleven of these questions are fired rapidly in the first sixteen lines. In the first four stanzas, the poet attempts to augment the reader's sense of wonder progressively by asking a series of rhetorical questions on the extraordinary powers required for creating an animal like the tiger. The creator must possess the same qualities to be able to produce such a creature. The nature of the Tiger, as Lionel Trilling says, is defined by the nature of God. In the last two stanzas, there is a reversal of this procedure. God is defined by the nature of the Tiger. God who created a meek and mild creature like the lamb dared to create the ferocious Tiger. Earlier we saw that the lamb, the child, and Jesus are one and the same. That such a God created the tiger is not comprehensible to the stars who are the agents of divine law. As Blake himself suggests, it is the "contrary state of the soul". The Lamb and the Tiger represent two aspects of God and two states of man.

The sound effects in the poem are striking. The metre employed is trochaic tetrameter which is itself an unusual form. There is a good deal of alliteration and assonance. The diphthong (ai) in Tyger recurs throughout the poem.

The poem may be explained in terms of the creation myth and the problem of good and evil in the world. What baffles man is that a kind God who created a mild Lamb also created the ferocious Tiger. It is incredible; "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" The Book of Job in the Bible raises the same question.

The poem is a fine example of compression. The questions at the end of the stanza lack a verb:

> And when thy heart began to beat
> What dread hand? what dread feet?

This is the revised draft. Blake must have felt that the fragment is forceful enough and that it underscores the tone of exclamation.

In one sense, *The Tyger* is a simple and enjoyable poem. It raises the common question: How do you account for the forces of good and evil in the universe? Blake's Tiger has a dual aspect, it is both beautiful and terrible as the repetitive phrase, "fearful symmetry", suggests. We should also remember that Blake turns from the Tiger to an examination of the nature of the creator.

> Did he smile his work to see?
> Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

There are allusions in the second stanza to daring attempts in mythology to challenge God: "On what wings dare he aspire?" is a reference to Icarus flying high towards the sun. The creator of the Tiger who had burning fire in his eyes must have had stronger wings than Icarus's wings joined by wax which melted due to the heat of the sun. In the very next line there is another question. What the hand, dare seize the fire? This is a reference to Prometheus's stealing fire from heaven for mankind's benefit. These two acts of daring and courage are outdone in the creation of the tiger.

Self-Check Exercise 5

1. Why is the rose described as "sick"?

2. What does the "invisible worm" stand for?

3. What is the meaning of the poem, *The Sick Rose?*

4. What are "the mind forged manacles"?

5. Examine the poem, *London,* as a poem of protest?

6. Why does Blake compare marriage to a hearse?

7. Why does the speaker in *The Tyger* wonder that the creator of the Lamb and the tiger is one and the same?

8. What impression of the tiger's qualities do you get by reading Blake's poem?

9. Give an example of compression in *The Tyger.*

10. Comment on the phrase, "fearful symmetry".

28.8 BLAKE'S CONTRIBUTION

We have seen Blake's use of symbols in *The Lamb, The Sick Rose, The Tyger* and other poems. We have also noted examples of compressed or concise statements in his poems. He developed these and integrated them into an elaborate system of his own. He believed:"I must Create a System, or be enslaved by another Man's". His "Prophetic Books"-*Jerusalem* is an example - deal with this developing and changing system of Blake. Much of Blake's work in these books is abstruse or obscure, but his main theme is clear. All the prophetic books deal with some aspect of the Biblical pattern of the Fall of Man, Salvation, the destruction of the fallen world and the rebuilding of New Jerusalem, the City of God. All these are presented as visions which are modelled on the Book of Revelation in the Bible. Blake believed that the violence predicted in the Book of Revelation was manifested in the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. He thought that such violence precedes the redemption of the world. He expressed these views in his unfinished "Prophetic Books", *The French Revolution and America: a Prophecy.* His later writings such as *The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem* deal with Biblical history which is an outer representation of the inner state of the soul. In this version, the fall comes through the disintegration of the soul and salvation is attained again through imagination. Blake held imagination to be the divine spark in man. He had stated: "I copy Imagination; I write when commanded by the spirits".

During his sixties, Blake devoted himself entirely to engraving and painting. He produced hundreds of paintings and engravings. These include illustrations for Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, for the Book of Job (see Appendix) and for Dante's *Divine Comedy.*

Blake provides a good example of the romantic revolt against traditional ideas. We have seen that he is opposed to the classics, to the mechanistic view of the universe, and to the tyranny of political systems. He has created a strange, even a private, mythology, and re-interpreted Christianity to suit his opinions. There was a tendency among the romantics to pursue truth in a new way. In their quest for ultimate meanings, the romantics emphasized the importance of the work of art. Blake is an outstanding example of this new approach to find out the ultimate truth.

Blake was almost unknown as a poet in his lifetime. Three decades after his death, the Pre-Raphaelites regarded him as a precursor. In the early decades of the twentieth century mythology and symbolism have been revived in the poetry of W.B. Yeats and the fiction of James Joyce. Blake's posthumous recognition was due to the importance given to myth and symbol in the poetry of W.B. Yeats and the fiction of James Joyce.

28.9 QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Write an essay on Blake's personality.
2. Discuss the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* as "Contrary states of the Human Soul"
3. Consider Blake as a precursor of the Romantic Movement.

28.10 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we considered the revolutionary and non conformist views of Blake. We saw his unique and original achievement in three related arts, chiefly poetry.

Keep in mind the importance given by Blake to Imagination, Vision and Prophecy while reading his poems and those of the other Romantic poets.

28.11 SUGGESTED READING

Abrams, M.H. (ed.) *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism* (1960)
(Essays on Romanticism and on all major Romantic Poets, including three essays on Blake. This anthology is useful for the whole course on Romanticism).

Blook, Harold. *The Visionary Company* . [1961],1971.
(There is a chapter, "The Contraries", on Blake, pp. 33-48. There are brief discussions of the better known poems of the major Romantic poets. Hence this is also useful for the entire course).

Bronowski, Jacob. *A Man without a Mask* [1943], 1954.
(An illuminating discussion of Blake).

Eliot, T.S. "William Blake" in *The Sacred Wood.*(1920).
(Insightful comments on Blake's honesty and original perceptions).

Erdman, D.V. *Blake, Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times.* [1953], 1969.
(Intensive study of English social and political thought during Blake's times and their effect on him).

Frye, Northrop, *Fearful Symmetry: A study of William Blake*, [1947], 1958.
(Discusses Blake's mythology with emphasis on the prophecies).

Harding D.W. "William Blake". *From Blake to Byron, The Pelican Guide to English Literature,* 5, (1957).
(A concise account of Blake's work with analyses of several well-known poems).

Schorer, Mark. *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (1946).
(Comprehensive study of Blake in relation of his age).

28.12 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise I

1. See 28.2
2. See 28.3
3. See 28.3.1
4. He was opposed to tyranny of every kind. He was against private property and against formal government.
5. See 28.3.2
6. See 28.3.3

Self-Check Exercise II

1. See 28.4
2. See 28.4
3. See 28.4.1
4. To restore our early ways of seeing things and to revive the heart. "To see a World in a Grain of sand".

Self-Check Exercise III

1. See 28.5
2. See 28.5.1
3. See 28.5.2
4. See 28.6
5. It presents a rare fusion of text, picture and decoration. In reinforces Blake's meaning.

Self-Check Exercise IV

1. See 28.7.1 first paragraph
2. See 28.7.1 second paragraph
3. See 28.7.2
4. See 28.7.4
5. See 28.7.5.1
6. See 28.7.5.2
7. See 28.7.5.2
8. See 28.7.5.2
9. See 28.7.5.2
10. See 28.7.5.2

Self-Check Exercise V

1. See 28.7.6
2. See 28.7.6
3. See 28.7.6
4. See 28.7.6.2
5. See 28.7.6.2
6. See 28.7.6.2
7. Because the Lamb and the Tiger represent diametrically opposite qualities.
8. See 28.7.6.2
9. See 28.7.6.2
10. The phrase epitomises the two important qualities of the tiger, fierceness and beauty.

UNIT 29 *THE PRELUDE* BK. 1

Structure

29.0 Objectives
29.1 Introduction
29.2 Nineteenth Century Romantic Revival
29.3 William Wordsworth : 'His life and life-view'
29.4 The Prelude (General)
29.5 The Prelude BK. 1:
  29.5.1 The Idea
  29.5.2 The Autobiographical Element
  29.5.3 Diction, Metre, Imagery
  29.5.4 Important Lines
  29.5.5 Glossary & Allusions
29.6 Questions for further study
29.7 Further Reading Suggested

29.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Units is to elucidate and critically interpret Wordsworth's *The Prelude* Book I and in this connection to give a historical account of the Romantic Revival to the target student studying English literature at the Post Graduate level.

29.1 INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth, the greatest poet of the nineteenth century Romantic Revival, wrote *The Prelude*, a long autobiographical poem in fourteen Books, in 1800, when he was thirty and at the pinnacle of his poetic talent. If Matthew Arnold is correct in his observation, then Wordsworth's best poetry came during ten years, between 1798 and 1808, and of his 'best' poems *The Prelude*, for its bulk, philosophy, seriousness of purpose, and tonal quality, is the 'greatest' also. ['Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced'.] This long poem of 7883 lines in blank verse is an epic of a very special type : its 'story' is in the account of the growth of a 'spirit', the development of an awareness, the evolution of a sensitive mind.

29.2 NINETEENTH CENTURY ROMANTIC REVIVAL

What is Romanticism?

While trying to define 'Romanticism' J.A. Cuddon, in his *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* refers to the American scholar A.O. Lovejoy who once observed that the word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing at all, and in a paradoxical statement tries to indicate its variety and charm: 'It is a word at once indispensable and useless'.

In the Middle Ages Latin was the language of learning and in contradistinction to it 'romance' denoted the vernacular languages. Later on, fanciful or highly imaginary books were called 'romantic', and gradually the term began to signify 'a popular book'. In the seventeenth century the term had acquired the derogatory connotations of bizarre and chimerical. In eighteenth century Germany it meant 'gentle' and 'melancholy'.

During the Renaissance, plays were called 'classical' or 'romantic' according to their adherence or non-adherence to the Aristotelian principles of dramatic art. The

playwrights who observed the 'unities' in their plays were called 'classical' and those who flouted them or took liberties with them were called 'romantic'. In this sense Ben Jonson was classical and Shakespeare romantic.

Often the ancient and the pagan were called 'classical' and things pertaining to Christianity 'romantic'. It is so because Homer and Vergil have stood the test of time, and their poetry, despite vastness and magnitude, is perfectly ordered and arranged as if by some basic rules of artistic creation. The Bible, on the other hand, is cryptic and suggestive. Faith itself is an act of imagination. And Christ's life, particularly his Resurrection, is full of 'mystery'. Auerbach in his essay *Odysseus' Scar* makes this distinction clear. He says that the poetry of Homer is 'the poetry of the foreground' whereas the poetry of, say, Job, is 'the poetry of the background'. The former is classical, the latter romantic. In 'the poetry of the foreground' everything is detailed clearly, objects are described in detail, and actions are narrated in proper sequence, and in 'the poetry of the background' hints are given, suggestions are made, symbolism is used, and the most powerful factor in creating artistic balance and effect is imagination. In the words of C.M. Bowra (in *The Romantic Imagination*), the single characteristic that distinguishes the English Romantics of the 19th century from the 18th century poets is to be found in the importance which they attached to the imagination.

Nineteenth Century Romantic Revival

Chronological division of literary periods is more often than not arbitrary, and yet, for practical purposes, literary critics and historians of literature mark off 'ages' on the basis of dominant characteristics and often they coalesce with decades, half centuries, and centuries: The sixteenth century as the Elizabethan Age or the Age of the Renaissance. The pre-Restoration seventeenth century as the Jacobean Age and the post-Restoration seventeenth century as the Restoration period or the pre-classical Age, the eighteenth century as the neo-classical Age, the first half of the nineteenth century as the Age of Romantic Revival, the second half as Victorian period and the twentieth century as the Modern period.

The first half of the nineteenth century is known as the age of the Romantic Revival because the Elizabethan Age was popularly known as a romantic period. This romanticism was in contradistinction to what was called 'classical', and the status of the classical was given to the ancient works that had stood the test of time. So, romanticism meant novelty and its degree directly depended on its departure from well established and acknowledged norms or principles of writing.

The nineteenth century Romantic Revival also, one may say, begins on this kind of a negative note : it is different from or opposite of eighteenth century poetry, the neo classical culture which achieves its fulfilment in Alexander Pope. But it is not only this. There is much more in nineteenth century Romantic poetry, much that is positive, a poetry that is not just defiance or departure, but standing on its strong legs, having the spine of a solid philosophy of life, a distinct angle and attitude, a new and befitting poetic diction.

The distinct angle and attitude is born of, in the words of C.M. Bowra, a special view of imagination which started with the eighteenth century dissenters like Blake and Collins and matured up in Wordsworth and Keats. Partly, though very spontaneously, it was an attempt to resist the onslaught of technology ('The Industrial Revolution') and to check the corrosion of human values caused by the growing desire for new-found material comfort and prosperity, and concomitant trade boom:

> The world is too much with us : late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
> (Wordsworth)

Poets like Wordsworth felt that the world was going the wrong way which would lead to unhappiness and it was their moral *duty* to warn it and to show it the path of truth and bliss. Imagination, to them, was the tool or instrument in human hand to discover or explore 'unknown modes of being'. They differentiated fancy and imagination : fancy, to them, was a mechanical process of mental permutation and combination, and indulgence in fantasy, for transient entertainment of the mind, an escape into the unreal; whereas, imagination was a living thing having organic growth and development, leading us to know our 'self' and its relation to the cosmic universe. This 'imagination' includes intellectual curiosity and emotional participation.

The most widely recognized feature of the English romantic movement is often spoken of as the 'Return to Nature'. Side by side with return to nature in poety, there was a movement initiated by Rousseau for a return to nature in social life, a movement of which the French Revolution was, in some degree at least, the outcome. It is curious to note that the poets of the early nineteenth century were drawn without exception into the romantic vortex, in some cases doubtless in spite of themselves, and to observe how they were severally affected by the political movement.

Essentially, romantic poetry is an attempt to establish harmony – harmony between the matter and the spirit, between the external and the internal, between the finite and the infinite. It is a swing between the outfit and the essence, between living and life, between heaven and home. It is acutely aware of the sphere of our sorrow and at the same time it is the desire of the moth for the star. Hence, its appeal to the Indian mind. It is easier for a civilization that has sprung from the *Tapovan* culture to appreciate Wordsworth's poetry than for a civilization that has built itself by banishing nature outside of its walls or has tamed nature not by love but by lash. If the system of Yoga says that it is through the body that we reach and enrich the soul, and see life or God in everything – animate or inanimate – through the power of this harmony, then Wordsworth's poetry is its best explanation :

That serene and blessed mood,

In which the affections gently lead us on,-
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

(Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*)

W.J. Harvey also points to this *unity* of Yoga in Wordsworth's poetry : 'The basic values asserted by Wordsworth are those of unity, integrity, wholeness. Unity of the mind with itself, of the present self with the plurality of all one's past selves –this is what dictates his quest for identity. Unity of the mind with Nature he had already expressed in some famous lines of *Tintern Abbey* ..... The experience he extends in *The Prelude* ..... The creative force thus manifested in Nature has its dim analogies in all of us, even in "the grossest minds".'

This 'high' priest of Nature' is no less a poet of man, a moralist who prescribes the cure of the disease of modernity sprung from intellectualism, dependence on technology, love for material prosperity and lack of basic values.

If we trace a thin line of division between two generations of English Romantic Poets, we have Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott on one side, and Byron, Shelley and Keats on the other.

Though more famous for his great critical work *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge (1772-1834) is widely appreciated for his highly romantic poems, especially *Kubla Khan. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. Most of his poems are of a fragmentary nature but that does not deter their merit which chiefly lies in their superb treatment of the supernatural, their lyricism, and glorious display of imagination.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), novelist-cum-poet excels as a narrative poet in his 'romantic tale in verse' in which we have a natural development of the old ballad and medieval romance. He does not have the depth and seriousness of a Wordsworth or a Coleridge but as a versifier of fanciful tales based on hazy historical material he is excellent.

The eldest of the younger generation of poets, George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) was more representative of the revolutionary spirit of the age than anyone else.

His *Childe Harold* had once taken England by storm. But Byron's fame with posterity will rest, among other poems, chiefly on the *Vision of Judgement* and *Don Juan*. Of course, in general, his fame has declined with time. His greatest defects are as an artist : his versification is slovenly; he bestowed sufficient care neither on the conception of his subject as an organic whole, nor on the working out of details.

Matthew Arnold, in his somewhat laboured plea for the supremacy of Wordsworth and Byron in 19th Century poetry, describes Shelley (1792-1822) as a 'beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain'. But, in the words of W.H. Hudson, 'As a lyric poet, he ranks with our very greatest, and no praise would be excessive for the ecstasy of feeling, the lightness and grace, the felicity of phrase and the verbal magic of such poems, for example, as 'The Skylark', 'The Cloud', 'The Sensitive Plant', the 'Ode to the West Wind', and 'A Lament'. And the fullest and finest expression of Shelley's faith and hope is to be found in his superb lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound.* His dreams of freedom are achieved in the freedom of the great Titan representing the paid, hope and fulfilment of mankind.

John Keats (1795-1821) was the last and youngest of this later revolutionary group. He was neither a rebel like Byron nor a utopian dreamer like Shelley. He believed in the cult of beauty: *Endymion,* his first long narrative poem opens with the line 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', one of his famous Odes, closes with the prophetic pronouncement, 'Truth is Beauty, Beauty Truth'. Keats wrote six long narrative poems, quite a good number of sonnets and short lyrics, six 'great' Odes and a verse drama. For a mature view of life, exposition of the essential drama of existence, and density of imagery, he is even ranked with Shakespeare.

Among the less important poets of the time, mention should be made of Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), James Hogg (1770-1835), Robert Southey (1774-1843), W.S. Landor (1775-1864), Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), Thomas Moore (1779-1852), Leigh Hunt, (1984-1859) and Thomas Hood (1799-1845).
The Romantic fervour did not last long. By the third decade of the nineteenth century it had started waning, and the Reform Bill of 1892 announced the beginning of a new age (in poetry, the Age of Tennyson) with its new problems, new equations, and new awareness. The romantic ideals lost much of their relevance in this age of social interests and practical ideals.

29.3 WILLIAM WORKSWORTH : HIS LIFE AND LIFE-VIEW



William Wordsworth was born on April 7,1770, at Cockermouth, and his sister Dorothy, with whom he had close, friendly relationship throughout his poetic career, was born on September 25, next year, at the same place. William lost his mother in 1778 and his father in 1783. The spirit of classicism was waning in English Literature during these final decades of the century, and in Germany, Goethe's *Werther,* which was a landmark in the romantic literature of Europe, was published in 1774, and Rousseau's *Confessions* which had no less of influence on the romantic poets of England saw the light of the day in 1781. And a very important event, the American Declaration of Independence, took place in 1776.

Wordsworth's first published poem, *Sonnet, On Seeing Miss Helen Maria Willians Weep at a Tale of Distress* appeared in *The European Magazine* in March, 1787. *An Evening Walk* was written the year the French Revolution started with the storming of Bastille (1789). In 1790 Wordsworth had a walking tour of France. He came back to England in early 1791 and returned to France late in the year to see revolutionary fervour in Paris. He had a love affair with Annette Vallon, and their daughter Caroline was born in December 1792. He composed *Descriptive Sketches* in 1793 and returned to England to seek a livelihood. *Godwin's Political Justice* was published the same year, and the spirit of inquiry and quest took an artistic shape in 1794 in the publication of Blake's *Songs of Experience*. In 1795 Wordsworth and Coleridge came close to each other which finally resulted in the joint authorship of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). This very year Wordsworth wrote some autobiographical verse which was the foundation of *The Prelude*. This last decade of the 18th century saw a reign of terror in France with the meteoric rise of Napoleon.

In 1802 Wordsworth wrote much lyrical poetry and published a new edition of *Lyrical Ballads* with revised *Preface*. In 1804 *Ode to Duty* was composed and *Ode on Intimations of Immortality,* was completed. In 1807 Wordsworth published *Poems* in Two Volumes and it was ridiculed in Reviews. The next year he left Dove Cottage for a larger house in Graspmere, and then in 1813 moved to Rydal Mount, home for the rest of his life. *The Excursion* was published in 1814, prefaced by an account of the plan for *The Recluse*. The argument and classification advanced by Wordsworth in the Preface to the Collected Edition of *Poems* spurred Coleridge to complete his own theoretical statement, *Biographia Literaria,* which was later published in 1817. In 1843 Wordsworth became Poet Laureate on Robert Southey's death. By now Wordsworth was a widely celebrated figure and there was steady increase in his American reputation. He died in April, 1850, and *The Prelude* which he wrote and rewrote almost throughout his life was published after his death. Throughout his life he wrote poems of philosophical issues, metaphysical problems and man-nature

relationship, and saw great writers at work : Goethe, Coleridge, Jane Austen, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Balzac, Dickens, Carlyle, Tennyson, Ruskin, Browning, Thackeray, Arnold, etc. His own best poetry, as pointed out by Matthew Arnold, came, of course, between 1797 and 1807, the most fruitful ten years of his long poetic career. In the remaining years good writing came occasionally and sporadically. Wordsworth felt with pain this waning of poetic power in him and presented it in the *Immortality Ode*. The drama of a crisis is very convincingly and impressively presented in that poem though the philosophy given by Wordsworth to explain the crisis is wide open to debate and controversy.

The question of the order in which Wordsworth's poems are to be arranged and studied is to be debated. He himself rejected the chronological arrangement in favour of what he called the psychological classification : poems of the Affections, the Fancy, the Imagination, Sentiment and Reflection. Others have proposed classification by form and theme. But, actually, this question is subsidiary in Wordsworth. His best things are scattered up and down his poetry in whatever order it is arranged (the period of ten years mentioned by Arnold, of course, supply the richest material). As a sonneteer, Wordsworth's merits are simply remarkable. The best sonnets of Wordsworth are worthy of Shakespeare and Milton, unsurpassable, perfect. There can be no doubt that Wordsworth found the discipline of sonnet writing helpful and beneficial; indeed he says so himself in 'Nuns fret not'.

So far as form is concerned, apart from his sonnets, he excels in lyric poetry. As lyrics, the Lucy poems are matchless : impassioned, disciplined, concentrated in content, informal, dramatic. The essential Wordsworthian, theme lies in every fibre of these lyrics, and yet the 'palpable design' of his longer works is not to be found in them.

Wordsworth had the ambition of writing a 'great' poem –very long, very rich, containing all his thoughts, and the history of the maturing of his poetic sensibility, an epic simultaneously personal, national, and universal. But he could never write this poem. Attempts remained unfinished. *The Prelude* was designed to be the *Prelude* to that poem. Throughout his life he kept on revising *The Prelude* but could not publish it. When it was published posthumously, the critics did not hesitate to call it a 'great' poem. Wordsworth's greatest and having wonderful coverage, depth and variety. Much of its content, of course, is to be found in the *Tintern Abbey* poem.

In his youth Wordsworth was inspired by the ideas (Voltaire, Rausseau) that led to the revolutionary movement in France. He welcomed the new democratic ideas because they tuned well with his reaction against the urban insularity of the 18th century English literature. Even when he was disillusioned with the French Revolution and began to hate its developments, his first concern was the poor, the rural, the lowly. His rich humanism made him very sympathetic to the suffering humanity in an age when industrialism and commercialism made the difference between the rich and the poor wider, uglier and more acute. He heard 'the still sad music of humanity' and was sad to see 'what man has made of man'. He felt that 'the world is too much with us', and realised that, as a poet, he had some responsibility. He wanted to show man the right path, and this made much of his poetry didactic. The moral concern, therefore, is very prominent in his poetry. This caused ire in Keats but did not deprive him of popular appreciation.

Apart from deep emotional concern for humanity, there is another very important theme in his poetry. It is his approach to and understanding of nature. 'Nature never did betray the heart that loved her', he said. If one goes to nature with an open heart, nature gives one everything, especially strength to face and overcome all sorrows and sufferings of life. In the words of W.H. Hudson, "As an interpreter of nature he still holds the first place unchallenged. His love of nature was boundless, and his knowledge of nature was equal to his love." With a keen eye he saw everything in nature, the minutest details did not escape his attention. And he believed that all these 'natural objects' are just manifestation of the spirit of nature. Through these

objects one reaches the centre, the essence; comes in contact with the infinite source of life and beauty, and gets all food and nourishment one requires in life. When one is in true contact with nature, nature becomes a guardian of one" soul-—he friend, philosopher and guide. From time to time Wordsworth lost this holy contact with nature and lamented the loss, but never was his belief in nature's benign power shaken.

Since he knew the 'panacea' and found 'illness' all around him, saw people ignoring what could cure them, he was sad. The tragic awareness of the suffering of man made him more inclined towards mankind, and so his love for nature and love for humanity became parts of the same awareness or philosophical truth he adhered to.

Even his poetic diction, that poetry should be written in the natural, unaffected language that the common man uses in his normal speech or communication, is derived from his concern for humanity at large, from his respect for the 'uneducated' rural people who have a rich heart, sincere feeling, and direct contact with nature, and do not 'lay waste' their powers in 'getting and spending'. Thus, his thought and art are essentially the outcome of the impact that the new vision leading to French Revolution created upon his mind. It is a turn from capitalism to socialism, but socialism of a very special kind in which the first criterion is the recognition of merit to be found abundantly in the poor and hardly in the rich.

29.4 *THE PRELUDE* (GENERAL)

Wordsworth kept on working on *The Prelude*, his longest poem, throughout his life—writing and rewriting it, often copying it, changing, rearranging and revising it, but never published it during his lifetime. Though it is a complete poem, a complete statement, he always cherished the thought that it was only a 'prelude' to a much longer poem. *The Recluse,* which he could never finish. *The Prelude* is much longer than the unfinished poem whose prelude it was intended to be. This caused embarrassment in the poet and it is perhaps one of the reasons that he could never publish *The Prelude.*

The poem has a complicated textual history. The poet worked on it at intervals for more than forty years. The first drafts were written in 1798 and the last full scale revision was made in 1839. In 1799 a short version of the poem was published in two parts. In 1805 Wordsworth wrote the whole of it but did not give the poem a name. It was just 'a poem to Coleridge': Wordsworth wanted to hear a few words of appreciation from his friend so that he could go happily with the composition of *The Recluse.*

The 1850 *Prelude* is the outcome of three large – scale reworking of the poem, and many minor revision. The poem was finally printed just ten weeks after Wordsworth's death. In stylistic quality and tone the 1850 poem is very different from the 1805 one. Continuous revision improved it quite a lot. In this unit we are to discuss the final version of the poem. The 1805 *Prelude* has thirteen Books whereas the final version has fourteen. The first Book has the title *Introduction : Childhood and School – Time* and the last Book is the *Conclusion* which comes just after the Book on *Imagination.*

The Prelude is a landmark in English literary history because it is a stupendous work the significance of which reveals itself to successive generations in various ways. M.H. Abrams in his work *Natural Supernaturalism* says that the 'characteristic concepts and patterns' of Wordsworth are mot clearly "displaced and reconstituted theology, or else a secularised or of devotional experience". The sub-title of *The Prelude,* 'Growth of a Poet's Mind' is also very significant. Romanticism in Europe was a much-varied thing, but one thing was common in all literatures of the time : psychological explorations. The human mind, all romantic writers believed, was the centre of the divine scheme, the arena of the struggle of Good and Evil. It is a

strange thing, and each discovery of its inner recesses is a thrill. And the poet has a richer mind, more sensitive and dynamic than anybody else's, in its creativity it is akin to God; and therefore the study of the growth of a poet's mind is not only a thrill in itself but also a religious pursuit, a study in godhead. The human mind is the arena of all tragedy and comedy, of all history, the sence on which is played out the continual drama of fall and redemption. From childhood to adulthood, this mind, through its experiences and responses, achieves maturity, a shape and a dimension, sensitivity of perception and intensity of feeling. In a poet's case, the acquisition is greater than in anybody else's case. Man's moral being depends on how the mind has worked and from what sources it has drawn its sap. The poet remembers past incidents and their impact on his mind. Stephen Gill says, "Memory is both the agent by which the poet explores his past, so binding together all phases of his being, and the power which retains and highlights moments of experience which, Wordsworth avers, haunt the adult with an inexplicable redemptive power. They are *spots of time* which with *distinct preeminence* retain a renovative virtue".

The Prelude is about the poet himself; and so it is autobiographical. It is about the nature and function of the human mind; so it is psychological; it gives certain definite moral conclusion; so it is didactic; it is about the infinite power and harmony of nature; so it is spiritual; it is an attempt to define the role and potentiality of imagination, and so it is intellectual. Even with all these aspects of *The Prelude*, one often doubts its social relevance, its relation to its time and topical issues. But we must remember that *The Prelude* is a poem of self consciousness and search for identity written at a time when entire Europe, reeling under the nightmare of Napoleonic onslaughts, was looking for a stable identity, a solid value system. In this sense. *The Prelude* is the most representative work not only of English romanticism but also of European experience and its concommitant romantic idealism. W.J. Harvey goes to the extent of saying, 'The world of *The Prelude* is not just the world of the mind communing with Nature; it is also the world of the university, the metropolis and the arena of power and politics.' Wordsworth spent the whole of his lifetime to perfect the poem which in its turn absorbed all new ideas and experiences that came to the poet and finally became a solid body of poetic work that has embodied the history of humanity standing on the crossroad of selfishness and humanism, science and imagination, adventure and utilitarianism, materialism and spiritualism. *The Prelude* is humanity's last and most fervent attempt to discover 'pure joy' in life.

The poem is an autobiography. As a chronological narrative, the poem is an account of the growth of the poet's mind upto the point at which he conceived *The Recluse* in 1798. Through reviscons from 1798 to 1805, the poem took a shape and character which was different from what it was when the poem was conceived. Naturally so, because Wordsworth who began *The Prelude* was not the Wordsworth who finished it. The first two parts deal with his childhood and boyhood experiences, and in the subsequent parts the growth of the mind is emphasised upon. The experience of his early life had remained stored in his mind, and he went to France to have direct contact with the Revolution, saw the towns and cities in both France and England, heard with pain 'the still sad music of humanity', came back to England and his friends, realised the most fundamental truths of life, and formulated his philosophy of nature.

29.5 *THE PRELUDE*, BK. I

29.5.1 The Idea

The Prelude is a long poem and very difficult to categorize. Its huge body has an epic form, lofty style, and tone of moral seriousness, but for want of a story, a sequential development of narrative, it cannot be called an epic proper. It is an autobiographical poem but only those episodes in the poet's life have been narrated which have something to do with his contact with nature and which cast a deep

influence on him in as much as they shaped his mind and fostered its growth, and gave him the joy of imaginative perception of the eternal and the universal. The moral overtone is very prominent; from every experience he draws a conclusion, and feels that it is moral duty to convey his observations to his readers because the world which is 'too much with us' should be brought back on the right track and made a blissful and peaceful place.

Book I of *The Prelude* introduces the theme and attempts to give a proper background to the proposed ambitious work, *The Recluse.* It refers to the poet's own 'Childhood and School Time', the morning years of life that showed the day.

In a very vital sense Wordsworth is a profoundly religious poet. He continuously evokes experiences which are spiritual. Ordinary incidents become extraordinary when seen through the prism of imagination, and in them the poet can perceive the continuous fusion of the limited and the unlimited, 'the kindred point of heaven and home'. Wordsworth is a religious poet not in the sense Herbert and Milton and Hopkins are: Wordsworth does not derive from or depend upon the Christian doctrines; but the essence of Christianity can easily be discovered in his poetry which is out and out secular. Neither inspired like mystic mendicants nor like the 18th century rationalists who tried to prove God's existence 'logically', Wordsworth explored his experience with highly sensitised concentration in which reason and imagination fused into one entity.

The Prelude Book I opens with a reference to the divine ecstasy that he had in the lap of nature (in a more condensed way he described it in *Tintern Abbey*). Then he goes on to refer to a few encounters with nature in his childhood, bringing them out of the store of his memory. They are not chronologically arranged, but they all lead to the central point: that nature shaped his personality and nurtured his moral being. Fortified with what he got from nature, he was immune from the onslaughts of a heartless, commercial words. Each small incident is described with all delicate details, as if every detail gives him the ecstasy of coming in sensuous proximity to nature. Autobiography turns to the exploration of a universal truth, and sensuous appreciation becomes the fabric of a philosophy, a metaphysical appreciation that is simultaneously secular and religious.

The Prelude is organised not chronologically but thematically. M.H. Abrams succintly writes about the thematic structure of the poem in his *Natural Supernaturalism: "The Prelude* .....is ordered in three stages. There is a process of mental development which, although at times suspended, remains a continuum; this process is violently broken by a crisis of apathy and despair; but the mind then recovers an integrity which, despite admitted losses is represented as a level higher than the initial unity, in that the mature mind possesses powers, together with an added range, depth, and sensitivity of awareness, which are the products of the critical experiences it has undergone." (p.77).

The poem opens with a note of joy. The wind suggests calm and peace and is matched by a 'corresponding mild creative breeze' within which becomes a storm and, breaking the frost, invokes the spring. The theme is announced in the very beginning: the discovery of nature's beauty and the discovery of man's true self. There are quite a few charming passages in *The Prelude*, rich in poetry and also endorsing Wordsworth's philosophy of life and nature. It is the 'fair seed time' in his life which he describes in the opening book of the poem. The childhood experiences tell that the poet's soul had fair seed time in his childhood. The philosophical foundation of the poem is also laid here. Though it is not a philosophical poem, the word 'philosophy' comes spontaneously in the analysis of the poem because, in the words of Stephen Gill, "*The Prelude* is a poem in which thought is brought to bear upon experience, and its ground is established in these opening books".

29.5.2 Autobiographical Element

"Exploring it (*The Prelude*) takes us unavoidably to the biographical matrix of the poem", says Stephen Gill. Wordsworth himself made it known to his family and friends as 'the poem on his own early life' or 'the poem on the growth of his mind', or 'the poem addressed to Coleridge'.

Wordsworth had in his mind the writing of a long 'philosophical' poem. The 'autobiographical' poem *The Prelude* was meant to be a 'preface' to that poem. But the philosophical' poem was never completed; only a few pages were written. The 'preface', on the other hand, kept on acquiring bulk and polish through continuous revision and retouching almost throughout the poet's life and finally took the shape of a huge 15-Book epic-like composition. Actually the poet wanted to give his reader the impression that his 'philosophy' was not just a concept but a system of faith that came out of simple but significant incidents of his life. But the 'philosophical' poem never came into its full being and the autobiographical 'prelude' became more philosophical than autobiographical. If we take *The Prelude* as a chronological narrative, it is a record of Wordsworth's life upto the point at which he conceived *The Recluse* in 1798. It is about the growth of a poet's mind which becomes fully mature to make 'feeling' the subject matter of a philosophical poem. But the poet chooses the incidents of his early life erratically with little regard for chronology and magnitude of incidents. Perhaps he remembered some experiences more vividly than others and felt that those experiences contributed more vitally to the growth of his mind. *The Prelude* is a biography of the soul, the story of an awareness, of the revelation of the power of human mind which can act in harmony with nature and get nourishment thereby. He remembers his pre-1798 days when his mind was continually invigorated and challenged by new ideas and concepts. He wrote both prose and lyric poetry at the time, each casting its influence on the other. This fruitful time owed itself to his uncommon experience in nature and with nature. He remembers the 'spots of time', small happenings serving as a key opening the door of the vast hall of realisation, wisdom and joy. It is a kind of 'freedom' that one enjoys within the framework of nature's principles. The 'elfin pinnace' (a pinnace is a small boat) experience, for example, was apparently a 'small' incident but it gave the poet an idea of 'the unknown modes of being', and it is not just an abstract concept but a concrete feeling, something that he could feel 'in the blood'. Incidents remembered and half-remembered shaped his mind so perfectly that he was in a position to tell the world what is right and what is wrong and make it see 'the light that never was on sea or land'.

A poet's poetic life is the story of the development of his imaginative perception of man in relation to 'the other'. Outer experiences nourish the inner realisation. Not all experiences have this nourishing power, only some have, and in *The Prelude* Wordsworth chooses them, at times recreates the half-remembered experiences, and all the time his intention is to focus on the evolution of a realization. It is futile to seek biography in his poetry; it is worthwhile to seek the dimension and depth of his poetry through the aid of biography. He, for example, avidly listened to the song of the cuckoo in his boyhood days as almost every boy does; the important point is that the continuity of the enjoyment of the birdsong reveals to him the essential thread that fruitfully connects man and nature. Every small incident of life referred to in the poem has this glorious function of revelation and building up of a philosophy of life.

29.5.3 Diction, Metre, Imagery

The Prelude is a long poem. It gained its length through slow and steady writing, through revisions and changes, arrangements and re-arrangements throughout the life of the poet. Finally it took the shape of a long epic-like blank verse composition in fourteen books. In 1798, after the publication of *Lyrical Ballads,* Wordsworth thought of writing a long philosophical poem under the title *The Recluse.* But he felt that some 'preface' would be necessary for this long philosophical poem. This preface took the shape of the two book *Prelude* and was published in 1807 under the

title *Poems in Two Volumes*. Then it was a long story of working and reworking on the poem until it was revised for the last time in 1839.

The question of structure comes first to the mind of the reader of this poem of great length, divided into fourteen books, each book containing about six or seven hundred lines. On reading the whole poem one feels that there is hardly any progression, the poem raising various philosophical questions and attempting solutions, often referring to the poet's personal experience in short narrative sketches, building the entire superstructure on the central theme of man-nature relationship. There is an easy flow though hardly any beginning, development and finale. It begins with a feeling: The feeling of being free, and ecstasy on account of that. The intention of the poet is to communicate this mental state. There is no hurry, no pressure to move forward, poetry moves with the ease of a soft breeze; long sentences run through blank-verse lines stopping, as if, when a full breath is over, a complete picture given, and a mental state is communicated. Then another sentence begins and a very special kind of poetry seems to be at the command of the mood which is expressed almost effortlessly. But the blank verse pattern, the ambic pentametre never fails, the lines are of uniform length and the rhythm regular. It is 18th century poetry inferfused with Miltonic seriousness at the service of romantic sensibility. Milton had a 'fable' in *Paradise Lost,* and much of the 18th century poetry is 'complete statement' in couplets; Wordsworth, on the other hand, has neither a fable nor the urgency of flinging morals through complete statements in perfect couplets. Yet wordsworth, in his diction and intention is closer to the age preceding his than the one in which he lived or the one that followed his. There is hardly any suggestive 'imagery' in the modern sense of the term – hardly a symbol or a metaphor – and yet in the communication of sensibility *The Prelude* is very modern; it reaches after the depth of an awareness, and in it the versification, the diction and the total pattern have their vital role. Description of personal experience and philosophical observations go together, one illustrating and endorsing the other. The personal experience – mostly of childhood and boyhood in Book I – are the 'spots of time', memorable incidents that illustrate the viewpoint. Quality of verse improves when the poet comes to these 'spots', and this gives the reader the impression that Wordsworth could have been an excellent narrative poet had he attempted it.

The pattern of the poem is not linear but circular, coming to the central issue from various sides, as if creating circles of waves around it. And, unlike *The Waste Land* where also the structural movement is circular, there is no conscious imposition of form, the 'content' – as if by its intrinsic natural force –makes and sets its own 'form'. There is much truth in Matthew Arnold's assertion that 'Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote the poem for him. He has no style'.

And yet the poem has wonderful variety. It is more than a mere Conversation Poem ('The Conversation Poems operate within limited parameters of manner and tone, striving to create the impression of an extempore meditation.'). *The Prelude*, as pointed out by Stephen Gill, 'exploits diversity of manner and tone (within the general overall limitations imposed by the blank verse) for the multiple purposes of the long poem.'

The inner force of the verse becomes more dynamic in the narrative passages. Vivid memory of personal experience gives extra strength and colour to these lines but in narrating these experiences Wordsworth never follows chronology: the intention is to highlight the essential function of these experiences : that they lead the poet to discover Nature's 'unknown modes of being'. So every narrative patch is followed by a long patch of meditative and reflective poetry. The reflective passages rise naturally from the experience which is their matrix. Stephen Gill writes. "Wordsworth dramatises and highlights significant experiences only, turning back on himself and collapsing chronology bewilderingly". Much of the verse of *The Prelude*

is meditative and reflective. It is thought versified. The blank verse, without losing its metrical discipline and rarely taking recourse to Miltonic sonority, takes the reader alongwith it effortlessly. The simplicity of the poetic mode is deceptive because it ushers one, almost unawares, into the world of mystical vision and joy.

Everywhere in the poem it is nature imagery; images drawn from the world of nature: water, mountains, valleys, breezes etc., and everything is literal, true, the object as it is. The poet remembers his childhood experiences and in that connection come the names of the objects of nature that exist most literally, materially, in the poem as part of the poet's physical experience. But at the same time each image dissolves into a symbol of the poet's spiritual relationship with nature and the concomitant joy he derives therefrom. Herbert Lindenberger puts it aptly" 'When Wordsworth describes a stream he knew in childhood he can start out wholly on the level of literal description – the poem is, after all, an autobiography – and before the reader has gone much further the stream has become a metaphor for the workings of the imagination. It is difficult to distinguish between the literal and metaphorical level in Wordsworth, for the literal becomes figurative and then literal again.' The imagery of *The Prelude* is, Lindenberger holds, 'something concretely observed by the poet, and something he must constantly return to as he narrates the events of his life; yet it is also something he thinks through, a mode of language which continually leads him away from itself to encompass larger areas of human experience.

29.5.4 Important Lines and their interpretation

(i) Oh there is blessing ..... to settle where I will.
(lines 1-9)

The 'gentle breeze', a 'visitant' coming from the 'green fields' and the 'azure sky', touches the cheek of the poet. It is more a spiritual touch than a physical one though the sense of physical comfort also is conveyed. The breeze itself is 'half-conscious of the joy it brings'; through this personification the poet conveys his involvement with nature, his joy is shared by the natural agencies, or it is the same emotion working both in the giver and the receiver and binding them together. The soft breeze has a 'mission'; obviously it is the mission of nature, coming close to man with her blessings. And none can be more grateful to nature than the poet himself because he has finally got in her a soothing shelter. The 'vast city' disappointed him; its cruel fetter chained him. He was a slave of manners and customs, conventions and hypocrisies there. Now, in the lap of nature, he feels as free as a bird that can fly in the sky at will. The poet is free to meditate, to fly in the infinite sky of his soul, to search for the harmony between man and nature.

(ii) What dwelling shall receive me ....out my course?
(lines 10-32)

The whole world of nature is before the poet. The vale, the grove, the clear stream: 'the earth is all before me'. Joy fills the heart of the poet. He enjoys the liberty that he has got after so many years. Even the 'wandering cloud' shows him the right way. His thought is at rest; his mind goes to lofty heights. The poet realizes that now he has got his cherished place. The busy world of the town was a heavy weight on him. He was a misfit there. Now he has the prospect of a long peaceful time before him. In great joy he runs hither and thither. He knows any trifle thing now can take him to the joyful world of mental peace that comes with the discovery of one's true identity.

(iii) Dear liberty ! ..... harmonious verse
(lines 31-45)

Liberty turns the joy holy. It is the spiritual experience of purity. The external breeze causes a stir deep within the mind of the poet. There is a 'corresponding breeze' in his heart. It gradually becomes 'a tempest, a redundant energy'. The poet is happy that there is a harmony between the external and the internal, between matter

and spirit, and this union brings with it 'vernal promises', as if the 'frost' of the heart is melt away. The poet can work now for long hours. New energy fills his heart. Time passes quickly but it is justified by the poet; productive work is life's greatest justification. Life now moves with a leisurely pace: there is no anxiety, on hurry. But writing of poetry continues. The poet writes in the morning, writes in the evening, and this regular writing of 'harmonious verse' makes his life holy and blissful.

(iv) ..... a higher power
Than fancy ..... performed. (lines 77-80)

After having wandered hither and thither, the poet finally turned to the 'known vale' and 'reached the very door of the one cottage which methought I saw'. It was such a calm and beautiful place that the poet decided to write a glorious poem there. The calm of the place was conducive enough for such a work. The poet means to say that external atmosphere is an aid to inner growth. Conducive circumstances enrich creativity and a poet can create a work of high merit if he gets the peaceful charm of nature's company 'far from the madding crowd' of urban people, Imagination is born of meditation, and this imagination is a faculty much superior to fancy, it has the harmonising power to establish living truck between the world of matter and the world of spirit. Imagination, of course, is Nature's gift, and this gift follows one's love for Nature. In distinguishing between Fancy and Imagination, Wordsworth here comes close to Coleridge's view of these creative agents.

(v) The Poet, gentle creature .... Unmanageable thoughts.

The poet is a 'gentle creature': he is like a 'lover': he has his 'unruly times', his 'fits', and in these moments he is 'neither sick nor well'; his only 'distress' is his 'unmanageable thoughts'. So, according to Wordsworth, the poet is possessed. Something, as if, descends on him, takes hold of him, and he can't help it. It is like sexual urge which blinds one, switches reasoning off, and makes one act 'the nature's way'. But it is creative or procreative, a design of nature, a human act through which nature operates. There is little play of intellect or reasoning in it. So, the moments of excitement or inspiration are 'unmanageable'. It is the typical romantic view of a poet.

(vi) .....I neither seem
..... build up a Poet's praise.

It is the poet's self assessment. He has the 'first great gift' of the 'vital soul' which is capable of deriving life-force from the inexhaustible storehouse of nature. He does not lack the understanding of 'general Truths', the basic scientific laws that control and guide the functioning of nature. They are 'under-powers' in the sense that they remain only 'subordinate helpers of the living mind'. The poet knows the physical laws, but goes beyond them to discover the spiritual principles of nature. The physical Laws are neither ignored nor taken for everything. And then, there are the objects of nature as manifestation of the spirit. Through these objects, a poet reaches the spiritual core of realization. The objects have their forms and shapes and a minute study of these forms and shapes is also a matter of 'toil', but all these things are necessary for the making of a poet. So, a poet must know the basic laws, observe the objects, and gradually be led to spiritual realization.

(vii) Ah better far than this ..... an interdict upon her hopes

The desire of writing a philosophical poem, in which there would be embodied the truths of life, fills the mind of the poet very often. It is a burden, the load of an ambition which is very difficult to achieve. The poet tries to ward this desire off by telling himself that the ripe time for this would come in maturer years. Now he wants

to move freely in the word of nature, just enjoying her sights and sounds, caring little for philosophy etc.

It is a state of the mind that the poet had in his early youth, a state of confusion, whether to choose this path or that, whether to enjoy nature or to build up a moral philosophy about this enjoyment, finally leading him to choose the former and to enjoy the blessings offered by nature. A sense of liberty gives freshness to the lines, an artless smoothness, a simple unaffected rhythm.

The poet contrasts this life with the busy life of the town plagued by industrial commercial culture. It is the typical Wordsworthian theme expressed in his famous sonnet 'The world is too much with us'.

(viii) I heard among .... Turf they trod (lines 322-325)

Sense of guilt has been expressed. A bird caught in the snare became the poet's victim. It was an act of cruelty and a crime. So he felt Nature admonishing him. He 'heard among the solitary hills' 'low breathings' following him. It was the spirit of Nature coming, like a guardian, to punish him for the sinful act he had done. Nature has been personified. And very deftly the poet has been able to express his guilt, fear and remorse, and also Nature's guardian like role. The simile in the last line is a beautiful example of the poet's artless but accurate imagery.

(ix) Dust as we are .....In one society (lines 340-344)

Man, physically, is no more than 'dust', but that is not his entire existence. He is part of the immortal spirit, and gradually, through maturity grown out of experience, this realization comes to him. Apparently or externally, the elements of life are discordant, but, inwardly or spiritually, there is wonderful harmony. This is the 'dark inscrutable workmanship' of nature. It is not possible to explain this miracle, but it is very much there, connecting the human spirit with the spirit of Nature. The idea of 'connection' and concomitant rhythm in harmony, the merger of the finite into the infinite, the spiritual relationship between the human soul and the soul of Nature, brings Wordsworth very close to the Indian philosophy of 'Yoga" In *Tintern Abbey* the poet explains it in more powerful terms.

(x) Thanks to the means .....as best might suit her aim.
(lines 351-356)

Nature is man's true and most dependable, most sympathetic guardian. She has her own ways of keeping man on the right track. She applies her methods when necessary. At times these methods may be very soothing, and at times they may be harsh, but Nature's intention is always holy. The poet is thankful to all those methods employed by Nature. At times she creates 'terror' in the mind of the wrong-doer, reveals herself to him in such a manner that he is not only overawed but also aware of the 'unknown modes of being'. The 'boat episode' in the poet's life was one such experience; he could feel the infinite power of nature watching, following, and admonishing him.

(xi) .....but after I had seen .....to my dreams.
(lines 390-400)

Here the poet becomes a mystic. When he saw the huge hill moving towards him as if with will of its own, he 'saw' nature and was aware of 'unknown modes of being'. It was a 'revelation'. The world 'revealed' was entirely different from the world we perceive and know through our senses. Nothing familiar can compare with it. And in that moment of revelation the familiar world disappeared, the poet was lifted to another plane of realization, to a different world or awareness. Wordsworth's romanticism lies in this mystical approach to nature but he describes his 'personal' experience with such force as to give it universal validity and appeal.

29.5.5 Glossary and Allusions

38 vexing its own creation : much greater in force and power than the mild breeze which led to it.

46 Matins and vespers : religious incantations of prayer sung in the morning and in the evening respectively.

72 Vale : The 'vale' in Grasmere; Dove cottage, into which the Wordsworths moved on December 20, 1799, and where they stayed until 1808, was then divided from the lake only by fields.

97 .....defrauded : The Aeolian harp, or wind harp – a fashionable toy in the late eighteenth century – became for the Romantics a symbol of poetic creation. It consisted of a set of strings stretched across a rectangular sounding box from which the wind evoked varying tones and harmonies.

112 self-congratulation : used without the modern pejorative implication, to mean 'rejoicing'.

141 ....brooding : the human mind initiates the creative process by brooding, as the Holy Spirit in Milton's Christian epic had brooded over Chaos.

155 images : landscapes as they present themselves to the eye or are retained within the mind.

158 manners: general way of life: morals; habits.

169 ..... unsung : Milton's decision not to write a romance about knights in battles and tournaments is recorded in Paradise Lost IX, 25-41, a passage that seems frequently to have been in Wordsworth's mind as he attempted to define his own position as a poet.

185 faithful loves : it echoes the opening stanza of *The Faerie Queene,* 'Fieree warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song.'

187-190 How .....Empire: Mithridates the Great, King of Pontus, was defeated by Pompey in 66 B.C. and died two years later; Odin, in one tradition, was a barbarian who led his tribe north from the sea of Asov to Sweden in the hope that one day their descendants might carry out his revenge upon the Romans.

202 ..... Of natural heroes : The Roman general Sertorius, contemporary and ally of Mithridates, gained control of most of Spain, but was unsuccessful in his attempt to master Rome from the provinces; he was assassinated in 72 B.C. According to legend, his followers emigrated to the Canary Islands after his death, and there founded a race that flourished until the arrival of the Spanish at the end of the fifteenth century.

212 Withering the Oppressor : 'Dominique de Gourges, a French gentleman who went in 1568 to Florida to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there' (*Prelude* note, 1850).

213 Dalecarlia's mines : Gustavus Vasa of Sweden raised support among peasants in the mining district of Dalecarlia, and freed his country from Danish rule in 1521-23.

217 Wallace : William Wallace, hero of Scottish nationalism, was captured and executed by Edward I in 1305. Wordsworth's interest had been stirred during his tour of Scotland with Dorothy in August-September, 1803.

237.....And clearer insight: Another reference to *The Recluse; Home at Grasmere*, which was to be the first Book of the main philosophical section of the poem, does precisely cherish the daily life of the Wordsworths, holding it up as a type for general future happiness. Later tradition represented Orpheus as a philosopher rather than a musician.

237-42 Wordsworth, in the mood he describes here, is not decisive enough to be either vicious or virtuous; he cannot distinguish between vague but feeble longings to write *The Recluse*, and an overwhelming impulse to do so, between timorousness and prudence, between mere delay and circumspection.

246 blank reserve : total inaction.

260 interdict : prohibition

268 false steward : refers to the parable of the false steward, Matthew 25.

269-74 This question had of course been the opening of the two-part *Prelude*, expressing already in October-November 1798 the poet's discontent at failure to make progress with *The Recluse*. The river is the Derwent, which flows along the far side of the garden wall of the house where Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth.

275 holms : Islands.

284 a shattered monument : Cockermouth Castle.

295 Skiddaw : nine miles east of Cockermouth, it is the fourth highest peak in the Lake District.

305 transplanted : the experiences that follow take place after Wordsworth has been 'transplanted' to Hawkshead Grammer School, thirtyfive miles from Cockermouth, in May 1779.

320 toil : snare of labour

327 the cultured Vale: the part of the valley that was under cultivation

330 end : result

373 pinnace: small boat

379 instinct : imbued

408 vulgar : ordinary : commonplace.

450 reflex: shadow; reflection.

460 diurnal: daily

461 train : sequence

471 characters: marks

495 courser : swift horse

535 .... By royal visages : In Wordsworth's extension here of the card game in 1799, the influence of Cowper is less apparent, and that of Pope (*The Rape of the Lock*) becomes more obvious

543 Bothnic Main: The northern Baltic.

547 .....And made me love them : in his childhood days it was not his conscious enjoyment of nature, but nature coming forward to him and impressing upon his tender mind her benign and permanent stamp which in later years made the poet love her.

554 intellectual charm : spiritual bliss

555 first-born affinities : affinities with which a child is born.

549-58: Here is affirmation of Wordsworth's view that in the spontaneous sensuousness of childhood there is a quality of mind which is vital to the development of spiritual life.

564 Organic : sensual; bodily

568 Cumbria's : Cumberland's

581 vulgar joy: ordinary pleasure

591 evil-minded fairies: fairies were supposed to cause ill-assorted couples to fall in love, as in Shakespeare's

Midsummer Night's Dream

593 Collateral : indirect

612 affections : feelings

620 tedious tale : the banal alliteration is a joke for Coleridge about poetic craftsmanship

626 honourable toil : the writing of *The Recluse*

633 visionary things : things seen in the imagination with the inward eye.

645 discomfited : unfit.

29.6 QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Write a note on the Romantic Revival and examine Wordsworth's role in it.
2. Comment on the various texts of *The Prelude.*
3. Justify the sub-title of *The Prelude* as 'Growth of a Poet's mind'.
4. Discuss *The Prelude* as an antobiographical poem.
5. Analyse the philosophical content of *The Prelude.*
6. Can autobiographical poetry be great poety? Discuss with reference to *The Prelude.*
7. Critically appreciate the Boat Episode in *The Prelude.*
7. Write a short essay on the diction and imagery of *The Prelude.*
9. Do you think *The Prelude* is Wordsworth's greatest work? Give reasons for your answer

29.7 SUGGESTD FURTHER READING

Editions:

The standard edition of the poems remains *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (5 vols. Oxford, 1940-9).

The accompanying volume *The Prelude*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (1926), 2nd revised edition ed. Helen Darbishire (Oxford, 1959) is still of use. *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth. M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York, 1979), often called the 'Norton *Prelude*', is best for students.

Biography:

(i) Christopher Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth (2 Vols.)
(ii) Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth, a file* (Oxford, 1989)

Background:

(i) Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background* (1940)
(ii) Jonathan Wordsworth, Michael C. Jaya, & Robert Woof, *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism, (New Brunswick and London. 1987).*
(iii) Max Byrd, London Transformed : *Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, 1978).

Language:

(i) Francis Austin, *The Language of Wordsworth and Coleridge (1989)*
(ii) Josephine Miles, *Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion (Berkeley, 1942).*

Criticism:

(i) M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism : Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York. 1971)
(ii) Herbert Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's 'Prelude'* (Princeton, 1963)
(iii) W.J. Harvey and Richard Gravil, *Wordsworth : The Prelude*, a Casebook (Macmillan, 1972).

UNIT 30 COLERIDGE : KUBLA KHAN & DEJECTION : AN ODE

Structure

30.0 Objectives
30.1 Introduction
30.2 Coleridge: Life and Works
30.3 Coleridge as a Critic
30.4 Coleridge as a Poet
30.5 Kubla Khan
- 30.5.1 Introduction
- 30.5.2 Structure
- 30.5.3 Substance
- 30.5.4 Interpretation
- 30.5.5 As a Romantic Poem
- 30.5.6 The Supernatural Element
- 30.5.7 Glossary
- 30.5.8 Questions for further study

30.6 Dejection: an Ode
- 30.6.1 What is an Ode
- 30.6.2 Introduction to the Poem
- 30.6.3 Substance
- 30.6.4 Interpretation
- 30.6.5 As an Autobiographical Poem
- 30.6.6 As a Romantic Poem
- 30.6.7 Glossary
- 30.6.8 Questions for further study

30.7 Suggested Reading

30.0 OBJECTIVES

The target reader is the student who wants to acquire Post-Graduate level proficiency in English literature, and the objective of this unit is to furnish him with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's life and literary words, especially his poetry. Two poems, *Kubla Khan and Dejection: an Ode,* have been chosen for detailed analysis as these are representative enough to give a comprehensive view of Coleridge as a poet.

30.1 INTRODUCTION

The component parts of the Unit are as follows:

(a) Coleridge's life and works
(b) Coleridge as a critic
(c) Coleridge as a poet
(d) Critical analysis of *Kubla Khan* with glossary and possible questions
(e) Critical analysis of 'Dejection: an Ode' with glossary and possible questions
(f) Suggested further reading
(g) Appendix : The texts.

30.2 COLERIDGE: LIFE AND WORKS



The Romantic Revival has been discussed in detail in the Unit on Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. Needless to say, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). Wordsworth's closest poet-friend, belonged to that Movement. The Romantic Revival of the closing years of the eighteenth century, which began with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1797 and extended upto the middle of the nineteen thirties, was a reaction to and also a product of eighteenth century classicism, and the remarkable point about Coleridge is that the element of reaction to the classical norms is most prominent in his poetry. So, he is often called the 'most romantic' of the romantic poets.

Coleridge's part in the making of the *Lyrical Ballads* seems, in a word, to obtain a 'willing suspension of disbelief' for the supernatural. This aim is emblematical of the best of his poetry.

Born in 1772, Coleridge was at Jesus College from 1791 to 1794. In 1797, he married Sarah Fricker, the sister of Southey's wife. His friendship with Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy with whom he had long walks made him the kind of poet that he was. The three influenced one another's thought and sensibility. There are most curious points of similarity between the careers of Coleridge and De Quincey, especially in that both were failures in the sanctuary of home, and both were the slave of opium. German metaphysics fascinated Coleridge, and turned the poet into a philosopher. This caused no enrichment to his poetry, but the combination of poetic sensibility with philosophical subtlety made him an almost perfect critic. His years of full poetic inspiration were few, two at the most (1797-98), and hence the quantity of his best work is in inverse proportion to its quality.

It is not necessary to attribute the decay of Coleridge's poetic powers, or rather the 'stinting' of the poetic flow, to Germany or to opium; probably this would be to confuse cause and effect. The real cause was something innate in the man, which he himself was painfully aware of. It was his high ambition to reach beyond the reachable, his desire to discover the deepest region of the soul, and his continuous discovery that 'words' – the only material of poetry-falls short of that supreme requirement.

His stress on music suggests his attempt to transcend the limitations of literalness and to make the words yield as much as they could. But, unlike Shakespeare, he could

not make his words deliver the richest. Under the pressure of demand they broke, often became incoherent. This explains the fragmentary nature of much of his later poetry. Another reason of his sudden decadence is his lack of self-confidence, which can partially be attributed to his addiction to narcotics.

This caused deep frustration in him. He worked by fits and succeeded in flashes, and failed to finish long and ambitions works undertaken by him.

Broadly speaking, there are four periods in Coleridge's poetic career. The earliest period extends from 1794 to 1796 and it includes works like *the Song of the Pixies, Lines on an Autumnal Evening* and *Lewti* (1794) and *Religious Musings* (1795-96). Then came the second and blossoming period (1796-97) when he wrote *Ode to the Departing Year: The Lime Tree Bower:Frost at Midnight, Fears in Solitude*, etc. Full blossoming came in the next phase when he was at the height of his poetic genius. Great poems like *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Christable* and *Kubla Khan* were written during this period. And the fourth and last period came with a decline in inspiration and achievement. Two poems of great merit, of course, were written in this period too: *Dejection: an Ode* and *Love*.

30.3 COLERIDGE AS A CRITIC

Today Coleridge is better remembered as a critic than as a poet. His *Biographia Literaria* is a great work in which one gets for the first time solid theories of criticism. The starting point of Coleridge is, of course, Wordsworth's preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. Then he proceeds to examine Wordsworth's poems and, in the words of Cazamian, 'certain intentions, as well as certain successes or failings, of Wordsworth are caught and illuminated to their depths; so searching is the light, that it is even cruel.'

Despite his romantic sensibility, in his criticism Coleridge is very objective. He does not disregard 'facts' and tries his best to be unprejudiced. Even T.S. Eliot's criticism draws heavily from Coleridge's viewpoint and stand. Owing to this objectivity, Coleridge can reach the essential depth of any kind of art and discover the harmonizing and sustaining force therein. About his Shakespeare criticism, Cazamian observes, 'His remarks on Shakespeare show a sound intuition of the profound unity of dramatic art'. His imaginative perception seldom fails him, and so his famous distinction between fancy and imagination, despite its mysticism, is so convincing and revealing. Fancy, according to Coleridge, is the mechanical joining of impressions stored in memory whereas imagination is an organic development of the mind which has the power to reveal the essential, and even the ultimate, truth of life.

German metaphysics fascinated him and turned the poet into a philosopher. The combination of poetic sensibility with philosophical subtlety made him an almost perfect critic.

30.4 COLERIDGE AS A POET

Coleridge belonged to an age of great poetic output. There was a sudden efflorescence which lasted for about three decades, and then withering set in. To know this phenomenon well is in a way to understand Coleridge best. Every great writer is inextricably linked with the life and thought of the people of his time.

The Renaissance may be taken as the starting point. It was an age of questioning, and so, of self-awareness and self-discovery. Something 'new' was needed and demanded: a new set of values; a new god, so to say. People became aware of the immense potentialities of the human mind.

Logical reasoning came as the new too, as if mysteries of nature could be solved with that and the proper perspective grown the 17th century brought science and the concomitant tilt towards materialism. Sir Issac Newton revolutionised human thought and attitude and Locke's philosophy tried to explain the universe in terms of logic and material order. The eighteenth century built the 'society' on these postulates and glorified 'order' and 'pattern'. The Industrial Revolution brought the assurance of comfort and prosperity. In literature. 'norms' were dug out from ancient classics, and 'content' was confined to the immediate and the tangible. The stress was on form, and the subject matter was limited to that which yielded to reasoning. Dissident voices (Blake, Gray, etc) were heard but ignored.

And then fresh wind began to blow. It was so powerful that it seemed to be sudden, as if there was a complete overturning of everything. There was a feeling and sense of *'freedom.'* In Wordsworth it was the freedom of going into Nature and breathing to one's fill her pure and purifying air. In Coleridge it was the freedom of entering the strange and mysterious zone of the supernatural. Byron and Shelley craved for a new social order based on intellectual freedom, scientific reasoning, and unprejudiced political system. Keats sang. 'Ever let the fancy roam/Pleasure never is at home.'

Though much of it came from native factors–a reaction to excess of emphasis on pattern and order, and on a concept of 'totality' within measurable limits–sizeable influence came from the continent, especially from France and Germany. German philosophers of the eighteenth century were busy exploring the emotional behaviour of man, the world of imagination, the sense of wonder unfolding an ever - increasing area of awareness, and this was reflected in the German literature of the time which treated supernatural as an extension of the known world of nature, often dealing in the eerie, the strange, and the mysterious. More than anyone else. Coleridge, because of his sojourn to Germany and his passionate reading of German literature, was influenced by it.

French Revolution was another exotic factor that had much to do in shaping the mind of the English poets of the time.

The French Revolution was the sudden and violent outburst of a general feeling seething long in the European mind. People wanted freedom: freedom from the oppression of monarchy, from the dictates of the church, from superstitions and social customs. As a matter of fact, in the world of thought and systematic development of an idea. England was the pioneer. England's struggle for freedom dated back to the Medieval times and matured up through Renaissance. Reformation, Civil War, Commonwealth , and so on. It gave inspiration to other nations. If the seed of French Revolution lay in the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, these philosophers, in their turn, derived much from the English exponents of political and social freedom. But what was an undercurrent of intellectual refinement and cultural development in England became violent, armed revolution in France against monarchy and all its institutions. Poets and artists of England felt attracted towards it in the beginning. Wordsworth and Coleridge went to France to actively participate in the revolution, but, seeing the bloody and blind turn it took, withdrew from it, though the cardinal ideas that had caused the revolution silently and imperceptibly crept into the English mind and brought about a change in life, thought and attitude of the English people.

Wordsworth was most enthusiastic about the French Revolution in his early youth. But his direct encounter with the Revolution was enough for him to be disillusioned. The Revolution took a bloody turn, innocent people lost their lives, power-mongering was rampant; it was, as if, one set of despots being replaced by another. Atmosphere in France reeked with opportunism, intrigue, greed and violence. Coleridge also saw this with pain. Both of them returned to England, to the soothing English nature, to their love for the native soil and their innate conservatism. Wordsworth felt that his stay in France was a 'waste of years'. Coleridge felt the same.

But these poets, despite their aversion to the later turns and final outbursts of the French Revolution, brought with them the essential ideas that had prompted the Revolution. One such idea was the concept of the dignity of the human soul. The Romantic poets of England now felt- and it was in sharp contradistinction to the 18th century attitude -that categorization of men must be made on moral standards and not on material ones. Economic prosperity or high social position does not make one good or great; it is the quality of the soul that matters and decides the category. With this feeling running strong in them, the poets felt that they had a moral role to perform. Wordsworth thought that he was a 'teacher', and Coleridge, like an oriental *guru* , took his readers to a visionary world to enter which 'willing suspension of disbelief' becomes a precondition.

Despite their love for peace, conservatism, pride in English tradition, in their imaginative flight, interest in the soul of nature, in the strange and the eerie, and in this humanitarian zeal, one perceives the impact of the essential ideas that lay behind the great upheaval of France.

So, influences came from various exotic sources; the native soil offered a rich tradition alongwith the impetus to break away from that tradition and to create a new one; and, above all, the genius of the poet made everything melt into a new 'concoction'; and, as a result, Coleridge's pen produced, among others, three poems of matchless merit, poems that could make any literature of the world proud of itself : *Kubla Khan, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel.*

Broad and basic qualities in Coleridge's poetry are the following:

a. Artistic treatment of the supernatural
b. Medievalism
c. Human nature and external nature: relationship in reciprocity
d. Creation of a dream-world authenticated by psychoanalysis
e. Imaginative flights
f. Lyricism

30.5 KUBLA KHAN

30.5.1 Introduction

Written in 1797. 'Kubla Khan' was first published, at the request of Lord Byron, in 1816. The book contained an 'introduction' which throws light on the circumstances that prompted the poet to write the poem:

'In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill-health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in 'Purchase' *Pilgrimage*: 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall: The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he had the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines: if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the

vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines or images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas, without the after restoration of the latter!'

So, Coleridge says that the poem is a 'fragment' and , that too, of a dream. He seems to be apologetic about it, as if trying to say that the readers should not take it very seriously, should not look for any deeper meaning or wider suggestion. An amoral boon of heightened imagination can cause such embarrassment in its creator. It is not a poem of statement or communication of an idea but one of imaginative exploration, of the discovery of the essentials of artistic creation and the relation between the natural and the supernatural. It is a poem equally powerful on its literal and symbolic levels obliterating with perfect ease the distinction between the common and the strange, the immediate and the remote, the worldly and the other -worldly.

30.5.2 Structure

Obviously there are three parts in the poem. In the 36- line first part the poet describes the pleasure palace of Kubla Khan, an emperor in ancient China. It has three stanzas of 10, 20 and 6 lines respectively. It is on the nature and quality of that art which reflects life and its strange, unintelligible complexities.

The second and the third parts are in one stanza, the second covering 5 lines and the third part the remaining 13 lines. In the second part the poet is referring to an Abyssinian singing girl whom he had seen in a 'vision'. It is about art that transcends life. The third and final part creates the picture of an inspired poet who can bring about a revolution in the world, a yogi who can change the meaning of life. Here is art that can change life and the world.

30.5.3 Substance

Kubla Khan, an ancient powerful king of China, once ordered the building of a majestic pleasure - house in Xanadu. Alph, the sacred river, ran through Xanadu, making it a fertile land. The course of the river was through dark and immeasurable caverns. And finally it fell into a dark Sea. The land, ten miles in perimetre,was fertile, and it was well fenced with walls and towers. It had bright gardens, winding streams and fragrant trees bearing sweet-smelling flowers. There were forests, as old as hills, in the midst of which there were green grassy patches of land, bright with sunshine.

The most remarkable thing here was a deep, mysterious chasm which went down the hill covered with cedar trees. It was a savage and desolate place like one we would imagine to be the haunt of a woman in mad love with a demon, coming here in the light of waning moon, waiting for him, though he has left her after having made love with her.

A powerful spring of water gushed forth from this gorge. Deep down, there was an incessant turmoil, as if the earth was breathing fast, and this panting of the earth resulted into a big throw of water which carried alongwith it big and small chunks of stone like rebounding hail or scattered grain when beaten by the thresher. The fountain that came out with these rocks and stones took the form of the sacred river. Alph, which followed a meandering path through wood and valley and reached the deep and dark caverns, and then fell with noise in the 'lifeless' ocean. And in this tumult Kubla Khan heard the voices of ancestors prophesying war (i.e. destruction of this idyllic place and palace).

The shadow of the dome of this pleasure house fell on the waves in the middle of the river. Many notes from the fountain and the caves resounded and got mixed. The orchestric effect was miraculous, and no less miraculous was the sight of the pleasure - dome that stood on caves of ice with domes flooded with sunshine.

The poet is reminded of a vision he once had; it was of an Abyssinian maid who played on her dulcimer and sang of Mount Abora. Her symphony and song were so excellent that if the poet could revive that in his poetry he would enjoy heavenly bliss and create art as charming as Kubla Khan's palace.

His music would, then, create the embodiment of the mystery in God's universe, the mystery of contraries woven together, the dichotomy of light and darkness, life and death, the 'sunny dome' and 'caves of ice'. Such great poetry brings about a great change in man's thought and attitude. Great poets are true revolutionaries. In their poetry lies the message of change and rebirth. Ordinary people are usually conservative. They dread changes. So they are afraid of great poets. They want to imprison them or to make them ineffectual. They try to fan up popular sentiments against them. They know that the great poets are nourished by heavenly bliss and benediction.

30.5.4 Interpretation

Apparently the poem is 'a fragment' or a series of fragments. First, it is about a palace the poet had heard of; and then it is about a singer the poet had dreamt of, and finally it is about a poet he had wistfully imagined of.

But it can never be called an incoherent poem. Rather it is one of the most balanced, methodical and concentrated poems in English literature. What is the poem about? Many critics ask. The simple answer is, it is about poetry. The later part of the poem is very clear in its purpose; the earlier part requires symbolic interpretation.

Kubla Khan desired a pleasure dome to be built in Xanadu. The abruptness with which proper names are introduced reminds us of John Donne; with the same unabashed deftness Coleridge takes us immediately into the heart of the matter. We are immediately transported to the strange and complex world of artistic creativity.

The word 'decree' is important. It includes desire, order, determination, 'Xanadu', the name, suggests remoteness, as if there is something exotic, mysterious, desire - evoking, thought -provoking in life. Alph flows through Xanadu, and Alph is a 'sacred' river. Its flow through the garden is the quest for the ultimate reality, 'the desire of the moth for the star' in art. It goes through mysterious caverns, and finally falls into a sunless sea. The 'sunless sea' is 'death' where life finally ends. A particular area with a perimetre of ten miles is fenced in with walls and towers and within that boundary there are gardens and small winding rivers. The trees in the gardens bear fragrant flowers. The forests are as old as the hills on which they have grown. It refers to the beauty and agelessness of art, its universal validity and charm.

But the most remarkable thing here is a deep, mysterious gorge that runs down the slope of a green hill across a wood of cedar trees. It is a wild and awe-inspiring place as holy and bewitched as the one haunted by a woman wandering about in search of her demon- lover in the dim light of a waning moon. The poet creates a supernatural world to suggest the inexplicable depths of art, areas where art ushers us in and we are terrified or benumbed. This 'chasm' may be the unfathomable 'unconscious' of the human mind, the reservoir of our memories, impressions and dreams. It is a 'savage place'. Beyond the reach of knowledge, beyond the territory science is capable or qualified to explore.

Deep down the chasm, a turmoil is going on ceaselessly, as if some thick liquid is boiling there. It is like the breathing of the earth: 'fast thick pants' suggest the sexual act. It is about the creative process of the earth. Water is ejected out of the earth's belly in the form of a fountain, and with it huge boulders come out like pattering hailstones or scattered grain when the thresher beats it under his flail to separate it from the chaff. The fountain takes the form of the sacred river. Alph. Pure poetry is something divine; its journey is from the deep recesses of the human mind to

heavenly bliss. It is born of the panting tumult (the creative urge), it flows through a fertile land (the creative process), it is sacred (purifying), and finally it is lost in oblivion (lifeless ocean). And it gives a vital message; that however lovely and divine art may be, it has the vulnerability of being destroyed because wars are inevitable. The ancestral voice is the voice of human experience. The strange dichotomy in man is that on the one hand he is capable of creating art 'par excellence' and on the other he fights like his primitive ancestor with his neighbour and fellowman and turns beastly, brutal and destructive. In intellect he can rise very high but in morality he can stoop lowest of the low. He has raised great monuments and he has also felled them. Wars have razed beautiful civilizations to dust.

The shadow of the dome of the pleasure palace fell on the waves of Alph and it covered half the breadth of the stream. The stream looked lovely, half of it breadth - wise, in shadow and half in light. In the sound of the waves of the river two notes mingles, the gurgling sound of the fountain, and the deep sombre note that came from the depth of the caves. The entire construction of the palace was a miracle of mixture of opposities. Its top was flooded with sunshine but its foundation lay in the caves of ice. Great art is like this: it embodies the essence of life, and life is a complex of contradictory experiences. In Kubla Khan's palace Coleridge finds 'ideal art'.

Then the poet moves to the second part of the poem. In the first few lines of the second half he refers to his dream in which he had the vision of an Abyssinian damsel playing on her dulcimer and singing of Mount Abora. And in the following portion of the second half the poet expresses his wish to recreate the perfection of the Abyssinian maid's song in his own poetry. Obviously, in the mind of the poet, both Kubla Khan's palace and the damsel's song are perfection of art. A poet who can achieve this perfection brings about a great change in society. In the poet's mind comes the picture of a saga-like, inspiring medieval singer of the Middle East on hearing whom people would come out of their stale customs and dead habits and be ushered into a new life, a new awareness. Such a poet with his 'flashing eyes' and 'floating hair' is like the pied piper of Hameline on hearing whose flute children would leave their homes to follow his path, however unknown and adventurous it might be. The poet wants to be one like him. Like his contemporaries Coleridge also wants to be a revolutionary, a preacher, a Messiah.

But he knows that the conservative people are afraid of any big change. They would like to continue in their life of 'pig satisfaction'. So they would try to restrict the dreamer from doing what he can. They would like to make him non-functional by using the magical method of weaving a circle around him thrice. They know that the poet is divinely inspired; he has taken Amrit that makes one immortal. Like Keats's nightingale he is 'not born for death'.

So in all the three pictures-Kubla Khan, the Abyssinian maid, and the visionary poet-Coleridge sees the periection of art. In the first picture it is art that best reflects life with all its complexities and contraditions; in the second picture it is art that transcends life and becomes celestial; and in the third picture it is art that changes life by infusing new ideas and new hopes in the mind of man. 'Kubla Khan,' therefore, is a poem about the nature and function of art. There is hardly anything that is fragmentary' about this poem. It is a well-knit, highly concentrated poem with a clear point of reference.

30.5.5 As a Romantic Poem

If there is truth in what C.H. Herford says about Romanticism ('Romanticism in an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility') then 'Kubla Khan' is one of the most romantic poems of English literature. Imaginative sensibility cannot develop perhaps any further. Xanadu is an imaginary place. Kubla Khan, though a historical character, has been treated imaginatively, as if he was, first and formost, a dreamer-architect. The 'romantic chasm', 'savage place', 'woman wailing', 'demon-lover'-they

are all creation of heightened imagination. And when 'Kubla heard from far, Ancestral voices prophesying war. it is romanticism at its very best.

The intricate pattern of the palace, the interweaving of the 'sunny dome and 'caves of ice', effortless blending of the natural and the supernatural; everything is in the romantic spirit, Kubla Khan's palace is just what the poet would have it in his dream. This wish- fulfillment is a romantic quality .

Remoteness in time and remoteness in space are traits of romanticism. Kubla Khan is not only an ancient king but in the poem he is also a mythical character belonging to hoary pre-history. Xanadu; the very sound of the word suggests remoteness, as do words like 'Lilliput' and 'Brobdingnag', 'Alph' is another such word, so is Mount Abora'. Proper names create exciting, half-lit domains in which the imagination of a writer gets space enough for free flight.

The use of the supernatural is another romantic trait in Coleridge. The 'woman wailing for her demon lover' is undoubtedly a supernatural image-

A savage place ! as holy and enchanted. As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted. By woman wailing for her demon- lover!

The kind of nature imagery, personification of nature that is found in the poem, is typical of romantic poetry. Nature seems to reflect human experience, wish and ambition.

Apparently disjointed pictures are harmonized with the thread of romantic imagination. The essential meaning emerges when we, with the help of our imagination. Overcome the apparent difficulty, break the upper crust of incoherence, and go deep into the poem to discover the harmony.

30.5.6 The Supernatural Element

Influenced by 18th century German poetry. Coleridge made extensive use of the supernatural in his poetry. His most successful poems are excellent poetry, some say, despite their supernatural element, and some say, for their supernatural element. Supernaturalism is so powerful an element in his poetry. And he has treated the supernatural in such a way as to make the reader feel that it is so very natural, very much a part of the total scheme of nature. Supernaturalism comes most powerfully in 'Christable' and 'The Rime' of the 'Ancient Mariner.' Not so much in 'Kublea Khan,' and yet it seems that it hovers on the entire poem: right from the mention of Xanadu to the magical weaving of a circle round the 'troubadour' to restrict him from his function of leading the world to a new profile and awareness. The description of the palace makes it an other -worldly construction; the Abyssinian maid singing of Mount Abora is a dream vision: and the poet with exuberant wildness seems to be someone who visits one in dreams and cannot be found in the world of man and nature.

But the very specific mention of something supernatural comes when the 'savage place' is described as 'holy and enchanted':

As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted. By woman wailing for her demon - lover !

Supernaturalism is not an embellishment in Coleridge's poetry; it is an organic part of the total texture. The natural and the supernatural are fused into one entity, and it is his power of imagination that does this miracle.

30.5.7 Glossary

(a) Xanadu : Name of a city. It corresponds to modern Shantung in China. Coleridge in his reading of Purchase found it called Xamadu or Xaindu. In

dreams names change and in this **poetical** dream a much better-sounding name has been found.

(b) Kubla Khan : The grandson of Chingiz Khan. He was the founder of the Moghul Dynasty in China. He built the city of Beijing and made it his capital. Marco Polo visited his court and from **his** accounts it is known that he was a lover of art and learning.

(c) Alph: An imaginary river, not traceable in geography. Coleridge read of Alpheus, a river often associated with the Nile. In his 'dream' the name is shortened.

(d) Demon-lover: A supernatural being, and the lover of a mortal woman. Generally to inspire awe about a desolate place and picture of a demon is created as Shakespeare refers to Setebos in 'The Tenpest.'

(e) Ancestral Voices: Voices as if coming from a distance, and warning and educating Kubla Khan. These are the voices of hundreds of years of experience and wisdom, voices of racial unconscious.

(f) Abyssinian Maid : An unmarried girl of Abyssinia. To a European of Coleridge's time Abyssinia, an African country, was a far-off land. The word 'Abyssinia' has also its musical effect.

(g) Mount Abora : The reading source of this word is Milton's Mount Amara in 'Paradise Lost,' Book IV. Here it stands for heavenly bliss.

(h) Holy dread: Dread for something which is divine, holy. Greatness causes awe. The common man is startled to see a great poet who is very uncommon, unique.

(i) Honey dew: Divine honey . It was believed that divine honey fell in small particles with the dew drops at night and if one could take a few drops of it one would turn immortal. Poetic inspiration is like that: it can make a man immortal.

(j) Milk of Paradise: It is also 'nectar'. Adam and Eve lived on this milk before they were banished from heaven to the mortal world.

30.5.8 Questions for further study

(a) Would it be correct to describe 'Kubla Khan' as a finished fragment? Give reasons for your answer.

(b) There is deep psychological realism behind Coleridge's use of the supernatural in his poetry. Consider the statement with reference to 'Kubla Khan.'

(c) Discuss 'Kubla Khan' as an allegorical poem.

(d) Do you think remoteness and strangeness constitute the essence of Coleridge's romanticism in 'Kubla Khan'?

(e) What picture of a poet is Coleridge's ideal?

(f) Kubla Khan's palace, as Coleridge describes it, best represents the strangeness, mystery and contradictions in life. Do you agree?

(g) Recreate an imaginary picture of the Abyssinian maid playing on her dulcimer in the form of a short story.

(h) Do you think it is impossible to enjoy Coleridge's poetry without 'willing suspension of disbelief'?

30.6 DEJECTION: AN ODE

30.6.1 What is an Ode?

J.A. Cuddon's definition of an ode is quite comprehensive: 'A lyric poem, usually of some length. The main features are an elaborate stanza-structure,' a marked formality and stateliness in tone and style (which make it ceremonious), and lofty sentiments and thoughts. In short, an ode is rather a grand poem; a full-dress poem. However, this said, we can distinguish two basic kinds; the public and the private. The public is used for ceremonial occasions, like funerals, birthdays, state events; the private often celebrates rather intense, personal and subjective occasions; it is inclined to be

meditative, reflective. Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is an example of the former; Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale', an example of the latter.'

30.6.2 Introduction to 'Dejection : an Ode'

The poem opens with a four-line quote from the 'Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence' first printed by Thomos Percy in his 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry' in 1765. The romantic poets of the nineteenth century were greatly influenced by Percy's collection. In the lines quoted by Coleridge, the speaker says that he has seen the old Moon holding the new Moon in her arms and he is frightened. He fears that a deadly storm might follow. Such strange forebodings take place in nature.

The relevance of these lines is that Coleridge wants such a storm to come in his life to arouse him from the spiritual slumber he is now in. The slumber is painful to the poet because it deprives him of his enjoyment of life and nature, and makes him unable to write poetry. At some stage of life Wordsworth also felt the same crisis and he has pictured it in his 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'. Shelley's invocation of the west wind is also in the same spirit. But unlike these two poets. Coleridge is very sentimental and that makes the immortality Ode and the West Wind Ode superior in quality to Coleridge's 'Dejection'.

'Dejection: an ode' is a verse letter written to a 'Lady'. There is doubt about the identity of this Lady, in all likelihood it was Sara Hutchinson. But in a letter to his friend Poole. Coleridge gave him the impression that the poem was addressed to him. Later he told some people that it was addressed to Wordsworth. It was originally addressed to Wordsworth and subsequently 'William' was replaced by 'Lady'. Coleridge, however, meant that it could be addressed to anybody with a happy disposition and contended mind. The poem is actually about the poet himself; it is a kind of confession. One confesses to one who is just the opposite type: a sinner to a holy priest, a guilty person to one who is pure of heart, and a sad man to one who is full of joy. It does not matter much whether it is addressed to Sara or Poole or Wordsworth: what matters is that it is a dejected Coleridge confessing his failings to one who is enviably joyous. Originally the poem had 340 lines. Later Coleridge cut it short to 139 lines and divided it into eight parts. The drastic revision was made by Coleridge the critic who expunged the 'too personal' details and retained only those of universal significance but the revision has also taken away much of its beauty. At times the truncation becomes uncomfortably perceptible. Humphry House believes that the revision has affected its merit, in its revised version, he maintains. 'It fails to achieve complete artistic unity, it is not a whole poem."

30.6.3 Substance

In the four-line quote from the 'Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence' there is the foreboding of a deadly storm. Such deadly storms, however destructive, bring about a change by causing a stir in the soil and making the plants sprout out of seeds. The poet feels that he is lying dormant and requires a new lease of poetic life. He wants to shake off his dullness and be creative once again.

The poet has melancholy of a subdued kind. It does not burst into any strong emotion. It is corroding his mind. He looks around and sees that everything in nature is excellently fair but he is not deeply touched by anything. He sees, but does not feel.

He has lost his genial spirits. The beauty of natural objects can no more lift from his heart the overwhelming burden of his grief. His attempt to gaze at the green light on the western horizon is futile. The real sources of passion and life are within one's heart and when they have dried up he cannot expect the external forces to animate him. Man receives from nature what he gives to nature. Nature lives in our life. Her joys and sorrows are taken from man. It appears to be happy or sad according to our

mood. The objects of nature are lifeless and cold. If we want to see some high or noble quality in nature, something better than the commonplace, we must send forth a light, a glory, and a radiance, to cover the natural objects, from our heart. Sweet and powerful voice must come out of human feelings to endow the sounds of nature with sweet charm.

The lady addressed to is pure of heart. So she is full of joy. Therefore to her nature is always festive. The poet finds a contrast between his mood and the mood of the Lady.

The poet remembers that in his earlier days he had this joy though the path of his life was rough. In those days he even used his misfortunes as material to weave visions of delight. Then hope grew around him like a creeper growing around a tree. Natural objects seemed to be his own, as if an extension of his own personality. But now his care-worn heart has no joy. He cares little for this loss of joy but his loss of imagination is the real loss. He was born with superb power of imagination but it is almost dead now. He tried to be patient, forgetting the loss he had suffered. So he tried to cultivate the study of metaphysics so that once again he could be 'natural man' who does not sigh or shed tears all the time. This was his plan. He practised it but it did not help him much. Tangled in metaphysics, he is still sad, unable to rouse imagination in him, unable to be creative, thoroughly incapacitated, and so melancholy.

The poet's mind is in the grip of sad thoughts born of the tragic reality of his life. He wants to get rid of them so that he can listen to the wind once again. In the raving wind he hears a prolonged scream of agony. It is a 'mad' scream, and the poet thinks that the wind should go to places where its howling will not sound so discordant as it does here - to bare crag, mountain tairn, to some blasted tree, some pine grove far away from any woodman's reach, or some witch-haunted lonely house. It is now causing havoc in this rainy month of April, creating the atmosphere of 'Devil's Christmas'. The tragic atmosphere is full of the painful sound of the wind. So the wind is like an actor, or even a poet. The sound made by the wind at the moment seems to be similar to the one made by a retreating army, its members groaning in pain and quivering in cold. The sound is silent and there is a brief pause. Then another sound is heard, less fearful, a bit pleasant even. It is like the tender story, written by Thomos Otway, of a little girl who lost her way on a desolate moor near her home. The little girl moaned low in grief and fear, and at times screamed loudly so that her mother might hear her and come to her rescue. The wind is imitating these sounds.

Care-worn the poet is sleepless, but he wants that his 'friend' may never suffer this sleeplessness. Sleep is a wonderful anodyne that heals all ailments. In the night the storm may blow and the stars may twinkle, but they cannot touch the person in profound sleep. The poet wishes her to rise in the morning, joyous and cheerful. He wants that the purity and freshness of her heart may spread all over nature. There is something divine in her heart and all things in nature should share that celestial element. The poet wants her to rejoice forever. May no 'dejection' be in her life.

30.6.4 Interpretation

In Shelley, it is dialectics: if winter comes spring cannot be far behind. In Coleridge it is erratic, incomprehensible, magical. If the old Moon is in the lap of the new Moon, a storm is in the offing. The thin crescent moon is bordering the whole of the moon which is visible in the form of a faint shadow, and it is a rare sight, and Coleridge, like the writer of the 'Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence' believes that it forebodes a sudden stir in nature in the form of a strong gale.

He himself is passing through a dull, monotonous phase. There is pain in his heart which is gradually corroding him. There is no violence in this pain, nothing spectacular about it. Dull, boring pain, like weevil, is eating into the vitals of his

personality. He wants a big shake, a storm, to rouse him to creativity. Shelley prays to the West Wind to make him its lyre, to lift him from the thorns of life where he has fallen: Coleridge does not have that strength for prayer. He also needs that kind of a lift, but he knows that it can come to him, if at all, through a miracle. There can be no 'reason' behind it, nor can prayer do anything, but strange things happen in nature, call it supernatural, and so a strange turn may come in his life also. Pain is corroding, self-defeating, unproductive. He needs joy which is elating, purposeful and creative.

Wordsworth also felt the same crisis.

'Dejection: an Ode' was written in 1802 and Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality' was written in 1806. Prior to the writing of these poems the two poets had identical feelings, long discussions, and apprehensions of a failure of their only talent. With Coleridge it was a deeper crisis. C.M. Bowra points out: "He knew that something catestrophic had happened to him, and he was afraid that his creative gifts were ruined. He put the blame on his lack of happiness but he knew that whatever the cause might be, the results were grave indeed." Wordsworth tried to overcome the feeling with the help of a broad philosophy, a larger view of life. Much of his 'Ode' is a reply to Coleridge's problem, and indirectly he helps himself too. Coleridge addresses Sara Hutchinson and says that she is full of joy, and so to her everything is blissful whereas he is full of sadness and therefore to him everything is dreary. (When Coleridge cut the poem short to half its original length, Sara Hutchinson became the 'Lady' : many people think that originally it was not Sara but Wordsworth whom the poet had addressed. Whatever it might have been, in its final form the address is to the 'Lady' . It makes the poem impersonal).

Wordsworth turns to Coleridge's six-year-old child Hartley and finds exuberance in him. The child's unbridled joy makes him philosophise about life and its growth through years. And he feels that through philosophical understanding one can rationalise the loss and regain confidence. Wordsworth never seems to be entirely broken down, but Coleridge is out and out a wreck. It is so, more because of Coleridge's idea that nature cannot be benign enough to extend a hand of comfort in our hours of need because she does not have any distinct entity: she is not a positive force. She is just what we make of her. If we are happy we see happiness everywhere in nature and that makes us all the more happy, and if we are sad we see sadness every-where in nature and that makes us gloomier. Coleridge comes close to Tagore's subjective philosophy:-

> 'T is the colour of my consciousness
> That makes the emerald green
> and the ruby red.
> I look up to the sky
> and light flashes
> in the east and the west.
> I see the rose and call "Beautiful".
> And it turns beautiful.
>
> (Tr. D. Ganguly)

But Tagore's 'I' is part of godhead, and Coleridge's 'we' is nothing more than the human mind and its reflexes. He knows that the Lady is full of joy which is given only to the pure of heart. When we are very close to nature this joy is born in our heart, and as it matures it gives birth to other joys and everything turns colourful and melodious. There was a time in Coleridge's life also when he experienced this celestial joy which enabled him to overcome all strain and suffering. His imagination was very active at that time, but thereafter each moment of dejection has weakened his imagination and enervated his soul. He turned to philosophy, tried to get some solace in broad generalizations about human fate. Metaphysical ideas have all the more destroyed his poetic faculties. The poet is unhappy that he has turned away

from existence to essence, from experience to philosophy, but he knows that it is all because of the waning of his imagination. Thus the poem, though autobiographical, takes up the basic issue of imagination-ratiotination relationship, something that Keats allegorically presents in 'Lamia,' Personal tragedy becomes a symbol of human destiny.

The poet tries to take a violent turn, away from the dull boring pain, to a tempest so that there be new equations and new developments. If pain is inevitable, wailing is better than sobbing.

Moods change as winds do. A strong gale is replaced by a tender wind, as tender as Otway's story of a small girl who had lost her mother in a lonely wood. The strong wind or the tender breeze, mind in great ruffle or in the grip of subdued, gnawing pain, it is the suffering of being uncreative. The entire poem is an implicit prayer for spontaneous joy- the kind of joy that the Lady has - because that joy alone can revive the lost poetic inspiration. Life's experiences become universal metaphor and the 'confessional' comes through significant nature imagery.

The 139-line poem is divided into eight uneven parts. It has a single theme-- dejection, need for love to overcome it and prayer to nature for a stormy shake up -- and it is elaborated in great length. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is also divided into parts: seven in all. But in that poem the narrative develops part by part, sequentially. Here it is one emotional situation. Division into parts gives the semblance, of course, of a mini epic. The situation is so vital for the poet, the involvement so great, the urgency so acute, that he feels that some amount of epic expanse is necessary to accommodate all.

30.6.5 As an autobiographical poem

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge felt almost simultaneously that their poetic powers were on the decline. This unnerved them because their total identity was in being poets. The loss of that identity would mean spiritual death to them. Decline in that 'one talent' made them apprehensive of 'death'. It caused fear. Wordsworth tried to overcome fear by turning to religio-philosophical explanation of the soul's journey, and to a large extent revived mental strength again. Coleridge also turned to philosophy but he thought that it was a poor compromise, and it deepend his frustration. C.M Bowra rightly points out: The problem which concerned both friends was that of poetical inspiration. Each felt that his hold on it was precarious and asked why this was so. Wordsworth faced the problem in the first three stanzas of the Ode and then abandoned it for at least two years: Coleridge, slower perhaps to start but quicker one he had started, told of his crisis in the poem which he afterwards called "Dejection".

The first full version of 'Dejection' was called 'Verses to Sara'. In this address to Sara Hutchinson there was reference to some private matters which was omitted later on. The final version was printed in the *Morning Post* on October 4th, Wordsworth's wedding day. Coleridge tried to sincerely tell his friends of the psychological crisis he was undergoing. Even before Wordsworth completed his Ode, Coleridge gave full and powerful expression of his feelings, and there was so much of appeal in it that it touched all, and Wordsworth could not escape involvement, and tried to console Coleridge, and in the process expounded a philosophy from which he also tried to derive psychological sustenance.

'Dejection' gives us an inkling of Coleridge's mind. The images are of night, darkness, howling storm, crescent Moon, Viper thought, dark dream. Devil's yule, lonesome wild, etc. It suggests despair of the worst kind. But there is one redeeming factor: his realization that joy is the most important thing in life, and it comes like a fountain from within. He is happy to see this redeeming joy in his 'Lady'. As the bliss of the Nightingale is the ideal Keats would try to reach and achieve and finally

realise that it is beyond his merit and share, so is the 'joy' of the 'Lady'. Coleridge's ideal, he knows, is impossible for him to achieve.

Despite the autobiographical element, despite the powerful personal note, Coleridge has succeeded in universalising his experience. 'Dejection' is about a human experience more than an experience of Coleridge himself. Perhaps every work of art has its origin and roots in some personal feelings and experience but the more an artist transcends it the more successful his art becomes. Coleridge has found proper 'objective correlative' for the emotion he intends to communicate.

30.6.6 As a Romantic Poem

Though the theme of 'Dejection: an Ode' is the failure of romantic imagination and subsequest grief on account of that, the poem is one of the finest examples of romantic poetry. In emotional depth, passionate feeling, intensity of experience and expression, selection of images, lyrical flow, structural arrangement etc. it is a representative poem of the Romantic Revival.

The Great Romantics, particularly Wordsworth and Coleridge, made their lives the subject matter of their poetry. The autobiographical element is very much pronounced in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. 'The Prelude' and 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'; among Coleridge's poems 'Dejection' is most overtly autobiographical. The tone of moralising is very prominent in Wordsworth; this romantic element of didacticism is not so prominent in Coleridge though 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' has a clear moral in it. The 'moral' is implicit in 'Dejection'. Joy redeems, and so one should try to overcome grief and be joyous.

The poem opens with a strange reference. The extract from a ballad, quoted at the very outset says that if the old Moon is in the lap of the new Moon a storm is in the offing. The whole of the moon is faintly visible because a bit of sunlight reached it being reflected from the earth. On its edge the crescent new moon looks like a bright girdle holding the old moon as if in its lap. The connection between this sight and a possible storm is entirely magical or superstitious. But the romantic imagination of the poet accepts it as something that inevitably happens.

Then the outwards storm becomes an inner gale; or, the poet wants that there should be a big stir in his mind so that he comes out of the lethargic barrenness which had deprived him of creativity. Almost imperceptibly the external storm becomes an inner fury and the poet wants to make use of it;

> Might now perhaps their wanted impulse give,
> Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

This relationship between the external and the internal, outer nature and inner nature, is a romantic belief.

The subjective approach that the external world is nothing more than what we think of it, that human imagination is the most important thing, is essentially romantic;

> O Lady! we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does Nature live:
> Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

The objective approach that the quality of the external world is independent of what man thinks of it is classical in spirit; Coleridge's view is just the opposite.

In 'Dejection' the theme of the poem is just the 'mood' of the poet, a mental state. This emphasis on a psychological condition, giving mind so much of importance, is a romantic trait. There is a contradiction, of course. The poet says that he has lost the

power to 'feel', but the entire poem is an expression of great anguish, intense feeling about a troubled mind. So it is an apprehension of loss, more than real loss. The poet wants that a storm should come to unsettle him from his dull, lethargic state, and make him more dynamic, even if it would mean devastation. But there is great dynamism in the poem as suggested by the music, the tone, and the imagery. In his love for the 'Lady' Coleridge expresses his gratitude to and love for all those human beings whose heart is full of love and joy. Personal appreciation turns into romantic humanism and appreciation of the basic qualities and values of life. Glorious and divine love weds us to Nature but it is 'undreamt of the sensual and the proud'. This hatred for, the sensual and the proud, is very much in the tradition of romantic poetry.

Coleridge, like Wordsworth in his 'Immortality Ode', wistfully looks back and remembers those days when things were much better, more glorious, and without any sense of deprivation.

This memory of the lost Paradise is romantic in spirit. The poet believes that as we move away from our paradisal state of innocence we keep on losing our spirit of imagination. We try to compensate the loss with our acquisition of knowledge but there can be no compensation of this vital thing, the creative imagination which enables us to discover the divine in nature.

In the seventh part of the poem the poet himself becomes almost delirious, a 'mad Lutanist' and in imagery free of all inhibitions tries to catch the essential spirit of the wind which can remove all 'viper thoughts'. The sudden outburst softens down in a 'tragic calm' at the end of the section where he refers to the 'tender lay' of a little child. This part of the poem reminds us of the great romantic poem of Shelley. 'Ode to the West Wind'. And the final section of an appreciation of the spiritual quality of the Lady whom the poet adores. The tone is now subdued, as if tempered by love, and this redemption in love, as in *The Ancient Mariner, i*s romantic. 'Dejection', then excels as a romantic poem.

30.6.7 Glossary

1. Bard: The poet who composed the Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence, describing the wrecking of Sir Patrick's ship off Aberdeenshire in a fierce storm.

   Weather-wise: wise about weather; one who can predict changes in weather.

4. That ply a busier trade; stronger and rougher (wind)
6. draft: blowing of air

   dull sobbing draft; moisturous soft wind making a sobbing sound rakes; touches lightly

7. Aeolian lute: A musical instrument played upon by the wind (Aeolus in ancient mythology was the god of wind).

Lines 6-7: 'In Romantic poetry the Aeolian lute is a standard symbol of the poet's mind worked upon by nature's inspiration (the wind), and the lute moanning to the "sobbing draft" conveys to the reader a mood of despair.' (Raymond Wilson).

9. The new moon winter bright: the new moon as bright as in winter.

9-12 The 'moon' is a favourite and significant image in Coleridge. It serves divers purposes, always at the service of a situation or a mood. C.M. Bowra, of course, holds that in Coleridge the moon is 'a symbol of the poet's power to transform the material world of imagination.'

13 I see the old moon in her lap: 'the faint outline of the whole moon is seen, lit by the sunshine which the earth reflects, so that it seems as if lying in the hollow of the crescent moon.'

14 Squally blast: strong, devastating wind.
17 raised me : inspired me.
18. sent my soul abroad : enkindled my imagination.
19. Wanted impulse : ordinary II excitement.
21 pang : intense pain
25. Lady : (possibly) Sara Hutchinson
26. Throstle : a singing bird
woo'd : persuaded
27. balmy and serene : calm and soothing.
29. peculiar tint of yellow green : the western say looks yellow-green : it is a rare sight, superbly beautiful.
36. cloudless, starless lake of blue ; the clear sky.
37. I see , not feel : This is the real problem with the poet. Once he used to feel, and now he can only see, the beauty of nature.

III

38. genial spirits: natural cheerfulness.
40. these : various, lovely, forms of nature.
41. smothering weight : crushing burden.
39-46 In the outward forms nature is very beautiful but the poet's grief, like a heavy burden, covers his heart and spirit-to-spirit contact with nature is not possible. Moreover, something has dried up within and this depletion causes his imagination lie dormant. Now with physical eyes he can see but he has no inner vision to see beyond the physical, to reach the heart of the matter and feel the life of things.

IV

47-49 Nature is beautiful because we attribute beauty to her, and when our imagination is defunct, emotional death sets in, and then nature is also dead for us.
51 that inanimate cold world; the world of nature full of lifeless objects.
52 The poor loveless ever-anxious crowd ; suffering humanity of teeming care-worn millions in whose life there is no love, no grace.
53-55 Nature's beauty is born in the human soul. It means it is human appreciation which makes something beautiful. Beauty is not an objective entity, independent of man. But the gifted one alone is capable of producing joy in heart and thereby makes nature beautiful and enjoys that beauty. To the rest there is neither joy nor beauty.

V

59. pure of heart : Sara whose heart is pure and innocent.
63. this beautiful and beauty making power: the inner creativity of the soul is beautiful in itself and also capable of making natural objects beautiful by casting a glow of imagination on them.
68. Wedding Nature to us : joining nature with human mind.
69. Joy : the creative principle.
75. suffusion : covering

VI

76. Dallied with distress : made light of sufferings
79. Fancy : imagination
81. Foliage : leaves
89. abstruse : metaphysical ; abstract
89-90 Metaphysics has deprived the poet of all natural joy
91. Sole resource : only pre-occupation.

92-93 Philosophical thinking was one of many pre-occupations earlier, but now it fills his total mind and has become a habit with him.

VII

94. viper thoughts : poisonous ideas.
95. reality's dark dream ; the dark world of nightmarish reality.
104. Mad Lutanist : the storm as furious as an impassioned musician playing on his lute with all fury.
106. Devil's yule : Christmas weather, with wild revelry fit for devils, Yule : the season of feast of Christmas. [The wind, in devillish madness, seems to be celebrating the revelry of Christmas].
107. timorous : quivering
108. Actor : one who can efficiently produce all kinds of tragic note.
120. Otway's self : The poet Otway himself. Thomas Otway (1652-85) was a playwright famous for *The Orphans* and *Venice Preserved.* A sentimental writer.

Tender lay: delicate story with tragic appeal.
[Originally the line read 'As William's self had made the tender lay'. It referred to William Wordsworth's tragic tale of Lucy Gray. Later, when differences with Wordsworth developed, Coleridge changed the name to Otway.]

VIII

127. Vigil : wakefulness
128. With wings of healing ; with soft invigorating touch.
129. But a mountain birth; 'This has been taken for an allusion to the mountains in travail which will bring forth - a mouse i.e, nothing of importance. Another explanation is ; May the storm be only local, confined to the mountains.' (Hollingworth).
136. eddying : moving in a circular motion.
135-36 May all things of the world receive life and joy from endless source of bliss.

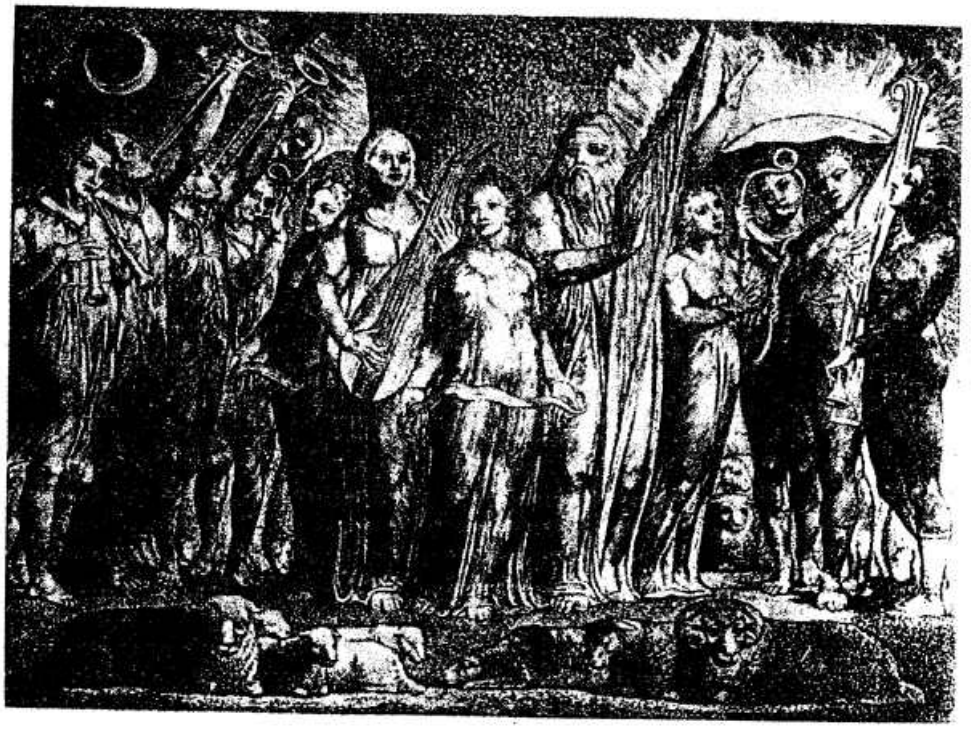
30.6.8 Possible Questions

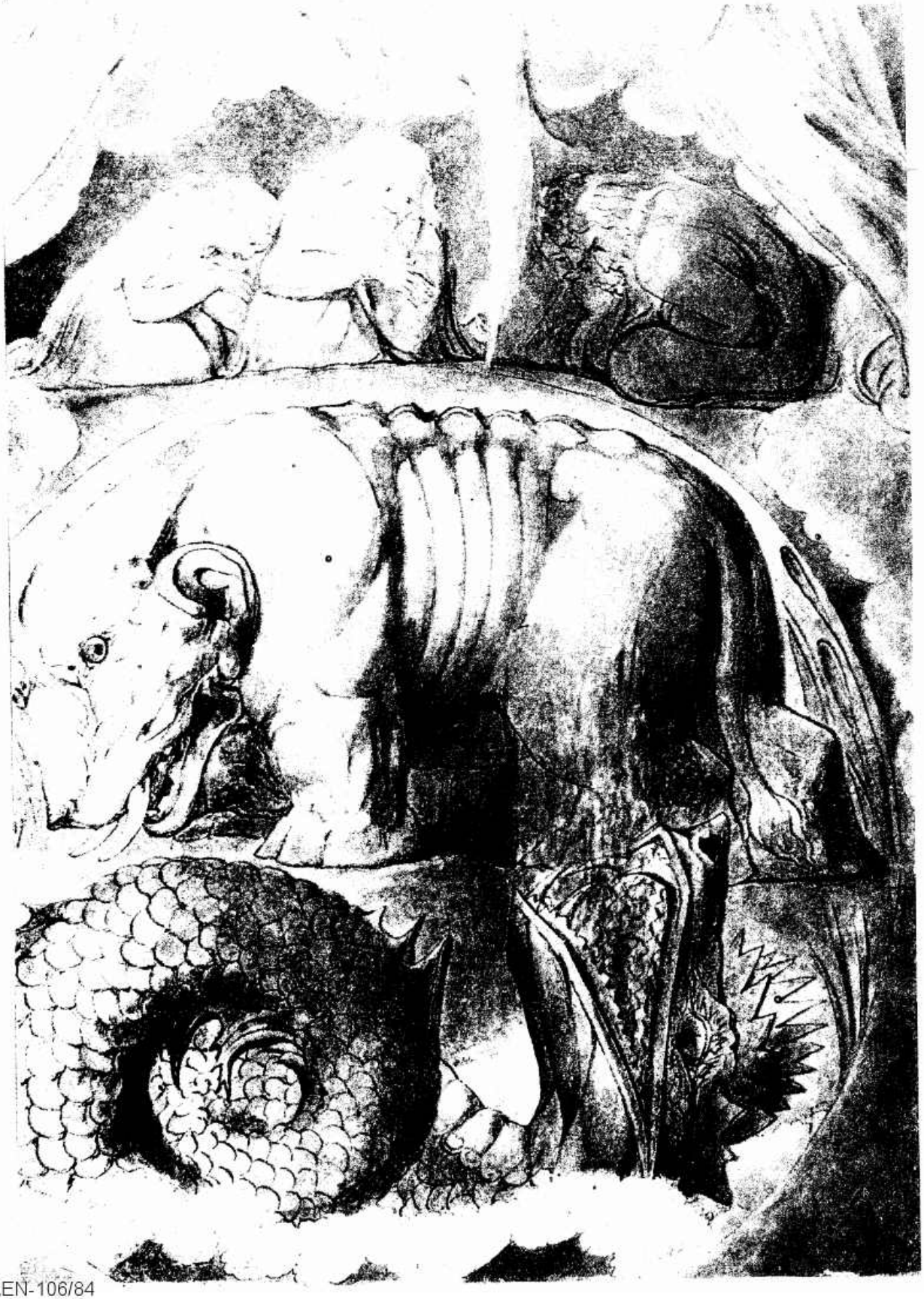
1. 'Dejection : an ode' is a dirge over the grave of creative imagination. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Trace the autobiographical element in 'Dejection; an Ode'.
3. Write a note on the elements of romanticism in 'Dejection: an Ode'.
4. Comment on the imagery of 'Dejection: an ode'.
5. Analyse the structure of 'Dejection : an Ode'.
6. Explain the following lines and state what light is thrown on Coleridge's philosophy of nature':
   O Lady! we receive but what we give,
   And in our life alone does Nature live.
7. What attitude to Nature does Coleridge express in the Ode to Dejection? In what ways does this attitude differ from that of Wordsworth and from his own earlier attitude?
8. In the 'Dejection' Ode the triumph of Coleridge as an artist consists not in transcending his neurotic state but in giving it an adequate verbal shape. Do you agree with this view?

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The Prelude: Or, Growth of a Poet's Mind
An Autobiographical Poem

Book First

Introduction - Childhood and School-Time

OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way, I breathe again!
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me,
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath or heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue , but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial powers, that, while they join
In breaking up a long-continued frost,
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours,-----
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers of harmonious verse!

Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a song

Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That would not be forgotten, and are here
Recorded: to the open fields I told
A prophecy: poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services.
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
To a green shady place, where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
And setting into gentler happiness.
'T was autumn, and a clear and placid day,
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west, a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known Vale, whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one cottage which methought I saw.
No picture of mere memory ever looked
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused,
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, not lacked
Aeolian visitations; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;
Why think of anything but present good?"
So, like a home-bound labourer, I pursued
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
Mild influence; not left in me one wish
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
To a servile yoke, What need of many words?

A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage,
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
In common things-- the endless store of things,
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
Found all about me in one neighbourhood--
The self -congratulation, and from morn
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.
But speedily an earnest longing rose
To brace myself to some determined aim,
Reading or thinking; either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
By timely interference: and therewith
Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
I might endue some airy phantasies
That had been floating loose about for years,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear
And mock me with a sky that ripens not.
Into a steady morning: if my mind,
Remembering the bold promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds
Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!
The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be neat him but his own
Unmangeable thought: his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such an arduous work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often cheering; for I neither seem
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
Of elements and Agents, Under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind:
Nor am I naked of external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice;
No little hand of yet remembered names
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
To summon back from lonesome banishment,

And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
Now living, of to live in future years.
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
Will settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;
More often turning to some gentle place
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,
Amid reposing knights by a river side
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
Whence inspiration for a song that winds
Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
To patient courage and unblemished truth,
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
Odin, the Father of a race by whom
Perished the Roman Empire: how the friends
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the fortunate Isles,
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish one by one,
Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that might not be withstood,
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold
And wasted down by glorious death that race
Of natural heroes: or I would record
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,
Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,
Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell,
How that one Frenchman, through continued force
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
Went single in his ministry across
The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed,
But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about
Withering the Oppressor: how Gustavus sought
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines;
How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name
Of Wallace, to be found, like a wild flower,
All over his dear Country; left the deeds
Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
To people the steep rocks and river banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty.
Sometimes it suits me better to invent
A tale from my own heart, more near akin

To my own passions and habitual thoughts;
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts
Before the very sun that brightens it,
Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish,
My last and favourite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;
But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust
That mellower years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus my days are past
In contradiction; with no skill to part
Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
From paramount impulse not to be withstood,
A timorous capacity, from prudence,
From circumspection, infinite delay.
Humility and modest awe, themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness; that now
Locks every function up in blank reserve,
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth,
Ah! Better far than this, to stray about
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.
This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so such wanting, in myself,
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back,

Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind

A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves

When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of owr terrace walk;
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
Of yellow ragwort; or, when rock and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
A naked savage, in the thunder shower.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted; - there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 't was my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation; - moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less, when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble, Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill-sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time

While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth - and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange, that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm. Like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light, But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When , from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head, I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape.
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me, with trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, -
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts

There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit to the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things --
With life and nature - purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart,
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid' the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us - for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six, - I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures, - the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare,
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star

That fled, and flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the grassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me - even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye, through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed, upon all forms, the characters
Of danger of desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth,
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?

Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours;
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line,
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
--Unfading recollections! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser;
Or, form the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours;
Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye

Delights and exultations of your own.
Eager and never weary we pursued
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
In square divisions parcelled out and all
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
In strife too humble to be named in verse;
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
Cherry or maple, sate in close array,
And to the combat, Loo or whist, led on
A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
But husbanded through many a long campaign.
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions; some, plebeian cards
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
Had dignified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates,
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds, - clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congreagation piteously akin!
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven;
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,
And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
Bu royal visages, Meanwhile abroad
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
And, interrupting oft that eager game,
From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself.
Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit,
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem in their simplicity to own
An intellectual charm; that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty

Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed,
Through every hair-breadth in that field of light,
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten; even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield; - the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, 't is true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
-And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory.

The scenes which were a witness of that joy
Remained in their substantial lineaments
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated, and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Thought yet the day was distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colours by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections,

I began My story early--not misled I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
Disowned by memory - are the breath of spring
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows;
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out

With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
May spur me no, in manhood now mature
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained; my mind
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me; - 't is a theme
Single and of determined bounds; and hence
I choose it rather at this time, than work
Of ampler and more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost:
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

APPENDIX 3

Kubla Khan
OR, A VISION IN A DREAM, A FRAGMENT

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But on! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
for he on honey-dew hath fed,
and drunk the milk of Paradise.

Dejection: An Ode
TEXT

Late, late yestreen the new Moon
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.
(Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence)

I

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence;
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould you cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Aeolian lute,
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-Moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming-on of rain and squally blast,
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear --
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze - and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That gave away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

III

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,

NOTES

NOTES

UTTAR PRADESH
RAJARSHI TANDON OPEN UNIVERSITY

MAEN-106
British Poetry

Block

2

THE SECOND GENERATION ROMANTIC POETS : SHELLEY & KEATS

Block VII Introduction

UNIT 31
The Volconic Voice of Hope : P.B. Shelley

Unit 32
A Study of *The Triumph of Life*

Unit 33
Keats : *Hyperion : A Fragment, I*

Unit 34
Keats : *Hyperion : A Fragment, II*

Unit 35
The Romantic Age : A Review

Appendices: Poems Prescribed for Study

I. *The Triumph of Life*, P.B. Shelley
II. *Hyperion: A Fragment*, John Keats

Supplementary Reading

1. 'Romanticism and Classicism', T.E. Hulme
2. 'John Dryden', T.S. Eliot
3. 'Pope', Lytton Strachey
4. 'William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy', W.B. Yeats
5. 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry', W.B. Yeats
6. 'Shelley's View of Poetry', Andrew C. Bradley
7. 'Lines Written in the Bay of Lerici', P.B. Shelley
8. Selected Letters of Keats

Errata – For units 22-24 and appendix I of Block V

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MAEN-106/103

BLOCK VII INTRODUCTION

This is the seventh block of the *British Poetry* course. You have by now come across terms such as renaissance, reformation, neo-classicism, enlightenment and also romanticism. Later in this course you will read about modernism and post-modernism. These terms have acquired some importance in the study of English literature. Students of literature generally read about them on the history of English literature course at the honours undergraduate level. Since this is the second block on Romantic poetry on this course I will take this opportunity to talk to you a little about romanticism. Did the poets - Burns, Blake, Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats - think of, or call, themselves Romantic poets? When and how Romanticism came to be used in British literature as a term describing a trend as well as a period ? You might be curious to know the answers to these questions. I will try to answer them for you.

The answer to the first question is short - no, they did not. Now I'll try to answer the second question. Wordsworth, whom you read in the previous block did not juxtapose `classical' and `romantic' in his famous preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), which you will read on MEG05. There is no indication that the new literature inaugurated by him and Coleridge could be called romantic. Sir Walter Scott in 1804 called *Sir Tristram* `the first classical English romance.' Next year John Foster's `On the Application of the Epithet Romantic' offers a commonplace discussion of the relationship between imagination and judgment without any suggestion of the literary application except in chivalrous romances.

The first English critic to make the distinction between classical and romantic was Coleridge, in his lectures in 1811 and for this he was indebted to the brothers Schlegel. Like them he also contrasted the organic from mechanical, the painterly from sculpturesque. This was one of the late but significant outcomes of his ten-month stay in Germany in 1798-99, partly in the company of the Wordsworths. They together studied Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804), J.F.C. von Schiller (1759-1805), and F.W.J. von Schelling (1775-1854). On his return to England Coleridge even translated Schiller's verse play *Wallenstein*.

Coleridge maintained his interest in contemporary German writings and in one of his letters (of 12 December, 1811 in Coleridge's *Unpublished Letters*, ed. Earl L. Griggs, London, 1932) he admits to have received a copy of Schlegel's *Lectures*. The brothers August Wilhelm (1767-1845) and Friedrich von Schlegel (1702-1829) had for the first time in European literature juxtaposed the terms classical and romantic though as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) told Johann Eckermann, his secretary, in 1830 (March 12) it was Schiller who had before them invented the distinction between 'naive and sentimental' and discussed them in his famous essays, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) and *On Naive and Reflective Poetry* (1795-96).

The brothers Schlegel had together founded the short-lived periodical *Das Athenaüm* (1798-1800) which has been called the manifesto of German romanticism. The elder brother, August Wilhelm had translated Shakespeare into German with the help of his wife and others and his lectures *Über dramatische kunst und Literatur* (1809-11) - in John Black's English translation *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1815)- acquired a European reputation and was a definite influence on Coleridge's own views on Shakespeare. These lectures have been called the `Message of German Romanticism to Europe.'

August Whilhelm's younger brother Friedrich, though no less interested in contemporary European literature, was one of the pioneers of Sanskrit studies in Europe and his *Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808) is still read with interest. John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), editor of *The Quarterly Review* and biographer

of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott (his father-in-law) translated one of Friedrich Schlegel's studies of the history of literature as *Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern* (1818). One of Friedrich Schlegel's *Fragmente* published in *Das Athenaüm* gives an interesting description of Romantic poetry. He wrote:

> Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry. It is not destined merely to bring together again all the different kinds of poetry and to put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. Its tendency is, and indeed must be, now to combine poetry with prose, inventive genius with criticism, the poetry of art with the poetry of nature, now to weld them together, to make poetry living and social, and life and society poetical, to turn wit into poetry, and to replenish and saturate the forms of art with pure material of every sort, and to give them life by means of flights of humour. It embraces everything so long as it is poetical - from the greatest system of art, which again contains several systems in itself, to the sight, the kiss, which the poetizing child breathes in artless song. It can so lose itself in what it represents that one might think its one and only object was to express the character of poetical individuals of every kind; and yet there is no other form which is so fitted to express completely the spirit of its author - so that many authors who only intend to write a romance have unawares represented themselves. It alone can become like the epic a mirror of the whole world which surrounds it, a picture of the period. And yet, free from all real and ideal interest, it is able above all to hover on the wings of poetical reflection half-way between the thing represented and the one representing it, always reinforcing this reflection and as if multiplying it in an endless series of mirrors ...

In the above passage we find some of the earliest remarks on Romantic poetry. Romantic poetry, according to F. Schlegel was progressive and universal in character, meant to serve not only the upper classses of the society with a knowledge of the classics but all sections of it. It was not just `poetry of art' but in combination with the `poetry of nature'. Poetry was to become a voice of the people and aimed at inculcating a poetical apprehension of life in society. Romantic poetry is the poetry not of the cultivated artist but that of a child, artless and unassuming. While being a `mirror of the whole world' and a portrait of its age, a work of art was `fitted to express completely the spirit of its author.' In these senses we are still in the Romantic age.

Friedrich Schlegel thought that Romantic poetry could not be `exhausted by any theory'. It is `still in the state of growth'. Schlegel looked at Romantic poetry on the analogy of social intercourse, friendship and love :

> Romantic poetry is among the arts what wit is in philosophy, and what society, intercourse, friendship, and love are in life. Other forms of poetry are finished and can now be completely analysed. The romantic form is stll in the state of growth; indeed, that is its essential nature, that it for ever grows and can never be completed. It cannot be exhausted by any theory, and only prophetic criticism could venture to give the characteristics of its ideal. It alone is without end, as it alone is free, and acknowledges as its first law that the will of the poet admits of no law superior to itself. The romantic form of poetry is the only one which is more than form and

in a manner the art of poetry itself, for in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic.

The Romantic poet submits before no law except those given by his conscience and of course, the limited possibilities of the medium. Schlegel called this unbridgeable gap between the ideal artistic goal of the poet and his / her failure to attain it, **Romantic Irony.**

With writers such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1830) and Goethe, Schiller and Schelling, the brothers Schlegel and Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763-1825), Novalis (1772-1801) and Friedrich Holderlin (1770-1843), Henrich Heine (1797-1856) and Eduard Mörike (1804-75) Germany had become, in literary production for the time being, the foremost nation in Europe. Madame de Staël (1766-1817) came from France to Germany and she later became responsible, in a large measure, for introducing the idea of `romanticism' to England and America. Her highly influential work on Germany *De l' Allemagne* (1813) was published in London. It, however, earned her her exile from an irate Napoleon.

France was busy from 1789 to 1799 with its Revolution and subsequent to that with Napoleon and his wars which ended with his downfall in 1815. Thus Madame de Staël and the novelist Francois-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) who also lived in exile in England from 1793-1800, became the early exponents of Romanticism in French literature which later found expression in the novels and poems of Victor Hugo (1802-85), the central figure of the Romantic movement in France.

In this block you will read two unfinished poems - *TheTriumph of Life* (written 1822, published 1824) and the *Hyperion: a fragment* (written 1818-19, published 1820) by Shelley and Keats respectively. The last unit is a sort of review exercise. You may read either units 31 and 32 first or units 33 and 34. However, you must read both units of either set consecutively. The last unit, i.e. 35 may be read as a revision exercise. It will give you an overview of the whole Romantic period.

Although the seventh, this is the eighth block of the *British Poetry* course to be printed. The eighth and tenth blocks were printed just before the present one. So it appears appropriate to point out here that the third cover pages of the two blocks got interchanged. You may have noticed that the quotations on this page generally relate to the poetry of that age. Have you paid attention to them ? You should.

The quotations on the third cover-page of this block are from the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume (1711-76), the English moralist and lexicographer Samuel Johnson (1709-'84), Shelley and Keats. Compare the definitions and discuss them with your friends, if you can.

We have anthologised articles on `Romanticism and Classicism' by T.E.Hulme (1883-1917) who decried Romanticism as `split religion', Dryden, Pope, Blake and Shelley. We have also included a selection of Keats's letters. You would find material on Wordsworth, Coleridge and also Shelley in the third block of the *Literary Criticism and Theory* (MEG05) course. It would be a good idea to read the critical writings by the three poets, and the units on those essays, after you have read their poems prescribed for you on this course. In order that you do not get swamped by critical material and to use space economically we have not provided you with any article on Wordsworth and Coleridge in this block.

Now, would you like to pick up your pen and go to page 78 of block IX of this course and change "W.B.Yeat's" to "W.B.Yeats's". Then introduce an "s" at the eend of

"Yeat" misprinted on the top right-hand corners of pages 119, 121, and 123 of block X. You may incoporate the corrections in units 22, 23 and 24 with the help of the errata printed in this block.

The frontispiece of this block is once again from Turner. It shows fishermen's children sailing paper boats on the river. You must have noticed the brilliant yellow colour representing the sweep of light. (Shelley and Keats though profoundly different present intensity of experience in their poetry unlike the poets discussed in block six; hence my choice.) Turner was characterised as `a virtuoso of the sublime'. However, this painting does not seem to merit Hazlitt's opprobrium `pictures of nothing and very like' . However, if you look at *The Slave Ship* printed elsewhere in this block and *Rain, Steam and Speed – the Great Western Railway* in the next you will get an impression that Turner's solid forms dissolve in light - somewhat like Shelley's skylark. Although this tendency of his later painting earned him a fool's reputation in his own country it was admired by the Impressionists such as Monet.

We have also printed a few specimens of John Constable's (1776-1837) art in this block. They are *Hampstead Heath* (1821), *Dedham Mill* (1819) and the The *Haywain* (1821). Did you notice the sky in the paintings of Constable? How effectively has he shown the play of wind, sunlight and clouds over his spacious landscapes! The sky remained to Constable `the key note, standard scale, and the chief organ of sentiment'. Constable and Turner, the leading Romantic painters of England, did in painting what Wordsworth and Shelley respectively did in poetry. Would you agree ?



JOHN CONSTABLE HAMPSTEAD HEATH. 1821.
Oil sketch 10 x 12" (25.3 x 30.5 cm).
City Art Galleries, Manchester, England



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JOHN CONSTABLE 1776 - 1837
Dedham Mill, ca 1819 Victoria and Albert Museum, London

UNIT 31 THE POET OF VOLCANIC HOPE : P. B. SHELLEY

Structure

31.0 Objectives
31.1 Introduction
31.2 Shelley: A brief sketch of his life
- 31.2.1 Birth and childhood
- 31.2.2 Education at Syon House Academy, Eton and Oxford
- 31.2.3 Life with Harriet Westbrook
- 31.2.4 Early friendship and later marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin
- 31.2.5 Migration to Italy
- 31.2.6 The last days

31.3 Let's sum up
31.4 Answers to exercises
31.5 Further reading

31.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are to enable you,

a) to appreciate the main events in Shelley's life, his ideas and character;
b) to acquire a background for his major works;
c) to appreciate the influence of certain persons and historical events on Shelley's life; and
d) to prepare yourself for a study of Shelley's poetry in the next unit.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

'I believe' wrote Herbert Read in his essay `In Defence of Shelley', `that the knowledge which comes from a complete understanding of a poet's personality is the best basis for the appreciation of his poetry.' This view may not be universally true. Many people appreciate Homer, Valmiki, Vyasa, Tulsi and Aurobindo without a knowledge of their lives. The same can perhaps be said even about the poetries of William Blake and T.S.Eliot but can we be sure that a knowledge of their lives would not enrich our appreciation not only of the poetries of Blake and Eliot but also of the epic poets of the East and West.So much for the relevance of biography to the study of poetry in general.

The case of Wordsworth and even more Shelley is different.Shelley's poetry is, as C.S. Lewis pointed out, `to an unsual degree, entangled in political thought, and on a political thought now generally unpopular.' Lewis went on :

> His belief in the natural perfectibility of man justly strikes the Christain reader as foolishness; while, on the other hand, the sort of perfection he has in view is too ideal for dialectical materialists. His writings are too generous for our cynics; his life is too loose for our `humanist' censors.

This unit will help you discover Shelley's unorthodox ideas and still more his so called `loose' life. It will still more than that, force you to answer certain fundamental

questions about a good life which may not have puzzled you before. For, you cannot differ from I.A. Richards who wrote :

> ... the fact that a critic, however eminent, does not understand something, if a point at all, is a point against the critic, not against the poet.

And Richards continues,

> As with his peers, when we judge Shelley, it is not Shelley who is judged.

So in reading Shelley you have to be watchful, as much of the poet as yourself, for your judgment on Shelley would at the same time be an observation on yourself, your beliefs, your attitudes.

Some of you may not read the whole of 31.2 at one go. You may read it sub-section by sub-section but read them consecutively. Some of you may like to read 31.2 a couple of times. Do as you consider proper. Answer the questions at the end of 31.2 after you have given yourself some time to consider the whole story in your mind once again.

In case you want to read the next unit on *The Triumph of Life* first you could do so but after having read it you may like to come back to this unit on Shelley's life. Hope you would enjoy reading about Shelley now and later his poem prescribed for you, in the next unit.

31.2 SHELLEY : A BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

Shelley has remained a poet of contradictions of gargantuan proportions in so far as his influence on the intelligentsia is concerned. To Eliot, Shelley was humourless and pedantic. However, his friends found him `full of life and fun' . Some considered Shelley a softie, others, thought of him as a villain. While D.H. Lawrence (1888-1935) took him to be `transcendentally male', to Charles Kingsley (1819-75) he was `utterly womanish'. While some early twentieth century critics thought that there was `no brain work' in Shelley's poetry and that it was `antipathetic to the play of the critical mind' others found him to have been `the solitary intellectual'. `His ideas' wrote Graham Hough in the fifties, `come from his own mental processes, from study, from visions of the future or dreams of the past, not from the world around him...' While the Victorians looked upon him as `the Divine' poet and found his lyrics `absolutely perfect' his contemporary reviewers had called his work a `dish of carrion', `drivelling prose run mad' and `the production of a fiend, ... calculated for the entertainment of devils in hell' . In fact a lot of the sympathy for or antipathy towards Shelley the poet is shaped by one's prejudice in favour of or against Shelley the man. For Shelley, although married twice, disapproved of matrimony, as well as royalty, non-vegetarian diet and religion. Although, like Byron, he came from a conservative background, like him Shelley was a republican, if not an anarchist.

31.2.1 Birth and childhood

Shelley shares with Byron the distinction of having been born in an old aristocratic family. Shelley's ancestors had been Sussex aristocrats since early in the seventeenth century. His grandfather Sir Bysshe Shelley made himself the richest man in Horsham, Sussex. However, his father Timothy Shelley was a conventional Whig M.P. (later baronet) who took his views from the Duke of Norfolk. The poet, born on 4 August, 1792, was his and Elizabeth (Pilford) Shelley's eldest child and thus in line for the baronetcy.



P.B. Shelley

Percy had four younger sisters and a baby brother. He loved to play with them and take them on his knees and tell stories out of books on which his own imagination had been fed. He took them to romp around in the fields, often dropping them across inconvenient fences. Once when he dropped his brother on a strawberry bed he called him a 'bad Bit' . On the northeast of Shelley's house was St. Bernard's Wood inhabited by an old dragon and a headless spectre and in the Warnham Pond lived a great tortoise. These and a snake that lived in the garden which was somehow killed by the gardener's scythe and an alchemist that lived in the garret were his constant subjects for childhood preoccupations. Young Shelley once dressed his sisters as fiends and led them in the garden at night with a fire stove flaming with chemicals. This interest grew as he learnt more about chemistry and electricity.

31.2.2 Education at Sion House Academy, Eton and Oxford

From the age of six until ten he learned Latin and Greek from Rev. Evan Edwards, a Welsh parson. In 1802 he went to Syon House Academy at Isleworth, near London. It was here that the scenes of the prison house began to close upon the growing boy Medwin, his cousin and schoolfellow described Syon House 'a perfect hell' to Shelley where he developed the habit of sleepwalking for which he was punished.

The two years at Syon House, however, was only a foretaste of Eton, surrounded and persecuted as he was by adolescent boys and unsympathetic, hidebound masters. Shelley was sensitive, and deeply imaginative. He disliked sports and thus became, in the eyes of his fellows, 'Mad Shelley' and his existence at Eton was a little hell.

However, Eton and Syon House were visited by an amateur travelling lecturer called Adam Walker. We can gain an idea of his lectures from his *A System of Familiar Philosophy* (1799), a book with more than 500 quarto pages and hundreds of illustrations. Walker Exhibited his Orrery (a clockwork model of the planetary system, named thus after Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery) to the children. The objects, however, that fascinated Shelley the most were chemistry and electricity, perhaps owing to the possibility of noisy and spectacular experiments that revealed before him the secrets of nature.

Shelley went up to University College, Oxford in the autumn of 1810. However, by that time he had had *Zastrozzi* (1810); and *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* (with his beloved sister Elizabeth) published. *St. Irvyne or The Rosicrucian* a Gothic romance like *Zastrozzi* was published in 1811. Meanwhile the Oxford printers published his collection of poems 'The Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson'. The poem, *The Wandering Jew,* after it was returned by Campbell with discouragement was sent to Ballantyne and Co. of Edinburgh . However, the events moved too swiftly to admit of the Edinburgh company issuing the poem.

On the very first evening at Oxford in October 1810 Shelley met another beginner called Thomas Jefferson Hogg (1792-1862) from Norton, Yorkshire. The two of them instantly took such liking for one another that they spent their days and evenings together almost to the complete exclusion of all others. They were inevitably seen as oddities. The two friends, however, were quite unlike one another. Hogg was self-centered and worldly, self-confident and gross in nature. Shelley was one spark of the ideal in his life. Yet Hogg was devoted to him and they collaborated in writing *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811).

Having published the pamphlet they sent copies of it to the masters of the colleges and the bishops. When Shelley was called by the master and two/three of the Fellows of University College to answer queries regarding it he refused to reply and was 'contumacious'. So, Shelley was expelled from the university. When Hogg heard about it he too claimed a hand in the work and was expelled likewise.

The two friends left Oxford for London on March 26, 1811. Hogg, persuaded by his father, left Shelley. But the Medwins and Groves helped Shelley during the six weeks he had to spend in London. As Timothy Shelley would have nothing to do with a wayward and obdurate son Percy's sisters sent him their pocket-money through a friend called Harriet Westbrook. Harriet was the daughter of a retired tavern-keeper in London. Shelley, though interested in his 'little friend', as he called her, was not touched by her. However, in the meantime Harriet was reproached at school for being friendly with a youth of Shelley's principles and suffered minor annoyances.

By the middle of May 1811 a settlement was reached between Shelley and his father in which his maternal uncle Captain Pilford, who lived near Field Place and was always helpful to Shelley, played an important part. By that arrangment Shelley was to get an alllowance of £ 200 a year and his entire freedom. Shelley was shocked that his father cared more for social conventions and had no real personal convictions. In July Shelley went to Wales, to visit his cousins, the Groves, where he briefly though violently fell ill. He recovered and was delighted with the mountain scenery, then new to him. During his walks here he once met a beggar whom he gave something and followed him a mile in order to enter into a conversation with him. Finally the beggar told him, 'I see by your dress that you are a rich man. They have injured me and mine a million times. You appear to me well intentioned, but I have no security of it while you live in such a house as that, or wear such clothes as those. It would be charity to quit me.' The incident evidently created a lasting impression on Shelley's mind.

On his last visit to Field Place he had met one Miss Hitchner, school-teacher of 29, who held a high place in his esteem and he began his long correspondence with her on metaphysics and education. The Westbrooks were also in Wales and Harriet continued to write to Shelley about her despondence, unhappiness at home, even contemplated suicide and capped it all with an expression of a desire for Shelley's protection. 'Her letters' Shelley wrote to Miss Hitchner,' became more and more gloomy. At length one assumed a tone of such despair as induced me to leave Wales precipitately. I arrived in London. I was shocked at observing the alteration in her looks. Little did I divine its cause. She had become violently attached to me, and feared that I should not return her attachment. Prejudice made the confession painful.

It was impossible to avoid being much affected; I promised to unite my fate to hers.' It was obvious that there was no love on Shelley's side and he confessed as much to Hogg whose advice he sought regarding their marriage. The two friends had learned from Godwin that the institution of marriage was irrational. In these circumstances Shelley married Harriet on the 28th or 29th of August 1811 in Edinburgh. Harriet was 16 and Shelley 18 years of age. Hogg joined them on their holiday and with him the Shelleys came to York where he was studying law. Here Hogg tried to seduce Harriet who told this to Shelley and the newly wedded couple immediately fled the city.

31.2.3 Life with Harriet Westbrook

For long Shelley had cherished a wish to meet and be with the Lake Poets - Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey. So he took a cottage at Keswick and was invited by the Duke of Norfolk to Greystoke. The duke had earlier interceded on his behalf with Timothy Shelley. Now Shelley was penniless and `in danger of every day being deprived of the necessaries of life.' The condition became less precarious when in December Mr Westbrook allowed Harriet £ 200 a year and a month later Shelley's father made an equal allowance to him to prevent `his cheating strangers.' At Greystoke Shelley had met Calvert who introduced him to Robert Southey (1774-1843). Shelley had always admired Southey and his *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) had long been his favourite. Shelley was to model his *Queen Mab* (1813) after Milton and *Thalaba* . `Here is a man at Keswick', wrote Southey, `who acts upon me as my own ghost would do; he is just what I was in 1794.' Southey also contributed to Shelley's domestic comfort in material ways. However, Shelley was somewhat disappointed with Southey's platitudes upon morality, faith and the impracticality of the youth.

It was at Keswick that occurred one of the first of personal assaults on Shelley. On 19 January 1812, at around seven in the evening there was some noise at Shelley's door. When he went to see what was happening he was struck to the ground and was stunned by a blow. It was understood that his chemical experiments had created suspicion among the people against him.

Earlier on on the third of the same month he had written to William Godwin whose *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* Shelley had read with the highest regard and veneration for the intellectual powers of the author. On the 16th he sent him a sketch of his own life.

While at Keswick Shelley's thoughts turned to Ireland and he contemplated going there for the sake of catholic emancipation. He wrote his, `Address to the Irish People' and early in February set off for Dublin in spite of the dissuasion of Calvert and Godwin.

Fifteen hundred copies of Shelley's `Address' were printed which he distributed freely in Dublin. He also wrote `Proposals for an Association' which was published on March 2, 1812. Shelley had been introduced to Curran and through him he made himself known to the leaders. On the 28th of February he joined O`Connell in addressing the people and spoke for an hour. Shelley was greeted both with hisses and applause - applause for bringing out the wrongs of Ireland, hisses for his plea for religious toleration. In Dublin Shelley also involved himself in acts of practical philanthropy. However, Godwin dussuaded him from his activities. `Shelley' Godwin wrote him, `you are preparing a scene of blood.'

Shelley left Ireland on 4 April 1812 and settled ten days later at Nantgwilt near Cwm Elan, the seat of his cousins, the Groves. Here he meet T.L. Peacock (1785-1866) for the first time. Peacock introduced him to his London publisher Hookham and inculcated in Shelley a love for the Greek and Latin classics.

In June Shelley migrated to Lynmouth in Devon. Eaton, who had published Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* in a periodical had been sentenced for doing so and Shelley wrote his 'Letter to Lord Ellenborough' in the publisher's defence. Shelley went a little futher. He wrote a new satirical poem 'The Devil's Walk' and put it and the 'Letter' in bottles and baloons and set them adrift by sea and air. This hurt his servant Dan Healy who had followed him from Ireland. He was imprisoned, as he failed to pay two hundred pounds, the fine imposed on him for posting Shelley's 'Declarations' on the walls of Barnstable. Shelley could net pay the fine but provided the prisoner with fifteen shillings a week to make his confinement comfortable. Another result of the publication of the 'Declaration of Rights' was that the government put Shelley under surveillance and his activities began to be watched by a spy called Leeson.

It is at Lynmouth that *Queen Mab* is first heard of. Shelley's first major poem to be published, *Queen Mab* was conceived in December 1811 and composed between June 1812 and February 19, 1813, when Shelley wrote to his publisher friend that it was 'finished & transcribed.' However, the notes were then still in progress. They are seventeen remarkable pieces - often considered better than the poem - 'against Jesus Christ, & the Bishops, & Marriage, & the Devil Knows What' , as he himself later put it. The work was extremely popular not only among the working class radicals, and was called the Chartists' Bible, but later also with Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). Shelley had asked Hookham in March 1813 to publish his poem 'on fine paper & so as to catch the aristocrats: They will not read it but their daughters may.'

In September 1812 Shelley moved to Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc, in Wales. Here once again he associated himself with one Mr. Maddock who was trying to reclaim some waste land by raising an embankment. Shelley contributed hundred pounds to the project and in October went to London in an effort to gain more subscribers for the undertaking. Here he met Godwin frequently and through him the Newtons, of vegetarian fame, as he had adopted vegetarianism while in Dublin.

Back in London Shelly renewed his friendship with his Oxford friend Hogg who has left an unforgettable picture of the poet's life in these years. Perhaps the most humorous in his account is his portrait of the Field Place school teacher Miss Hitchner who owing to his long expressed wish joined Shelley's household in Wales and the ever present Eliza whom Hogg nicknamed 'Brown Demon' and 'Black Demon' respectively . Miss Hitchner was finally got rid of and an allowance paid to set off the loss due to her giving up her school teaching.

Shelley briefly visited Wales (November 13, 1812 Tanyralt) and Dublin (March 21 , 1813) but was back in London where Harriet gave birth to their daughter Ianthe (June 1813) . Shelley was extremely fond of her and would walk up and down the room with it in his arms for a long time. Peacock further tells us that Shelley sang a Imonotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repitition of a word of his own making '. This word was Yáhmani, Yáhmani. However, Peacock, goes on :

> The child has a wet nurse, whom he did not like, and was much looked after by his wife's sister, whom he intensely disliked.

Peacock thought that if Harriet 'had nursed her own child, and if this sister had not lived with them, the link of their married love would not have been so readily broken.'

On March 26, Shelley remarried Harriet at St. George's Church, London in order to ensure the validity of the Scottish marriage and the rights of his children. Next month Harriet left him. She was unhappy about Shelley's wandering life, friends and activities. Shelley's ' Stanza April 1814' and 'To Harriet , May 1814' show how much he missed her. In July she was discovered to have been living with Eliza, her sister, at

Bath. It is possible that this protracted absence of Harriet became the immediate cause of the break in their marriage.

31.2.4 Early friendship and later marriage with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Shelley met Mary (1797-1851), daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) and William Godwin (1756-1836), on May 5 or 6, 1814. She had just returned to London after a long stay in Scotland. The two instantly fell in love. Peacock, who was a witness to Shelley's life at this time describes the state of agitation he found him in:

> Between his old feeling toward Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of mind suffering like a little kingdom the nature of an insurrection'.



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Peacock further described his looks and state of mind,

> His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum and said, ` I never part from this ' He added, `I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles :
>
> *Man's happiest lot is not to be*
> *And when we tread life's thorny steep*
> *Most blest are they who earliest free*
> *Descend to death's eternal sleep.*

It is probable that Mary pursuaded Shelley to undertake a trip to the continent in order to save his life and they left England on 28 July 1814. Jane 'Claire' Clairmont (1798-1879), daughter of William Godwin and his second wife Mary Clairement joined them on the trip. From Troyes, France, Shelley wrote a letter to Harriet inviting her to join them but she did not do so. However, the party returned, for lack of funds, to London only after six weeks.

Life was not easy for Shelley in London, harried as he was by creditors. In order to avoid them he had to go into hiding and frequently shift lodgings. However, he was

happy, buoyed by his love for Mary. In November (on the 30th) Harriet gave birth to his son Charles Bysshe. His financial problems also soon came to an end with the death of his grandfather Sir Bysshe on 6 January, 1815. Most of Shelley's ruinous debts got paid and an annurity of £ 1000 (£200 paid directly to Harriet) was settled upon him.

Shelley and Mary took a pleasant cottage at Bishopsgate near the entrance to Windsor Park. From there they made a boating trip upstream on the Thames and after coming back Shelley wrote his first great poem *Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude* (1816). It is a non-political poem of haunting beauty written under the influnce of Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814) published recently. Mary gave birth (January, 24, 1816) to their son William at Bishopsgate. (Her first child, however, was born the previous year (i.e. February 22, 1815) but had survived only for two weeks.)

In May 1816 Shelley left for Switzerland in the company of Mary and Claire Clairmont. They lived in a cottage on the bank of Lake Geneva. Lord Byron lived close by in Villa Diodati where Milton had lived in 1639. The two poets undertook a 10-day trip round the lake and the two families became very intimate. It was thus that Claire became the mother of Byron's daughter Allegra (born, 12 January, 1817). Meanwhile soon after they returned to England (in September 1816) Shelley was first shocked by the suicide of Fanny Imlay (1794-1816 ; daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft from the American writer Gilbert Imlay whom she met in Paris) and a month later, that is on 9 November, by Harriet's drowning herself in the Serpentine river in all probability because she was soon to become the mother of a child that was not Shelley's.

On the 30th December (1816) Shelley married Mary at St. Mildred's Church in the presence of her father. After his marriage he tried to recover Ianthe and Charles, his children from Harriet, to his custody but his claim was contested by the Wesibrooks. The affair was brought into the Chancery Court and it was stated that Shelley was a man of atheistical and immoral principles . *Queen Mab* was offered as a proof. Lord Eldon gave his judgement on 27th March, 1817, who placed the children with Dr. and Mrs. Hume, nominated by Shelley. However, Shelley could see his children no more than 12 times a year and only in the presence of the guardians. The judge did not place them in the care of the Westbrooks either.

The Shelleys settled in Albion House at Marlow (February, 1817). Hogg and Peacock were their close friends and Godwin and Leigh Hunt (with his large family) frequent visitors. Through Hunt Shelley met Keats (1795-1821) and Horace Smith (1779-1849), a prolific but minor novelist and poet. Peacock introduced him to the study of Plato who thereafter became his lifelong companion along with Homer, the Greek tragedians and the Bible . Mary put together at Marlow her useful *History of Six Week's Tour* and wrote her famous *Frankenstein* . She also gave birth to Clara on September 2 , 1817. While at Albion House Shelley wrote his longest poem *Laon and Cythna,* his idealized and idiosyncratic version of the French Revolution transposed to an Oriental setting. In order to avoid prosecution it was published with alterations in 1818 as *The Revolt of Islam.*

The Shelley couple were not ideally happy at Albion House. Mary felt uneasy and embarassed in the presence of Claire who was and was not Byron's wife. She had put Shelley's reputation at stake. So they wanted to go to Venice and turn over Allegra to Byron to rear as his own (which he did) . Besides, Shelley's health was deteriorating. He suffered from anxieties. He had fears that his children from Mary would also be taken away from him and that his father would have custody over him on the pretext of his madness. Shelley did not share these fears with anyone, not even Godwin. Hence he left England along with his family on the 11th or 12th March 1818, never to return. However, unhappily for both Mary and Shelley, the party included Claire.

31.2.5 Migration to Italy

It was Italy that saw the flowering of Shelley's genius. It gave him the sudden confidence that comes from experience and maturity. The change from England was also welcome . He wrote,

> no sooner had we arrived in Italy than the loveliness of the earth & the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations - I depend on these things for in the smoke of cities & the tumult of humankind & the chilling fogs & rain of our own country I can hardly be said to live. (April 1818)

On his arrival in Italy he first sent Allegra from Milan to her father who was then living in Venice. Byron readily undertook her bringing up and education. The Shelley household moved to Leghorn which along with Pisa became his principal place of residence in Italy. He was drawn to Leghorn because the Gisbornes, old friends of Godwin, lived there.

Maria Gisborne had been brought up as a girl in the east. She was middle-aged when Southey met her. She married Reveley, the student of Athenian antiquities in Rome. Reveley was a radical and in England got associated with Godwin and his circle. When Mary Wollstonecraft died after giving birth to her daughter Mary Maria took her home. When two years later Reveley died Godwin proposed marriage to Maria but she refused. Instead she married Mr. Gisborne with whom she had been living in Italy for some years. Mrs Gisborne and Shelley read Spanish together and she introduced him to Calderon (1600-81) whom Shelley translated in 1822. Shelley got attached to Maria's son Henry Reveley, a young engineer who wanted to put a steamboat on the Mediterranean and Shelley, notwithstanding his difficult condition, invested on it. The project, however, failed and Shelley thought that he had been defrauded. The trouble was later settled amicably.

Shelley did not settle immediately at Leghorn. He stayed at the Baths of Lucca where he completed *Rosalind and Helen* which was begun at Marlow and translated Plato's *Symposium* . Claire was, however, getting anxious about Allegra as she heard more and more about Byron's life in Venice. Induced by Claire Shelley undertook an exhausting journey from the Baths of Lucca to Venice. Claire stayed at Padua as her presence was to be kept a secret. Byron offered Shelley his villa at Este in which he had himself never lived. Shelley wrote to Mary to bring their family to Este at once which she did. Baby Clara could not bear the strain of the journey and died (24 September, 1818) in Venice where she had to be taken for advice. Mary secretly blamed Claire and Shelley for this calamity. While at Este, Shelley entered the greatest creative period of his life. He wrote `Lines on the Euganean Hills' , *Julian and Maddalo* and the first act of *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley wrote the second and third acts of *Prometheus* amid the vast ruins of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome and started writing *The Cenci* which was completed in August 1819. In Rome on 7June, 1819 William, his son died 'after an illness of only a few days ' as Shelley wrote to Peacock , `haunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.' (June 1819)

Shelley moved to Leghorn to allow Mary the company of Maria Gisborne. Here he heard about the political unrest and agitation in England and what is known in history as the Peterloo massacre (August 16). Shelley wrote ` The Mask of Anarchy' in September 1819 which was, however, not published until 1832. On 2 October they moved to Florence where his last child Percy Florence was born (12 November). He was named after the poet and the city of his birth and succeeded to the baronetcy. Shelley wrote his famous `Ode to the West Wind ' in Florence in October and the next month wrote a parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* (written in 1798 but published with a dedication to Southey in 1819): It was called *Peter Bell the Third*

as Keats's friend John Hamilton Reynold's second 'Peter Bell' had already appeared. Shelley mocked Wordsworth's defection from the radical cause and called him 'a solemn and unsexual man.' This poem also was suppressed until 1839. In December Shelley wrote the fourth act of *Prometheus* and on 27 January, 1820 the family travelled to Pisa. This was to be their last station, except for occasional trips to Leghorn and Lucca and the final summer at Casa Magni on the Bay of Spezia.

The immediate purpose of their visit to Pisa was to consult the famous Italian physician Andrea Vacca Berlinghieri. Here he found a friend in one Mrs. Mason, a daughter of the Earl of Kingston of Ireland where Mary Wollstonecraft had served as a governess. However, at Pisa Shelley soon became the nucleus of a large group of people from Ireland, England, Italy and Greece. Life for Shelley at Pisa was made difficult by Godwin by his ever increasing demand for money. Shelley reminded him that he had paid him £4000 to 5000 and in order to do so paid the money-lenders four or five times that amount. Claire caused Shelley trouble by her anxiety for Allegra and her inability to be on good terms with Mary. The discharged servant Paolo tried frist to blackmail him and then spread scandals about his personal life which were taken up in Italy and echoed in England. Finally, Claire left the Shelleys to become a governess in Florence but visited them from time to time.

The 'Pisan circle' which Shelley had formed included Professor Pacchiani, Princess Argiropoli, Sgricci, Taffe, Prince Mavrocordato - who was responsible in large measure for *Hellas* (1821), Shelley's lyrical drama on Greek revolt against the Turks - and above all Emilia Viviani, a beautiful 17-year-old heiress 'tyrannized' in a convent at Pisa who made Shelley write his breathtakingly beautiful poem *Epipsychidion* (1821). The title of the poem remains a puzzle perhaps because it is addressed to *epi-psyche* the 'soul out of my soul' or beloved and also because of its ironic reference to the *Epithalamium* the conventional marriage song such as Spenser wrote. In this poem Shelley attacked the institution of marriage as 'the dreariest and longest journey' and praised 'Free' or 'True' love (ll.148-73)

The most important addition in January 1821 to the circle was Edward Williams and his wife Jane. They remained Shelley's companions till the end. His poems on Jane - 'With a Guitar, To Jane,' 'To Jane , The Invitation' , 'When the lamp is shattered' , 'To Jane (The Keen stars were twinklig)', and 'Lines written in the Bay of Lerici' - were not shown to Mary and have the quality of the poems written for one alone to read.

Mention must be made of Edward John Trelawny (1792-1881) who joined the Pisan Circle on January 14, 1822 whose chief claim to memory was his record of the lives of Shelley and Byron apart from his presence at the cremation of Shelley along with Byron. Shelley had gone to Ravenna to persuade Byron to come down to Pisa to join the circle which he did on 1 November, 1821.

31.2.6 The last days

Byron's daughter Allegra had died on 20 April, 1822 and so the Shelleys began their projected summer at San Terenzo, facing Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia a little early. They rented Casa Magni and occupied it on April 8. The Williamses also moved to San Terenzo on 30th April. On May 12 they received *Don Juan* their schooner. Shelley Christened it the Ariel and Williams called it 'a perfect plaything for the summer'. The two friends also made a shallop of canvas and reeds and in one or the other of these vessels Shelley incessantly boated. Shelley wrote *The Triumph of Life* going off by himself in his shallop in moonlight. Mary had never found Shelley in a happier mood. 'If ' wrote Shelley ,'the past and future could be obliterated, the present could content me so well that I could say with Faust to the passing moment, "Remain thou , thou art so beautiful." '

Mary, unfortunately was not happy. She was not well. Shelley had been taken seriously ill. One night when with Williams he saw naked Allegra rise from the waves and clap her hands. On another occasion he saw his own image which asked him 'How long do you mean to be content?' Mrs Williams also saw Shelley twice while he was not present. Casa Magni was a place of visions.

Two months had passed by in this retreat and Shelley's old friend Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) was to arrive in Italy to edit *The Liberal* from Pisa. The plan had been conceived by Shelley and was to be supported by Byron. In order to meet the Hunts Shelley, along with Edward Williams and his sailor-boy Charles Vivian set sail for Leghorn on 1July 1822. Thornton, the eldest son of Hunt always remembered the cry with which Shelley rushed into his father's arms saying, 'I am inexpressibly delighted! You cannot think how inexpressibly happy it makes me.' The Hunts were settled in Byron's *Palazzo* in Pisa and Shelley, Williams and Charles set sail for San Torenzo by the same boat. On the 8th of July 1822 Ariel sank under a squall. The two bodies, i.e. of Shelley and Williams, were found on 18 July. In one of Shelley's pocket was a volume of Aeschylus and in the other, Keats's poems folded back to back as if the reader had been in the act of reading it when he hastily thrust it away with the intention of coming back to the line where he had left.

Trelawny arranged for the cremation at which Byron and Hunt alone were present besides a few natives of the place. Byron and Hunt could hardly maintain themselves. Trelawny snatched Shelley's heart from the flames. His ashes were deposited in the English burying ground in Rome by the side of Keats and his son William. Mary did not marry but lived to write and publish Shelley's writings posthumously.

You have read an account of Shelley's life. Now would you like to answer a few questions which are based on it ?

Exercise

Answer either a or b set of questions below:

a) When and where did Shelley write the following :

1. *Queen Mab*,
2. *Alastor*,
3. *Prometheus Unbound*,
4. 'Ode to the West Wind', and
5. *The Triumph of Life* ?

1._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.

4.

5.

b) 1. Would it be fair on our part to ask whether Shelley's relationships with many women was proper ? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Shelley loved liberty and freedom. Cite instances that support or refute the observation and state if Shelley acted responsibly or otherwise.

3. If Shelley had been alive would you have tried to know him closely ? Give reasons for your answer.

31.3 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you read about the troubled life of Shelley, his acquaintances, and his attitude towards them. You got to know about his wide reading; for Shelley, notwithstanding his death at twentynine, was one of the most learned of the English poets. You were in this unit, faced with a "morally difficult" poet because we cannot read Shelley without deciding upon some of the fundamental issues of life such as love and marriage, limits to our freedom and the need for restraints, etc.

31.4 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

a.
1. Shelley wrote *Queen Mab* in England and Wales during his early period of political activism in 1812-13.
2. *Alastor* was written in Windsor Great Park in the latter part of 1815.
3. The first act of *Prometheus Unbound* was written at Este in 1818. The second and third acts were written in the spring in Rome and the fourth act in December of 1819 at Leghorn and Florence.
4. `Ode to the West Wind' was written in the `wood that skirts the Arno' near Florence in October 1819.
5. *The Triumph of Life* was written in moonlight while boating in the bay of Lerici in the Gulf of Spezia while the Shelleys were sojourning at Casa Magni in the summer of 1822.

b. I would not answer those questions, for you can guess what I would have to say from the text of this unit. However, you may discuss your answers with some of your friends because they are not irrelevant to a proper understanding of Shelley's poetry.

31.5 FURTHER READING

The best thing would be to read as many of Shelley's poems as you can : *Queen Mab, Alstor,* `Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', Mont Blanc' , *Prometheus Unbound* which Yeats called a `sacred book', and `Epipsychidion'. You must read the essay `A Defence of Poetry'. You will find it printed in the *Reader* (See pp.108-141) that goes with *Literary Criticism and Theory* (MEG05). This essay has been discussed for you in Block III unit 4 of the course. It would be advisable to go through the essay as well as the unit right away.

If you wish to read more about Shelley's life read Newman Ivey White's life of *Shelley* in two volumes published in 1940. This work was condensed in one volume as *Portrait of Shelley* (1945). Edmund Blunden's *Shelley : A Life Story* (1946) offers vivid details from the poet's life. Kenneth Neill Cameron's *The Young Shelley* (1950) and the sequel to it *Shelley : The Golden Years* (1974) examine the development of Shelley's political thought and his radicalism.

Among the shorter studies of Shelley are Matthew Arnold's `Shelley' in *Essays in Criticism, Second Series* (1881) in which Arnold criticized him as `an ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void' and George Santayana's `Shelley, or the Poetic value of Revolutionary Principles' printed in *Winds of Doctrine* (1913) in which he retorted, `An angel cannot be ineffectual if the standard of efficiency is moral.' We have anthologised for you `Shelley's View of Poetry' published in 1909 in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* by Andrew C. Bradley in this block. You may read it. You may also read Herbert Read's `In Defence of Shelley' (pp.189-287), a

psychological study of the poet at a time when such studies became very popular in literary criticism, in *The True Voice of Feeling: Studies in English Romantic Poetry* (Faber and Faber : London). However, in reading Read's essay you must be careful not to accept his thesis without caution. 'Shelley' Read writes, 'lived in a state of heightened subjectivity due to his unconscious homosexuality'. Read quotes Dr McCurdy's words:

> ...very frequently the alleged object of love is merely a lay figure; the subject is in love with the ideal of what the loved one should be. In such a case the union is happy just in so far as the object of attachment is capable of identifying himself or herself with the ideal. This type of love is narcissistic because what is loved is not another person at all but an autochthonous ideal.

From studies such as McCurdy's Read declares Shelley a 'narcissistic type'.

Read whatever fascinates you but don't allow yourself to get swamped and read only as much as you can with enjoyment.

UNIT 32 A STUDY OF *THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE*

Structure

32.0 Objectives
32.1 Introduction
32.2 Jean Jacques Rousseau: The leader in *The Triumph*
32.3 Reading *The Triumph of Life*
32.3.1 Discussions on *The Triumph*
Lines 1 - 40 Part I
Lines 41 - 175 Part II
Lines 176 - 295 Part III
Lines 296 - 438 Part IV
Lines 439 - 548 Part V
32.4 Reading Yeats's `The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry'
32.5 Let's sum up
32.6 Answers to exercises
32.7 Further reading

32.0 OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of this unit is to enable you to appreciate *The Triumph of Life*.
- In order to help you do so we also help you discover Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) on the one hand and look at Shelley's poetry from the point of view of W.B. Yeats, one of the greatest of the admirers among the British poets of Shelley, on the other.
- After having read this unit you will also gain greater confidence in writing reference to context questions.

32.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit has mainly three major parts - 32.2, 32.3 and 32.4 - on Rousseau, *The Triumph of Life*, and W.B.Yeats's essay on Shelley. I will tell you why I have arranged the material in this fashion.

Rousseau, introduced very briefly in 32.2, is a character in *The Triumph of Life*. He is in this poem, for Shelley what Virgil was to Dante in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. We'll talk about Rousseau only for this reason. You must know who he was in order to appreciate *The Triumph*.

Part 32.3 is devoted entirely to explicating the text of the poem prescribed for you. Now you know that you have to look for the text of *The Triumph of Life* in the appendix of this block. It is this section (32.3) which is the longest and you must read it little by little. Our discussion on this poem has been divided into five parts. Read one part carefully and then do the exercise. Each part ends with an exercise. You may take an-hour-and-a-half to do a sub-section. If you have to do the reading of this part in five days don't blame yourself for being too slow. This part (32.3) of the unit is not to be studied in one day. It will require a lot of input from you. This is borne out by the fact that the section on `Answers to exercises' in this unit is longer than in any

other unit on the British Poetry course. Doing the exercises will help you understand the poem better.

In this unit we have given you a model answer to a reference to context question. As you know you should expect to write such explanations at the term-end examination.

W.B.Yeats's 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' can be called one of the most significant studies of Shelley by a British poet. If you had been in a class-room of a main-stream university your teacher would have spent a couple of lectures discussing Yeats's Shelley. Well, s/he could have also discussed A.C.Bradley's essay on Shelley provided for you in this block but we do not propose to do that here. You will have to read Bradley on your own. However, you can discuss Bradley's essay on Shelley at the Study Centre or with your friends at a privately formed study circle.

After having come so far give yourself a short break and then plan your study of this unit before going further or if the poem tempts you, read it first. Then read about Rousseau in the next section.

You may be required to consult a reference work for other personages such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, Dante, Voltaire, etc., who appear in *The Triumph of Life.*

32.2 JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU : THE LEADER IN *THE TRIUMPH*



Jean Jacques Rousseau

Jean Jacques Rousseau was one of the most influential of the eighteenth century writers and thinkers. If on the one hand he was largely responsible for the rise of Romanticism in England and on the continent, on the other he influnced leading German Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Georg Hegel (1770-1831), and educationists such as Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), and even John Dewey (1859-1952).

Jean Jacque was born (June 28, 1712) to Isaac Rousseau a Jenevan watchmaker and Suzanne Bernard, niece of a Calvinist minister. His mother died a few days after his birth. Rousseau's education began at the age of six when he started reading books from his father's library. He first read novels and comedies but soon switched over to Plutarch and the great moralists. When Jean Jacques was ten years of age his father quarrelled with a member of an influential family of Jeneva and as a result went into exile leaving his two sons - Jean Jacques and his elder broth François - with his brother-in-law Gabriel Bernard. François was apprenticed but Jean Jacques was sent outside Geneva to live with J.-J. Lambercier, a minister, who taught him the classics.

In 1745, while at Paris, he took up with Thérèse Levasseur, a chambermaid at the hotel where he was staying. He had several children by her but they were all sent to a foundling home. Rousseau finally married her in a civil marriage in 1768.

While in Paris Rousseau met Diderot, d'Alembert, Helvetius and Voltaire. He wrote all the articles on music that Diderot and d' Alembert published in their *Encyclopédie* (1751-65).

In the meantime, Diderot encouraged him to compete for the prize announced by Dijon Academy in 1750 for an essay on the question whether the sciences and the arts had helped to purify morals. Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* won the first prize and its publication brought him recognition all over Europe. In this essay Rousseau had not used the word *Liberté*. However his opinion,

> The sciences, letters, and arts ... wind garlands of flowers around the iron chains that bind them [the people], stifle in them the feeling of that original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turn them into what is called civilized people.

was taken unfavourably by the powers that were. Although a child of the Enlightenment (for the meaning of this word please read the introduction to block V) Rousseau was questioning not only monarchy and the church but also the sciences and the arts and indeed civilization itself. Rousseau thought that the atheism of the *philosophe* was a luxury of the bourgeoisie. He instead elaborated a "theism" of the heart. In 1762 Rousseau published *The Social Contract*, perhaps his most famous book after his *Confessions*, in which he observed, ` Men are born free and everywhere they are in chains.'

Rousseau sought a reordering of the society. He admired the ancient Greeks who thought that `we begin properly to become men only after we become citizens.' The wise man according to Rousseau was one who `no longer [regarded] himself as one, but [was] part of the whole, and [was] only conscious of the common life ' Rousseau blamed civilization for the ills of our society and thought that social and worldly life was a source of wickedness. He developed this theme in his novel *Émile*.

Rousseau was unfortunate with his friends : Diderot, Hume and even Voltaire. Rousseau received an anonymous pamphlet on the last day of 1764 *Le Sentiment des citoyens* (`The Feelings of the Citizens') in which he had been attacked for being a hypocrite, a heartless father and an ungrateful friend. The effect on Rousseau was terrible and the pamphlet had been written by Voltaire.

When Rousseau recovered from the shock he bagan writing his *Confessions*, his defence of his life and work. On July 2, 1778 he died quietly at Ermenonville on the estate of the marquis René de Girardin.

32.3 READING *THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE*

Shelley was writing *The Triumph of Life*, as you know, before he left San Torenzo for Leghorn and was drowned on his voyage back on 8 July, 1822. The poem thus

remained unfinished. Notwithstanding its fragmentary status T.S.Eliot called *The Triumph* Shelley's finest work. In it Shelley achieved the detachment that we don't find in any of his earlier works of the same or greater length.*The Triumph* is written in *terza rima*, the verse form which Dante had used in his *Divina Commedia* and Petrarch in his *Trionfi*. Shelley tried this verse form for the first time in *Prince Athanase* (written at Marlow in 1817) and kept his hand in with *The Woodman and the Nightingale*, the *Ode to the West Wind* and some translation of Dante. You may recall (from our discussion in 2.5.1) that the *terza rima* is a special case of a triplet with the interlocking rhymescheme aba-bcb-cdc-ded-efe-... Examine the text of the poem and find out the rhymescheme for yourself.

The 'triumph' in the title of Shelley's poem stands also for triumphal procession as in Petrarch's *Trionfi* or *Triumphs* which is a sequence of seven poems celebrating the victory of Love over Man, Chastity over Love, Death over Chastity, Fame over Death, Time over Fame and God over Time. Shelley could also have been influenced by the Roman relief sculptures of ceremonial processions, which he must have seen in Italy, of victorious Generals' entry into Rome in ancient times. These processions included their prisoners of wars. Shelley's poem portrays the victory procession of Life which has people like Plato, Aristotle and Alexander, Dante and Petrarch, on the one hand and Napoleon Bonaparte, King Frederick II (1712-1786) of Prussia, Czarina Catherine II (1729-1796) of Russia and Leopold II (1747-1792) the Holy Roman Emperor, on the other. Voltaire, Kant, Milton and Wordsworth also figure in the procession but not the 'sacred few' of Athens and Jerusalem, i.e. Socrates and Jesus Christ who refused to make any compromise with Life and thus did not become its slave. The 'leader' of the poem, of course, is Rousseau who makes sense of the chaotic procession for the narrator. When Shelley was

> Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
> Half to myself I said - 'And what is life?
> Whose shape is that within the car? And why' -
> I would have added - 'is all here amiss?-
> But a voice answered - 'Life! '

The voice is that of Rousseau :

> What I thought was an old root which grew
> To strange distortion out of the hill side.

The distorted root-like form is what remains 'of what was once Rousseau' and he comments upon some of the interesting figures in the procession for the narrator just as Virgil took Dante through *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. The difference is that while Shelley and Rousseau look on and the procession moves Virgil and Dante had travelled through the nine circles of Hell and the seven cornices of Mount Purgatory.

Now first read the poem on your own and then read the next section of this unit. You may have to read the poem again in order to be able to do the exercises. Do not lose patience. At the end of the discussion exercises you will feel satisfied with your work.

32.3.1 Discussions on *The Triumph* :

For the sake of convenience we have divided the poem into five parts. Shelley himself, however, did not do so. Hence the text provided in the appendix is continuous.

I Lines 1 to 40 of *The Triumph of Life*:

You may need some help and like to write the meanings of the following words in the margin of the text.

line 7 - *Orison* = a prayer
8 - A *Matin* is a service in the Church of England
9 - A censer is a vessel in which incense is burned.
25 - athwart = sloping position
26 - Locate the Appenine mountain range south of the Po valley on the map of the Italian peninsula.

Exercise I

Now answer the following questions :

1. What does the expression `cone of night' in line 23 mean ?

2. What is the time of day that is described? Point out the two images that you find most effective.

3. Describe the narrator. What does he tell us about himself?

Having answered the questions above compare them with my responses given later, in 32.6, in this unit. Allow yourself some interval before going on to the next sub-section i.e. II.

II. Lines 41 to 175 :

Now read lines 41 to 175 of the poem. You may need some help in reading it which may be had from the glossary below :

line 51 - A bier is a table-like movable frame, sometimes with wheels, for taking a dead body to the graveside.

line 78 - Mary Shelley had filled the gap left in the text of the poem by her husband with `blinding'.

line 85 - The crescent new moon is seen as a chariot in which is seated the shadow of the moon.

line 91 - Mourners wear black material or **crape** on their clothes.

line 92 - dun = dark

line 94 - **Janus** was a Roman god of beginnings and endings. He is represented sometimes with two faces and sometimes four, one on each side of his head.

line 111-116 - According to the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 15) the Year of Jubilee was the `year of release' in which the slaves were freed. The irony in Shelley's use of the word **jubilee** can be seen in his using it to describe a Roman triumphal procession in which the victorious army displayed the people they had conquered. The conquered people, in order to display their

subservience, were sometimes made to carry a yoke on their neck.

Shelley, in these lines, recails that these 'triumphs' began about the end of the Republic when the Romans themselves were enslaved by their emperors.

line 121 - **Age** refers to a historical period, an era.

line 128-136 - The '**sacred few ... of Athens and Jerusalem**' are obviously Socrates and Jesus Christ.

Now if you first answer the following questions and then read my responses to them given later in this unit you will be able to understand the second part of the poem better.

Exercise II

1. Comment briefly, in your own words, on the procession that the narrator describes in lines 41-73.

2. Please read lines 74 to 111. Shelley describes Life, the Conqueror, in those lines. State some of the significant observations of the narrator on Life and his procession.

3. In lines 111 to 175 Shelley describes the crowd that is accompanying the car of Life. Tell us in brief about the persons described.

III Lines 176 to 295 :

You may consult the following notes which will help you understand this part of the poem better.

line 180 - The `voice' in this line refers to Rousseau just as in line 190 the grim Feature' refers to him. Milton described Death in *Paradise Lost* (Book X, line 279) as a `grim Feature'.

line 210 - A **mitre** is a tall pointed hat worn by priests of high rank such as bishops and archbishops on ceremonial occasions.
A **helm** is an old use of helmet. In the old phrase `at the helm' (or the person at the top) refers to the man at the tiller - a long handle fastened to the top end of a small boat's rudder so that it can be turned easily.

line 270 - Francis Bacon (1561-1626) discussed in his *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, the myth of Proteus as an allegory of physical matter and its transformation.

line 274 - In the place of bards of old' Shelley had written, in a cancelled draft of the poem, `Homer & his brethren.'

line 288 - While John was the name most commonly adopted by the popes, Gregory VII (Hildebrand) is singled out by Shelley because he established the temporal powers of the papacy, apart from its spiritual.

Now answer the following questions in the space provided. You may then read my responses recorded in section 32.6 of this unit.

Exercise III

1. Why does Rousseau tell the narrator
" Before thy memory
"I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did, and died ..."

2. The leader tells the narrator about the acts of the men of letters for which they stood chained to the chariot of Life (in lines 210-215). What was the fault of the men of letters?

3. What fault does Rousseau find with himself which forced him to become a captive in Life's victory procession? Please read lines 278-281 before answering this question.

4. What was Constantine's crime according to Shelley?

IV. Lines 296 to 438 :

In order to comprehend this portion of the poem better you may read the text along with the notes below :

line 331 - To be oblivious of something is to be unmindful or forgetful of it. In poetry, however, the word is used in the sense of, `of or inducing oblivion'. Rousseau's account of his life in this poem is modelled partly on his *Confessions* and partly on Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*.

line 345-46 - The sun, here, is symbol of the deity. It is reflected from water which is symbol of mortality. Shelley shows us the play of life and death, immotality and mortality.

line 352 - Critics agree that `A shape all light' in this line represents human creativity. It is like the sun in glory because we see things as much in the light of our imagination as in the light of common day.

line 357 - In Greek mythology Iris is the goddess who acts like the messenger of the gods. She displays the rainbow as her sign.

line 359 - Nepenthe, mentioned in Homer's *The Odyssey*, is an Egyptian drug which has the power to banish pain, anger and sorrow. Helen of Troy gives it to Telemachus (in *The Odyssey*, IV). Shelley's immediate source could be Milton's *Comus*, in which the character of that name, who is son of Circe, the daughter of the Sun, offers an `orient liquor in a Crystal glasse' which is greater than `Nepenthes', in order to seduce them.

line 361 - Shelley's use of the word **palm** here, as in *Adonais* and *Prometheus Unbound*, for the `sole' of the foot is quite without precedent. In *Adonais* Shelley has,

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :

And in *Prometheus Unbound* Shelley wrote,

Our feet now, every Palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;

Shelley, however, consistently used 'palm' as the ' sole of the foot'.

line 414 - **Lucifer** is light-bringer. In Shelley's poetry it refers always to the planet Venus, the evening and morning star.

Chrysolite is a name given to precious olivine, a pale yellowish-green silicate of magnesia and iron.

line 419 - The star refers to Venus, the morning and evening star.

line 420 - The **Jonquil** is a type of sweet smelling flower of the Narcissus family.

This section of the poem, as you must have noticed, is allegorical in nature. It also invites us to participate in an experience, more than describing a scene or narrating a story. Hence, you must read it and discuss it with your friends privately or at the Study Centre, under the guidance of your counsellor.

The execrise below will help you understand how this section can be discussed. It will also help you more immediately to prepare for the examination.

Exercise IV

Explain the following lines with reference to the context, supplying brief critical comments where necessary :

'... Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why -
Pass not away upon the passing stream.'
'Arise and quench thy thirst' was her reply.

Note : You may like to read the points under 52.3.2 i.e. on Page 75 in block X of this course, before writing your explanation.

V Lines 439 to 548 :

Read the notes below for help in understanding the last section of the poem :

Lines 439 - 41: A pavilion, as you know, is a large, light ornamental building used for exhibitions or public amusement. Shelley describes a 'wind-winged pavilion' built by Iris whom we met earlier in this poem. This pavilion, formed like an arch of victory is particoloured in vermilion, green and azure. Besides, the pavilion is progressing ahead of the procession.
This arch is the arch of Life. Iris represents Life, its richness, its colourfulness, its joyous variety. In *Adonais* (L II) Shelley had portrayed Life as a 'dome of many-coloured glass' :
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments.

The triplet reminds us of the lines in *Adonais*.

line 446 - Atomies are motes or grains or particles of dust.

line 463 - Lethe in Greek mythology is the underworld river in Hades. When one drinks its water one forgets the past.

line 472 - Dante was led through Paradise by his beloved Beatrice. In lines 472-74 the subject is Love which led, Dante - 'of him' - from the 'lowest depths of Hell / Through every Paradise and through all glory' and who returned from there to tell us 'How all things are transfigured, except love'.

lines 481 - 83 Shelley scholars agree that the 'phantoms' in this passage are like the *simulacra* or masks described by Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* (Book IV). Lucretius describes ideas, beliefs, superstitions and passions of men peeling off from them and forming *simulacra* or masks and floating around in the air.

line 495 - Ermine is the name given to stoat in winter when its fur turns white. Formely, important people such as kings and judges wore the white fur of this animal. Hence, metonymically, ermine stands for the important people in the society.

line 496 - The Pope wears the tiara (or tiar) or triple crown which symbolises his dignity and sovereignty.

line 500 - Skeletons are also called anatomies.

line 505 - The bones of the dead are kept in a charnel house.

line 530 - The shadows a person gave off were each in some aspect like the person from whom they derived and like one another in some respects.

Exercise V :

Explain one of the following passages with reference to the context and provide brief critical comments of your own :

(a) ... Who returned to tell
In words of hate and awe the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured, except love
For deaf as is a sea which wrath makes hoary

(b) ... as when there hovers
A flock of vampire bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing ere evening
Strange night upon some Indian isle, -

32.4 READING YEATS'S `THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHELLEY'S POETRY'

Please first read the essay by Yeats printed later in this block and then come back to this unit and do the exercise given below :

Exercise VI :

Below you have six short passages from Shelley's `The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry'. A word or two has been left out in each passage. Let's see if you can fill in the blanks.

a) He bids the reformers in the *Philosophical Review of Reform* receive `the onset of the cavalry', if it be sent to disperse their meetings, _____', and `not because active resistance is not justifiable, but because temperance and courage would produce greater advantages than the most decisive victory' ...

b. [Shelley] does not believe that the reformation of society can bring this beauty, this divine order among men without the regeneration of the _____ of men.

c. Intellectual Beauty has not only the happy dead to do her will, but ministering spirits who correspond to the _____ _____ of the East, and the Elemental Spirits of medieval Europe, and the _____ of ancient Ireland, and whose too constant presence, ... give some of [Shelley's] poetry an air of rootless fantasy.

d. I have re-read *Prometheus Unbound*, which I had hoped my fellow students would have studied as a _____book, and it seems to me to have an even more certain place than I had thought among the _____ books of the world.

e. ... our little memories are but a part of some great Memory that renews the world and men's thoughts age after age, and that our thoughts are not, as we suppose, the deep, but a little _____ upon the deep.

f. The ancients [Shelley] says, called souls not only Naiads but _____, 'as the efficient cause of sweetness'; but not all souls 'proceeding into generation are called _____ 'but those who will live in it justly and who after having performed such things as are acceptable to the gods will again return (to their kindred stars). For this insect loves to return, to the place from whence it came and is eminently just and sober.'

As you mut have noticed Yeats's essay on Shelley's poetry is divided into two parts : the first one is on Shelley's ideas, and the second one on the symbolism in his poetry. We may say that in the first part of his essay Yeats deals with Shelley's philosophy and in the second with his language, although in a restricted sense.

Yeats begins the first part of his essay on the ' Ruling Ideas' with a reminiscence of his student days. Yeats and some of his friends had rented a room in a 'mean street' in Dublin. This was used to discuss philosophy. Yeats goes on to admit that his friends found his opinion - that that philosophy only was going to survive the ravages of time and was useful to us which could be embodied in poetry - rather idiosyncratic. Yeats further goes on to point out that if we wish to discover the Will of the Maker it can be found in our poetry rather than our history or philosophy wherein, according to him, the 'heart withers.'

You may have been reminded of Gandhi ji's *Hind Swaraj* in which he speaks against history, technology and the legal and medical professions. (You may read this work prescribed for you and discussed in the third unit of Block I of *Indian English Literature*, MEG07.) In fact the resemblance between Shelley's views, as expressed by him, in his *Philosophical Review of Reform* and *The Masque of Anarchy* and Gandhi ji's ideas on passive resistance appears quite striking to us. W.B.Yeats in 1900 and Shelley in the first quarter of the 19th century anti-dated Gandhi ji in their appeal for non-violent struggle against tyranny.

Yeats reacts against the view held, as he says, by three generations that Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* was nothing but William Godwin's (1756-1836) *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) put into rhyme. Yeats points out that Shelley's ideas of liberty, which he termed Intellectual Beauty was so much more than political justice because,

> the regeneration [Shelley] foresaw was so much more than the regeneration many political dreamers have foreseen.

So far so good. But Yeats goes on to point out that that *regeneration* 'could not come in its perfection 'till the Hours bore, Time to his tomb in eternity.' Perhaps this poetic stance though abstruse is common both to Yeats and Shelley that we, their readers,

must be able to comprehend in all its lineaments, with the help of 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry.'

Yeats's examination of Shelley's symbols carries him to the conclusion :

> [Shelley] was born in a day when the old wisdom had vanished and was content merely to write verses, and often with little thought of more than verses.

Yeats seems to complain that the unity of life of the middle ages cannot be found in Shelley.

However, if you replace Shelley with Browning in the above passage you could appreciate the organic unity of life in Shelley's time and the loss of it in Browning's. Perhaps you could say that while Shelley was a poet of Goddo Pahan complex Browning was that of Anjali complex. What we imply is that there is more conscious artistry in Browning than in Shelley or to look at it *a la* Yeats, there was less of the unity of life in Browning's time than in Shelley's.

However, let's first look at Shelley's symbolism through Yeats's eyes. We would examine Browning's art in the next block.

Yeats points out that although Shelley had not studied magic and magical philosophy he used certain images repeatedly in his poetry and as the years passed by they concretized into symbols. Yeats's theory is that Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin sailed in open boats on many rivers on the continent in 1814. The ecstatic experience that he had gave him a lifelong system of symbols of the river, the cave and the tower.

Besides the river, or rivulet, the cave and the tower, Shelley also made use of the Porphyrian symbol of the bee. The bee returns to the place from where it comes and it's 'eminently just and sober.' The good soul does likewise. It returns to its 'kindred' star.

As you have read the essay yourself I would not try to detail all the symbols here once again but only point out how Yeats notices these symbols working out their effects in the poetry of *The Triumph of Life*.

'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry', is an essay by a poet who is not known for the clarity of his thought as for instance Dryden and Pope, or for that matter even Wordsworth and Keats are. Shelley is Yeats's poet, a poet's poet and the former contributed to the latters growth as a poet of a highly idiosyncratic nature. Hence you may be required to read Yeats's essay a few times. Do so and memorize a few passages from it, if you can.

32.5 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you read *The Triumph of Life* and in order to do so you also read an introductiory note on Jean Jacques Rousseau who is the leader in the poem.

In order to help you gain easy access to some of the best critical pieces on the poets and poems discussed on this course we have provided material on them in these blocks. However, we have not discussed each one in detail for obvious reasons. The brief discussion on Yeats's essay on Shelley is an exception. However, we hope you found it useful and you would read other essays on your own and discuss them with your friends in a study group. In this unit you wrote a couple of reference to context

questions which must have been useful in understanding the text of the poem and would be helpful later in writing your term-end examination.

32.6 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Exercise 1 :

1. Shelley is definitely thinking about the gigantic cone-shaped shadow (umbra) of the earth made in space due to the light of the sun. The image speaks of Shelley's interest in science.

2. It is morning time. The opening lines describe the Sun 'Rejoicing in his splendour' and 'the mask of darkness' falling from the Earth. The S and E in the upper case further help us personify the two entities. The image also sets the tone, for the poem, of the conflict between hope and diespair - life in life and death in life.

   The other dominant image is that of prayer made by the birds, forests and flowers, oceans and continents and islands. We can see in our mind's eye the vapour rising from the waters which the poet portrays as the prayer of the ocean rising heaven-ward. The first twenty lines are rich in visual images of astronomical dimensions. However, the censers and incense, olfactory images, offer a rich experience to our sense of smell. These are also suitable for the time of day, i.e. morning, the time of prayer, that is described in the introductory lines of the poem.

3. The narrator had remained awake all night because of certain thoughts that disturbed him. These thoughts, he says, `must remain untold'.

   Was Shelley thinking about the Byron and Allegra affair or was the possible conflict between him and Mary - owing to Jane Williams towards whom he felt a certain amount of warmth at this point of time - on his mind ? Or, were the deaths of Allegra and his own children that disturbed him? We cannot answer these with certainity.

   However, the narrator tells us that he was now about to fall asleep with his head towards the mountain on the east and his feet towards the `Deep' or `ocean' - more realistically the bay of Lerici in the Gulf of Spazia. The poets are insular about the real world.

   However, the poet is one with nature. The dew that fell on his hair and brow was the same as that which fell on the grass on the slope of the Appenine over which the chestnut tree was growing under which he was lying

   It was against such a background that the narrator had the epiphany which is the subject of this poem.

   Now give yourself a break for a few hours or resume your work on this unit tomorrow.

Exercise II

1. Shelley describes the men, women and children as leaves and gnats blown aimlessly one way or the other. While some people are obsessed with fear of death all their life there are others who actively work to avoid it. What is, however, common about all human beings is their proneness to overlook the

real life - `The fountains whose melodious dew / Out of their mossy cells forever burst.' People pursue their `serious folly' without ever thinking about this life that is lost in the act of living.

2. Shelley's description of the Chariot of Life begins and ends with the mad revelry of the people in the procession. We read in lines 75 - 76 :

The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the South wind shakes the extinguished day.

The libeccio, the southwest wind in Italy is the wind of hot storms on the Western coast. Shelley was actually there in June.

In the two lines above Shelley also makes use of the familiar epic device of comparing the dead with fallen leaves. In lines 50 - 52 you read how Shelley focussed his attention on one who,

Was borne amid the crowd as through the sky
One of the million Leaves of summer's bier. -
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,

As Shelley was familiar with such comparisons in Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton, it appears that Shelley wishes to place himself in their great tradition. He is here making use of an epic device in order to give dignity to his poem.

Just as this section begins with a brief description of the conquered so does it end with a similar description. The crowd gives way to the narrator who seems to rise up from it. He witnesses the noise that the crowd is making ;

... like clouds upon the thunder blast'

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around ;

You may notice that Shelley repeats in order to clinch the impression. However, he does so not without some variation. While earlier the image had only visual and tactile appeal now it is richly aural also.

The vision of the car of Life is thus properly placed in the middle of the conquered. The splendour of the chariot is described with the help of a simile. It was brighter than the sun in the same measure as the mid-day sun is brighter than the stars. However Life's carriage is like the young moon which holds the old moon in its lap. The **epic simile** in lines 79-85 suggests the movement of the chariot which is like the advent of a storm. While the light of the car is blindingly dazzling its movement is overpowering like a storm.

Paradoxically enough Life is `Crouching within the shadow of a tomb' and is dressed in black. Quite appropriately the four faced Janus - *Janus Quadrifrons* - is the charioteer. However, paradoxically again,

All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded ...

The narrator wonders upon the utility of the four pairs of eyes of the charioteer of Life and its (i.e.Life's) beams that are meant to see,

... all that is, has been, or will be done. -

Life is all paradox piled upon paradox, mirror on mirror, mirrored is all the show and yet the movement of the ill-guided car is solemn and majestic.

3. Shelley briefly tells us that all those who were either famous or infamous in life could be seen in the procession of the conquered people. However, he does not find the `sacred few'

> ... who could not tame
> Their spirits to the Conqueror ...

i.e.Life. Socrates and Jesus Christ were among those who could not be seen. The narrator, however, as you must have noticed, does not name them. He makes use of the ancient literary device of periphrasis, which shows Shelley's piety, the "faith" of an "atheist".

A large portion of this section of the poem is devoted to the description of the ribald crowd, the revellers, who are in front of the chariot of Life. They are joyous but `Kindle invisibly ... Like moths by light attracted and repelled.'

As against these are the old and the impotent who are left far behind the chariot of Life and `frost,' performs the job - i.e. of destruction - that fire did in the case of the passionate lovers.

Exerise III

1. This part of the poem helps us identify Shelley with the narrator. When the narrator asks him, `First who art thou?' the leader replies with the words quoted in the question. Shelley was born in 1792 and Rousseau had lived from 1712 to 1778. Thus he had lived his life - loved and hated, feared and suffered - and died before Shelley began to live. Rousseau tells Shelley about himself and his achievements upto line 207.

2. The leader shows the wise men as those wearing `wreathes of light' while the Bishops and Archbishops wear mitres and monarchs crown and generals their helms or distinguishing headgears. The `wreathe of light' of the men of letters is a sign of `thought's empire' over other people's thought. Rousseau tells Shelley that their crime was that they were so preoccupied with establishing their suzerainty over other peoples' minds that they had no time to look inwards and try to know themselves which is the chief end of wisdom.

   In lines 260 - 270 Rousseau exemplifies by pointing out at Alexander and his teacher, i.e. Aristotle. Aristotle's thoughts 'long outlived' both `woes and wars' of Alexander, throned as he was in `new thoughts of men'. This suzerainty of the ancients was challenged by Francis Bacon (1561-1626) who had pointed out that `the truth of nature lieth hid in certain deep mines and caves' - and thus rescued knowledge from the stranglehold, during the medieval period in Europe, of Plato and Aristotle.

3. The difference between Rousseau on the one hand and Homer, Virgil and Dante on the other was that while the latter `inly quelled / The passions which they sung' the former wrote what they had suffered. So a poet like Rousseau, or for that matter Shelley also, sowed `seeds of misery' for the people just like the `deeds' of the tyrants and `Anarchs'.

   The `living melody' of the great poets of the past suppressed the revolt in their readers which they in the first place incited, thus containing the bad social effect of their poetry. They exercised a salutary effect on their readers. These lines give us a peep into Shelley's - the author of the `Mask of Anarchy' and *Queen Mab* - mind in the last phase of his poetic career.

4. Constantine the Great (274-337 A.D.)was Roman emperor from 306 to 37. He was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity and make it the state religion. By doing so he combined the authority of religion to that of the state and thus allowed the corruptions in political places to permeate religious authority.

Shelley names Constantine along with Julius Caesar (C. 101 - 44 B.C.), a Roman general and statesman, who formed the first trumvirate with Pompey and Crassus in 59 B.C. After the death of Crassus, in defiance of the Senate he crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C. and defeated Pompey in a civil war and thus became dictator.

It is significant that Shelley calls them Anarchs, the word that Milton used for chaos in *Paradise Lost* (II, 988) and Pope after him also used it for chaos in *The Dunciad.* Shelley's use of the word 'Anarch' gives us the impression that he thought that if Caesar brought chaos into the society by assuming the crown Constantine further aggravated the same by making Christianity a state religion. In line 287 while blood symbolises war gold represents insatiable greed.

Exercise IV

Below is how the reference to context question could be attempted :

The given lines have been taken from P.B.Shelley's (1792-1822) *The Triumph of Life* (1822 , published 1824).

In his last work, left unfinished when he died on 8 July 1822, Shelley is trying to understand `Life'. He describes a `Vision' in which he encounters Life victorious over all of us. Among those we witness - monarchs and men of letters - is Jean Jacques Rousseau, the Swiss-French thinker who tells him about some of the various personages in the procession of Life. Shelley asks Rousseau,

> "Whence camest thou and whither goest thou?
> How did thy course begin" ...

Rousseau tells him some of the bare facts, but his mind cannot `compass' the cause of Life - `Why this should be ...' However, Rousseau asks Shelley to participate in life instead of looking at it from a distance:

> ... from spectator turn
> Actor or victim in this wretchedness,
> And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
> From thee.

We find the same situation being repeated in the given lines. Earlier on Rousseau had asked a similar question to some evanescent deity - `A shape all light.' `He had wanted to know where he had come from? Where he was ? and Why he was where he was ? The supernatural visitant had asked him to `arise' and `quench' his thirst.

This section, i.e. the fourth, is highly allegorical. Shelley describes the lady holding a cup for Rousseau which as soon as he touches with his lips he forgets everything. He goes on to describe `a new Vision never seen before.' And yet he can tell us little more than that `the fair shape waned in the coming light.' In brief the question What is Life? remains unanswered. In the fifth section Shelley for the third time witnesses the chariot of Life.

The three lines given for explanation are a specimen of the economy of Shelley's style in this poem. He is attempting to answer a philosophical question and befitting

his subject he is simple and austere. The poem would have universal appeal. In India, in the ninth century Shankar had asked similar questions in his *Moh Mudgar* or what is popularly known as *Bhaj Govindam :*

कस्तवं कोऽहं कुत आयातः
का मे जननी को मे तातः
इति परिभावय सर्वमसारं
विश्वं व्यक्त्वा स्वप्नविचारम्॥

[Who are you ? Who am I ? Where have we arrived here from ? Who is my mother ? and who my father ? Reflect on the essence of existence and you will scoff at it as you laugh at the events of a dream.]

You should compare your explanation with some friend's, and /or ask a knowledgeable person to comment on it.

Exercise V

Passage (a) is about Dante. It has been discussed in the fifth part of our discussion.

Passage (b) is an example of epic simile. You may recall what an epic simile is from the discussion on *Paradise Lost* in Block IV. The epic simile here describes the *simulacra* or phantom and gives grandeur to the tone and atmosphere of the poem.

Although the theme of the poem is, as Mary Shelley thought, depressing the vitality and timber of the poetic voice of Shelley is quite assuredly felt in lines such as those given.

Exercise VI

a. with folded arms'
b. hearts
c. Devas, Sidhe
d. sacred sacred
e. foam
f. bees , bees

32.7 FURTHER READING

Yeats's remarks on *The Triumph of Life* in his essay `The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' are perceptive and should be carefully and critically considered in the light of your own reading of the poem.

You may read F.M.Stawall's `Shelley's "Triumph of Life" ' published in *Essays and Studies* V (1914), 104-31; G.M. Matthews, ` "The Triumph of Life" : A New Text', *Studia Neophilologica*, vol. XXXII, no. 2 (1960), 271-309; `The 'Triumph of Life" Apocrypha', *TLS*, 5 August 1960, 503; `On Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" ' *Studia Neophilologica*, vol XXXIV, no.1 (1962), 104-30; and Donald H. Reiman. *Shelley's `The Triumph of Life* : A *Critical Study*, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 55 (1965), if you can come by them easily.

Desmond King-Hele's *Shelley : His Thought and Work* (London : Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960) is more easily available in old libraries. Part four of Chapter XVI, i.e. pages 349-60 offers a simple discussion on the poem and can be studied with profit. `In *The Triumph of Life*' writes King-Hele, `Shelley seems to be more exacting in his definition of the individual good life, which he implies should be spent pursuing the

summum bonum, that `shape all light' which lures artists, scientists, mystics, thinkers and youthful idealists to toil in its service.' Read King-Hele if you can find the book.

Miriam Allott's `The Reworking of a Literary Genre : Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*' (239-278) in *Essays on Shelley* edited by her and published in 1982 by Liverpool University Press (Liverpool), is a comprehensive study of the poem.

Paul de Man's `Shelley Disfigured' in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (Columbia University Press : New York, 1984), Balchandra Rajan's `*The Triumph of Life* : The unfinished and the question mark' (184-210) in *The Form of the Unfinished : English poetics from Spenser to Pound* (Princeton U. Press, Princeton, 1985) and Tilottama Rajan's `The Broken Mirror : The Identity of the Text in Shelley's *Triumph of Life*' (323-349) in *The Supplement of Reading : Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Cornell U.P. : Ithaca, London, 1990) are some of the influential readings of the poem which you may read if you can find them. I have seen *Deconstruction and Criticism* edited by Harold Bloom *et. al.* (Continuum : New York, 1994) in many libraries. It has three essays which throw light on *The Triumph* : Paul de Man's `Shelley Disfigured' (39-73), Jacques Derrida's `Living on. BorderLines', (75- 176) and J. Hillis-Miller's `The Critic as Host' (217-253).

However, in view of the fact that we lay more emphasis on your reading and understanding the poem and not on accumulating critical opinions you should read only as many articles as you can read conveniently and profitably.

UNIT 33 KEATS: *HYPERION: A FRAGMENT-I*

Structure

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33.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will introduce you to *Hyperion: A Fragment*, a long poem by John Keats, the youngest British Romantic poet of the second generation. The poem is usually referred to as *Hyperion.*

After reading the unit, you will be able to appreciate

- The factors in Keats's life that help us understand his poetry,
- The social and political context which shaped Keats' ambitions as well as *Hyperion: A Fragment*
- We have given a list of books at the end which you may want to consult to enhance your knowledge of Keats and his *Hyperion.*

33.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section we will 1) explain some critical terms, and 2) introduce the critical method we have used in these units on Keats.

1) The way a poet arranges his material is as important as the context of his life and the history of his times.

The arrangement of material is called the *structure* of the poem. A reading of the poem that takes the poet's life into account is called *biographical criticism*. A reading that takes the history of the time into account is called *historical or cultural materialist criticism*. Together, biographical and historical readings *contextualise* the poem.

A reading that does not consider the context is usually called *textual* criticism. This can be useful because a poet is a technician who uses the tools of poetry, such as length of lines and verse form, to enhance the meaning and pleasure of reading. Some guidelines have been given in the glossary (1.4). M.R.Ridley's *Keats's*

Craftsmanship, mentioned in the bibliography, is an excellent aid to a textual reading of Keats's poetry.

Some of the more recent essays offer another kind of textual criticism in which etymology or history of a word is analysed. Examples of these have been included in the bibliography. This kind of reading combines textual and historical criticism.

It is best to use textual criticism as an additional tool to contextualised criticism to ensure a balanced and reasonably accurate understanding of it.

2) We have concentrated on historical and biographical readings of the poem because Romantic poetry is more consciously autobiographical than any poetry in England before this time.

Keats was a qualified doctor but only wanted to be a poet. How this affected *Hyperion*, what it is about, when did Keats write it, why he left it unfinished, and why he recast it as *The Fall of Hyperion* a few months later are issues that help us to understand the poem. How Keats's *Hyperion* compares with other Romantic long poems also deepens our understanding of the poem.

To follow the discussion, you must first become familiar with the poem. Read 2.2.1 in Unit 2 where the poem has been summed up. Then read *Hyperion: A Fragment* which is appended to these units. Use the glossary as you read. After that, read the rest of Unit 1 and then read the poem again. Once you have followed the poem and the discussion, answer the questions and then check your answers with the answers given at the end of the unit.

33.2 JOHN KEATS

John Keats was born on 31 October 1795 into a lower middle-class family. His father managed a livery stables in Moorfields, London. His maternal grandmother owned the inn where Keats was born. He was the eldest of four children. When they were orphaned after the death of their mother, Keats, at fourteen, became the head of his family. He was never rich and made little money from his poetry.

Keats attended Clarke's school in Enfield. In 1810, he was apprenticed to Dr.Thomas Hammond, quarrelled with him in 1813, joined St.Guy's hospital in 1815, and became a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, i.e., a doctor, in July 1816. In December 1816, Keats abandoned medicine for poetry.

There was little difference between butchers and many surgeons at the time. Keats's own superior was a more like a butcher who left Keats to take care of his bleeding and tattered patients. Keats became familiar with suffering, disease, and death which he wrote of sympathetically and knowledgeably in his poems.

Keats began taking mercury for a sore throat, the start of consumption (tuberculosis) in October 1817. Then his youngest brother, Tom, got consumption and Keats nursed him until Tom died on 1 December 1817. After Tom's death, Keats realised that he, too, was probably in the last stages of consumption for which there was no cure at that time.

In February 1820, Keats vomited blood, a sign that tuberculosis had destroyed his lungs. In August, he wrote that "A winter in England would I have no doubt, kill me, so I have resolved to go to Italy" (Gittings 387). The next day he wrote to Shelley, who had invited him to Pisa, saying that "There is no doubt that an english [sic] winter will put an end to me, and do so in a lingering and hateful manner, therefore I must voyage or journey to Italy" (Gittings 387-88). He "went to Italy in pursuance of

his physician's urgent advice'" and died in Rome on 23 February, 1821 (Gittings 388).



John Keats

Keats's letters will help you to understand him and his poetry better. There are several collections of Keats's letters, one of which is mentioned in the bibliography.

33.2.1 Friendships

Keats may have been unfortunate in money, but he was lucky in his friends. Apart from affection and admiration, they gave him money or a home to stay in when he needed it. One of them, Joseph Severn, nursed him as he lay dying in Italy. Many of them shaped his ideas. Among these were:

1) Charles Cowden Clarke: Cowden Clarke, the son of Keats's headmaster, introduced him to classical mythology which fascinated him. Keats experimented with Greek mythology in several poems, basing long narrative poems, such as *Endymion* and *Lamia*, on its stories. In the shorter lyrics, such as the odes, he used Greek gods, goddesses, and artefacts as symbols or poetic shorthand. The Ode "On a Grecian Urn," for example, is a meditation on a Greek vase. Apollo, the Greek god of poetry and the sun, is probably the most important deity in Keats's work. He stands for poetic perfection and became a personal symbol for Keats who wrote hymns and odes in praise of him. Apollo is one of the protagonists or chief actors of *Hyperion*.

2) Leigh Hunt: Keats's adult friendships show us that he was consistently on the "liberal side," i.e., his friends were Radical rather than conservative. Of these, Leigh Hunt and William Hazlitt, were "two of the most embattled liberal journalists of the day" (Dickstein 176). Hazlitt's continuing influence enriched Keats's understanding of poetry and politics. His association with Hunt varied much more but was decisive in his poetic career. We have therefore discussed it at some length.

Hunt was a Radical publisher and poet. Radicals favoured a democratic rather than a monarchic form of government. After the French Revolution, English politics were

more or less simplified into those for revolution and those against it. Revolutionaries, reformers, and all who wanted structural and institutional change were called Radicals. The opposition was referred to as conservative, legitimist, monarchist, or__most often__Church and State. The conservative, monarchist English government believed that Radicals threatened the stability of the state.

Hunt was jailed because he had written critically of the Prince Regent, then the head of State. Visiting Hunt in jail or showing sympathy for him in other ways was a way of making one's Radicalism public. Byron, for example, visited Hunt in prison even though they did not know each other. Keats had praised Hunt's poetry and politics in three poems, "On Leigh Hunt's poem 'The Story of Rimini'," the sonnet "On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt," and "Written on the Day that Mr.Leigh Hunt Left Prison," all published in the 1817 volume of his poems. In December 1817, Hunt named Keats in his article, "Young Poets." This ensured that Keats was known as a Radical from the start of his career as a poet. It affected the reception of his poetry.

For many decades after the French Revolution, reviewers judged a poet by his politics, not his ability. Conservative reviewers mocked Keats's social position, saying he was of the "Cockney School of Poetry," a surgeon's apprentice, and a "suburbanising" versifier because he lived for some time in unfashionable Hampstead Heath. They assumed that poets must be educated in universities and that a man of Keats's class could not be a poet. All these were political condemnations as is made quite clear in Lockhart's jibing comment that Keats belonged to the "Cockney School of Politics, as well as the Cockney School of Poetry" (Briggs 484. It is not very certain whether the critic was Lockhart or some other person but Lockart is assumed to be the author of the anonymous *Endymion* review).

Lockhart also levelled the most serious political charge against Keats, one that could have endangered Keats's life. He said that Leigh Hunt's "'bantling,'" Keats, was guilty of "'sedition'" (Dickstein 177). Any criticism of Church and State was considered sedition. It was punishable, often by death. The political oppression of the period was terrifying, and the working class and non-aristocrats like Keats were especially vulnerable to the anti-sedition laws. Just as Blake began to write in a mythology of his own invention to obscure his strong Radical views, Keats tried to avoid trouble by writing in indirect forms like the allegory. 1819, the year Keats wrote *Hyperion*, was the worst year for political repression till then. Its worst event from the Radical point of view was the Peterloo Massacre in August 1819. All the younger Romantics marked this event by writing poetry about the issues involved. Between August and October, Keats wrote the second *Hyperion*.

We have discussed *Hyperion* as a political allegory in 2.2.4.

33.2.2 Keats's poetic ambition

Keats's views on poetry are in his letters and some of his poems. Most readers agree that he had mature and sensitive opinions on poetry and poets. Some of his phrases have become usual critical descriptions. For instance, the phrase "egotistical sublime" used for Wordsworth is from Keats, as are "the true voice of feeling" and "the finer one," both titles of well-known books on Romantic poetry. We have included here some of his views relevant to *Hyperion*.

1) Keats did not think that poetry should be merely pleasant. The poet should understand and participate in others' sorrow. In one of his earliest poems, he said that the subject of poetry should be "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (*Sleep and Poetry* 125-126). By 1819, he had begun to equate sorrow and wisdom. You will learn about the relevance of this to *Hyperion* in 2.2.4.

2) The style of his poetry should be peculiar to him and not influenced by his literary heroes, especially Milton. Easily adopting another's identity was a problem for Keats. He had to struggle to find his own style.

3) Keats wanted to be a great poet, remembered among the "mighty dead."

4) For this, he would have to write a long poem which, he said, was "a test of Invention" (Gittings 27). All great poets had written long poems, it was a step to fame, and lovers of poetry would like a poem with "images so numerous that many are . . .found new in a second reading" (Gittings 27).

But a long poem, Keats believed, required great knowledge. In 1817, he planned to read for about five or six years before writing a major poem. Then early in 1819, when he realised that he did not have even a year of working life left, instead of reading copiously, he began to write copiously. He produced so much good and varied poetry in 1819 that it is often called his *annus mirabilis* or year of miracles. *Hyperion: A Fragment* was written towards the start of this turbulent year, *The Fall of Hyperion* towards the end. Both are incomplete.

The difference between the two poems has been discussed in 2.2.8.

33.3 *HYPERION: A FRAGMENT*

33.3.1 The dates, structure of and models for *Hyperion:* Now we would discuss the poem step-by-step

Keats began to write *Hyperion* shortly before Tom died. He divided it into books, as Milton had divided *Paradise Lost*. After writing two and a half books of 357, 391, and 136 lines respectively, he abandoned it in March or April 1819. *Hyperion* is in blank verse, that is, it is in unrhyming iambic pentameter lines, the same verse as Milton had used in *Paradise Lost*.

We need to consider two questions. 1) Why did Keats begin on an epic poem? 2) Why did he stop work on it?

1) Why did Keats begin on an epic poem? Keats's ambition to write a long poem is closely linked with the events of the time. Periods of radical, rapid, and violent change seem to demand epics. Poets record and analyse the events of their time and frequently invented new styles for this, as Milton had done in the seventeenth century which was the last period of violent and radical change in England. Like the other Romantic poets, Keats admired Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and wished to mark his age in a similar way.

But in some ways Wordsworth, author of *The Excursion*, was a more relevant model for Keats. Milton was a poet of reason and did not "think into the human heart" like Wordsworth, said Keats. Wordsworth had lived through the French Revolution and its aftermath and had written a long poem on the problems it had raised for poets, in particular. His was a more useful example for the early nineteenth century than Milton's. (For Keats's other views of Milton, see 2.2.4 and 2.2.5.)

Epics are long narrative poems, most often about war. *Hyperion* narrates the result of the war between two orders of gods, the Titans and the Olympians. According to Greek mythology, a set of gods does not remain in power forever. The giant Titans replaced their parents (see *Hyperion* 2.206-210). The Titans have now been overthrown by the Olympians. This is Keats's focus. He is interested in the radical difference between the past and present immortals.

2) Why did Keats stop writing *Hyperion*? Keats was the most stringent and honest critic of his own work. As early as early May 1818 he said that he had "run away from both Milton and Wordsworth He admired the two poets but he did not want to imitate them Later in 1818 he began *Hyperion*. By May 1819, he was very critical of its "Miltonic intionations" (Gittings 292).

He knew that *Hyperion's* "false beauty" came from its "many Miltonic inversions" but that it also had the "true voice of feeling" (Gittings 292). Yet he couldn't see the difference clearly enough to separate the true from the false. This is partly why he abandoned it altogether.

Between August and October 1819, Keats began and dropped *The Fall of Hyperion* which is also called the second Hyperion. Keats's decision to rewrite the story of Hyperion shows that it still interested him. What he had failed at was the narrative design or how he should tell the story and in what vocabulary and rhythm. Why he did not finish the second *Hyperion* is beyond the plan of this syllabus, but the bibliography guides you to those who have written about this.

For the difference between the *Hyperions*, see 2.2.8.

33.3.2 Why did Keats use Greek myth?

We have already seen that Apollo was Keats' personanl symbol of perfect poetry. It seems appropriate that he should be the hero of his epic. Some reasons why Keats used Greek myth are given below.

1) Keats admired Wordsworth's *Excursion* in which he praised pagan mythology. We have already seen that Keats thought Wordsworth was a better model for him than Milton. One reason why *Paradise Lost* could not be a model for Keats's long poem was that Milton was a staunch Christian. Keats, however, was an atheist like many Radicals of the time. The *Excursion* probably helped him to decide that a non-Christian, pagan mythology was acceptable in a modern epic.

2) Lord Elgin, a British diplomat, had just deposited the statuary he had stolen from Greece in the British Museum when it may about chaotically but open to the public. Keats was among those who saw the Elgin Marbles. His descriptions of the fallen Titans as motionless and disordered is said to be an accurate description of how the Elgin Marbles appeared at the time (see e.g. *Hyperion* 2.33-35).

3) Keats did not have an "aristocratic" educaation which would have acquainted him with Greek and Latin literature or the classics. Some critics feel that Keats tried to compensate for the lack of an "aristocratic" education by showing his familiarity with books in general and Greek mythology in particular in his poetry. Hyperion is an instance.

4) The most important reason was the idea of change inherent Greek mythology. Even the gods were subject to change An order of gods could be replaced by another. It was the perfect metaphor for the political and cultural changes sweeping through institutions and people thinking at the time. Keats has Oceanus tell Saturn, " as thou wast not the first of powers, / So thou art not the last . . / Thou art not the begining nor the end" (*Hyperion* 2.188-190).

33.3.3 Hyperion compared with other Romantic long poems

Keats's *Hyperion*, Shelley's *The* Revolt of Islam and Byron'S Don Juan, long poems by the second generaton of English Romantic

other. We will see whether this is useful for reading *Hyperion,* or whether some other comparison, such as with Blake's later long poems, is more fruitful.

Like *Hyperion*, *The Revolt of Islam* is based on a story from Greek mythology while *Don Juan* is based on a European legend of more recent times. All three poems are from a personal or subjective perspective. All three are unfinished. All three can be read as political poems.

The Revolt of Islam and *Don Juan* are largely commentaries on contemporary politics from liberal, Radical view points. *Hyperion* is less openly political. Shelley and Byron were aristocrats while Keats was closer to the working class. Keats's use of Greek mythology to evade censorship almost obscures his politics, much as Blake's personal mythology did, but that does not mean it is absent. Blake and Keats belonged to more or less the same social class. We have seen that it was dangerous for people of their class to be openly Radical.

It is usually the case that works from the same social class will have more in common than those grouped according to the writers' ages.

33.4 GLOSSARY

This section has an explanation of some words and terms in *Hyperion*.

After the first four items, phrases and names are listed as they appear in the poem. After the first four entries, the Book number is given at the head of that section of the list. The line number is given in brackets.

Hyperion (title):	Titan. God of the sun
Immortals:	The usual term for Greek gods and goddesses.
Olympians:	The new order of gods
Titans:	The defeated gods

Book I

Saturn (4):	Chief Titan
Naiad (13):	Water nymph
"infant world" (26):	The events of this story are supposed to have taken place when the world had been newly created
Amazon (27):	Belonging to a race of giant women
Achilles (29):	Greek hero of the Trojan war and Homer's *Iliad*
Memphian sphinx (32):	Egyptian sphinx, a mythical creature with the body of a lion, wings, and the face of a woman
"unpractised hands" (62):	Jove is new to the job of hurling thunderbolts, hence the reference to his "unpractised hands"
Thea (96):	Hyperion's consort
Olympus (146):	Mountain home of the Olympians
"the rebel three" (146):	Jove, Poseidon, Hades. The Titans call them rebels because they have defied the authority of their parent gods. Jove's Greek name is actually Zeus. Keats has used the Roman name for him. Jove is god of the sky. Poseidon is the god of the sea, and Hades is the god of underworld. They are the chief Olympians with authority over sky, sea, and earth. The three are brothers
"Not heard . . ." (187):	Keats emphasises that the violent dethronement of the ruling gods is unprecedented. Most writers of the period spoke of the French Revolution in similar terms

Zephyrs (307): Spring breeze. Usually singular

Tellus (246): Titan. Goddess of the earth. "Briny robes" in this line refers to the oceans which seem like the earth's skirts

nadir (276): The point of the heavens diametrically opposite to the zenith. The heavens were said to have two poles

zenith (277): The highest point of the sky which was perceived as an inverted bowl by the ancient Greeks

"hieroglyphics . . .fled" (277, 281-283): A reference to the Rosetta Stone covered with Egyptian pictorial language discovered by Europeans in the early nineteenth century. The hieroglyphics had not been deciphered in Keats's time

Cœlus (307): Father of Hyperion and Saturn, now only a voice. He belongs to an earlier order of gods than the Titans

"earth-born / And sky-engendered" (309-310): The Titans were the children of Tellus, the earth goddess, and Cœlus, the sky god

"Now I behold . . . In men who die" (332-335): See 2.92-97 for a similar description of Saturn. Keats shows that the Titans' fall is more than a fall from power. With their fall, they have become subject to human emotions. They have lost the virtues that made them superior to mortals

Book II

clenched, clench'd: Keats has spelt the word with all its letters the first time but dropped the last "e" the second time. Like Milton, Keats shortened sounds for enhancing the meaning. The shorter "clench'd" here creates the onomatopoeic effect of teeth snapped shut

"Heaving in pain . . . convuls'd" (27-28): Keats's descriptions of pain and disease are powerful and immediate. He probably relied on his medical experience for them

Mnemosyne (29): Pronounced Ne-moss-in-nee. Goddess of memory and mother of the muses who were patrons of the arts and learning. She is the only important Titan who is not at the Titan conference. She tells Apollo later that she is an "ancient Power" who has left her peers for the sake of the new beauty Apollo represents. In fact, as she also tells him, she has nurtured his gifts of music etc.

"Scarce images of life. . ." (33-34): Descriptions like this remind one that Keats had seen the Elgin Marbles lying in disorder in the British Museum

"Of Druid stones . . ." (35): Probably a comparison with Stonehenge on the Salisbury Plain

Iäpetus: Father of Atlas, Prometheus, and Epimetheus

"enormous Caf . . ." (53-55): The assumption here is that a woman's labour pains are more severe when a son is born than when a daughter is born. Biological information of this kind dates the poem. It also tells us about its notion of manliness, namely, that men were physically

powerful and manifested this power from the time they were babies in the womb

"Ganges sacred isles" (60): References to Egypt and India point to Europe's conquest and colonisation of Africa and Asia which began to gain momentum in the early nineteenth century

Enceladus (66): Titan. Close to Saturn. According to Apollodorus, in the war with the Olympians, "Athene threw a vast missile at Enceladus, which crushed him flat and became the island of Sicily" (quoted in Graves 1.132)

Oceanus (75): Titan. God of the sea

Thetis (75): Consort of Oceanus

Clymene (2.76): A confusing figure in Greek mythology who sometimes appears among the Titans and sometimes among the Olympians. According to one story, she and the Titan, Iäpetus, were the parents of Prometheus, the first man. According to another, she became pregnant by the Olympian, Zeus. If Keats knew these conflicting stories, he simply ignored them. His Clymene is a nymph, that is, a minor immortal

Themis (76): Mother of the Fates

"disanointing" (98): In ancient times, when a king came to power, he was anointed with a sacred oil. "Disanointing" describes Saturn's loss of kingship

"utterless thought" (120): Keats has used this phrase to show that the gods did not communicate in the language of mortals but in other ways. It is a device to show the difference between immortals and mortals

"untremendous might" (155): Saturn refers to the power of the Olympians as "untremendous might" to infuse some courage into the Titans. Though he says that the Olympians' power is small compared with that of the Titans, the fact is that they have been defeated by the Olympians. We get the impression that Saturn is full of empty bluster

"What can I then?" (157): Saturn cannot control the Titans any longer. This is another sign of his loss of power

"unseen parent" (158): Cœlus

"locks not oozy" (170): Oceanus' hair ("locks") is not wet ("oozy") as it would have been had he come straight from the ocean. The defeated Titans have fled from the areas they controlled.

"complain'd" (249): Spoke

"hectic" (250): Feverish

"an island of the sea" (275): Possibly Delos where Apollo created music

"A living death . . .sounds" (281): "Living death" is an oxymoron. Like Oceanus, Clymene acknowledges that the Olympians are superior in their skills and beauty. The Titans must be displaced. The loss of their power is like death, but since they are immortals they cannot actually die

"the over-wise" (309): Oceanus

"the over-foolish" (310): Clymene. Enceladus is being sarcastic about Oceanus and Clymene

Memnon (374): Warrior who fought Achilles and is mentioned in Homer's Iliad. A statue, supposedly of Memnon, in Egyptian Thebes used to utter a sound like the note of a lyre every sunrise__Keats speaks of sunset__until it was repaired with modern materials

Book III

Delphic harp (10): Apollo's temple was in Delphi. As the god of poetry, he carried a lyre. Keats calls it a harp

"Father of all verse" (13) Apollo

Delos (24): Island home of Apollo

"Apollo is *once more* the *golden* theme" (28): *once more* is in reference to the many poems on Apollo Keats had written before this. Self-reference is common in Romantic poetry and is the basis of Romantic irony: *golden* is probably a reference to Apollo's being god of the sun. It could also refer to the fact that in Keats's poems, Apollo has golden sandals, bow, and lyre. Traditionally, they are of silver

"the Giant of the Sun" (29): Hyperion

"his mother fair" (31): Apollo's mother, Leto

"twin-sister" (32): Apollo's twin-sister, Artemis. Goddess of the moon and chastity

33.5 EXERCISES

These exercise are to help you assess how well you have mastered the context of Hyperion. Try and answer them on your own and then check your answers against those given at the end.

Q.1 *Some dates*

i. When was Keats born? When did he die?

ii. In which year did he write his greatest poetry. What is it called?

iii. When did Keats commit himself to poetry?

iv. When was his first collection of poems published?

Q.2. *Some biographical information*

i. What profession did Keats train for?

ii. What did he die of?

iii. Which social class did he belong to?

iv. What was Keats by political conviction?

v. Which of his friends introduced him to Greek mythology?

Q.3. *Keats and poetry*

i. What sort of poet did Keats wish to be?

ii. What, according to him, should be the subject of poetry?

iii. Why did he wish to write a long poem?

iv. Which earlier poem did Keats take as his standard?

v. What were the relative merits of Milton and Wordsworth as models for Keats's poetry?

Q.4. i. How many versions of the Hyperion story did Keats write? What titles did he give them? What did he call them? What are they usually called by readers?

ii. When did he stop work on them?

iii. What is their verse form?

Q.5. What is an epic?

Q.6. What is the most important reason for Keats's using Greek mythology to express contemporary issues?

Q.7. Which Romantic poet is Keats best compared with and why?

33.6 LET'S SUM UP

Romantic poetry was consciously autobiographical. Keats's poetry is no different That is why we have considered how his poverty, illness, Radicalism, friends and poetic ambition influenced the emphases of his poetry. Keats was also a very literary poet, that is, he deliberately drew attention by reference or imitation to ideas and styles that he had picked up from books. We have tried to show how important his letters and other poems are for understanding *Hyperion*.

33.7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

This list of books is in three parts:

1) The works referred to in Units 1 and 2
2) Other articles and books that you may wish to read
3) Journals that specialise in articles on Keats, Shelley and the Romantics. You may wish to discover what critics have said about Keats on your own. These journals carry recent criticism.

We have given a short explanation of what each book or articles in this list is about.

Biographies of Keats have not been listed but there are several lives by, e.g., Douglas Bush, Aileen Ward, and Walter Jackson Bate. Robert Gittings has written an illustrated life of Keats which is quite moving.

Works cited:

Briggs, Harold F. ***The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats.*** **New York: Modern Library, 1951**
[This is the edition of Keats's poetry we have used for these units. It includes some letters by Keats and reviews of his works]

Dickstein, Morris. "Keats and Politics" in ***Studies in Romanticism*** **25 (Summer 1986): 75-181**
[Dickstein's article is the basis of the forum on "Keats and Politics" in this issue of *Studies in Romanticism]*

Gittings, Robert. Ed. ***Letters of John Keats: A Selection.*** **1970; rpt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970**
[The standard collection of letters by Keats and his correspondents is edited by Hyder Rollins. Gittings' selection has only Keats's letters but all the important ones are here]

Graves, Robert. ***Greek Myths.*** **2 vols. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955. Rpt. 1960**
[A lively, scholarly guide to Greek myths. You may, however, find some other dictionary of classical allusions or companion to English literature more useful. Make sure that you use a reliable one from, say, the Oxford or Cambridge University Presses]

Additional bibliography

Bewell, Alan. "Keats's `Realm of Flora." ***Studies in Romanticism*** **31 (Spring 1992): 71-98**
[Bewell is good on the social implication of Keats's imagery. For instance, he relates the kinds of gardens Keats liked writing about to "suburban" as a term of class abuse for Keats]

Bradley, A.C. "The Long Poem in the Age of Wordsworth" in *The Oxford Lectures on Poetry*. Oxford UP,
[An old but sound essay on why the Romantics attempted long poems]

Bromwich, David. "Keats's Radicalism" in *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Summer 1986): 197-210
[More specifically about Keats's Radicalism than a general study like Everest's. Useful]

Bush, Douglas. "Keats and His Ideas." In *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism* ed. M.H.Abrams (New York, 1960) 326-329.
[A reliable account of Keats's concern with poetry and the role of the poet]

Butler, Marilyn. "Myth and Mythmaking in the Shelley Circle." *ELH* 49 (1982): 50-75
[A study of how and why the younger Romantics used mythology. Butler argues that they created their own myths from the ancient ones. She relates their mythmaking to the political events of the time, especially censorship, Radicalism, and atheism]

Devine, Philip. "Ode to the Nightingale Among Poets." *Asian Age* 31 October 1995
[An American "working class" view of Keats. The writer identifies with Keats's social and educational background as well with the times Keats lived in. Devine makes poetry and Keats come alive by showing how contemporary he is]

Everest, Kelvin. *English Romantic Poetry: An Introduction to the Historical Context and the Literary Scene.* Milton Keynes: Open UP, 1990
[A crisp account of the age. Everest does not deal with Keats very much but gives a very good idea of the period and its poetry. Highly recommended]

Homans, Margaret. "Keats Reading Women, Women reading Keats." *Studies in Romanticism* 29 (Fall 1990): 341-370
[A gendered analysis of Keats's readership and who he thought should read his poetry. Homans argues that Keats did not want women to read his poetry]

James, D.G. "The Two Hyperions." In *Keats: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Walter Jackson Bate. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964
[A standard and sound essay of 1948]

Jones, Elizabeth. "The Suburban School: Snobbery and Fear in the Attacks on Keats." *Times Literary Supplement* October 27, 1995 (no.4830): 14-15. Full version in *Keats-Shelley Journal* 45 (1996)
[An analysis of the language used in adverse criticism of Keats to show the political and social biases against him. This is a good example of contextualised criticism.]

Keach, William. "Cockney Couplets: Keats and the Politics of Style." *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Summer 1986): 182-196
[Not directly about *Hyperion* but gives you a good idea of how the style that a poet adopted became the reason for class-based attacks on him]

Levinson, Marjorie. *The Romantic Fragment Poem.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986
[An study of the Romantics' iconoclastic approach to poetry and poetic forms. May be read along with MacFarland.]

McFarland, Thomas. *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981

[Much painting and writing of the early Romantic period focused on architectural and other ruins. McFarland's study is about this phenomenon. It is relevant to *Hyperion* because Keats's description of the fallen Titans was based on the partially ruined statues of ancient Greece known as the Elgin Marbles. McFarland may be read along with Levinson.]

Matthews, G.M. *Keats: The Critical Heritage.* London: Routledge, 1971
[A collection of reviews and opinions on Keats, primarily in the nineteenth century. The lateG.M.Matthews' introduction is probably the finest survey of Keats criticism up to 1971 and for many years after]

Muir, Kenneth. "The Meaning of `Hyperion'." *Essays in Criticism* II (1952): 54-75. Rpt. in *John Keats: A Reassessment* . Ed. Kenneth Muir (Liverpool 1958) 102-122
[Muir has a good analysis of Keats's politics and verse]

Ridley, M.R. *Keats's Craftsmanship*
[Still among the best analyses of Keats's technique]

Shelley, P.B. "Adonais"
[Shelley's elegy or lament for Keats, along with his Preface, is the start of the quite untrue story that Keats got consumption because he was miserable at the reviews of *Endymion*. But it also shows the sympathy Keats got from his fellow poets and Radicals]

Stillinger, Jack. *The Poems of John Keats.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978)
[A standard edition of Keats's poems]

Useful journals:
Keats-Shelley Journal
Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin
Studies in Romanticism

33.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Q.1.
- i.
  - a. 31. 10. 1795
  - b. 23. 2. 1820
- ii.
  - a. 1819
  - b. *annus mirabilis*
- iii. 1816
- iv. 1817

Q.2.
- i. The medical profession. He was a trained doctor.
- ii. Consumption or tuberculosis
- iii. Lower middle class
- iv. A Radical
- v. Cowden Clarke

Q. 3.
- i. A great poet, one who would be remembered among the "mighty dead."
- ii. The suffering of the world, or what he called "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts."
- iii.
  - a. It was "a test of invention"
  - b. All great poets had written long poems
  - c. It was a step to fame
  - d. Readers liked poems with numerous images so that at a second reading, they discovered new things.

iv. Milton's *Paradise Lost*

v.
a. Milton and Wordsworth had both written long poems about the rapid and major changes during their times, but Wordsworth's was more relevant to Keats since they were near contemporaries
b. Wordsworth had thought into the human heart, said Keats, while Milton was a man of reason
c. Keats's admiration for Milton had resulted in "Miltonic inversions" and "Miltonic intonations" which Keats described as "false beauty"
d. *Paradise Lost* was a Christian epic, while the pagan mythology Wordsworth praised in *The Excursion* was more suited to Keats's atheism.

Q.4. i.
a. Two
b. *Hyperion: A Fragment* and *The Fall of Hyperion*
c. Keats called them his two "Hyperions"
d. Readers usually refer to them as the first and second *Hyperion*. The first is mostly called just *Hyperion*.

ii. He stopped *Hyperion* between April and May 1819. He began and stopped *The Fall of Hyperion* between August and October 1819.

iii. Both poems are in blank verse, i.e., in unrhymed lines in the iambic pentametre. Milton had used this verse for *Paradise Lost*.

Q.5. i.
a. An epic is a long narrative poem
b. It has several simultaneous stories
c. It is centred on war
d. Epics usually appear at times of quick, violent, and drastic social change.

Q.6. Keats's poem is about how one order of gods is replaced by another. The idea of change was inherent in the ancient Greek conception of the world and even the gods were subject to it. This made it a good vehicle for his ideas which were about the pains and knowledge caused by change.

Q.7. Blake. Blake was a Christian and Keats an atheist but there are many similarities in their work. Both were from the lower middle class; both were inclined to Radicalism; both were vulnerable to the anti-sedition laws; both therefore obscured their political biases in mythological machinery.

UNIT 34 KEATS: *HYPERION: A FRAGMENT-II*

Structure

34.0 Objectives
34.1 Introduction
34.2. *Hyperion: A Fragment*__a discussion
- 34.2.1 A critical summary of *Hyperion: A Fragment*
- 34.2.2 Critical views on *Hyperion*
- 34.2.3 *Hyperion* as political allegory
- 34.2.4 *Hyperion* as a poem about poets and poetry
- 34.2.5 Uncertainties and "Negative Capability"
- 34.2.6 Is *Hyperion* incomplete?
- 34.2.7 The difference between the two *Hyperions*

34.3 Exercises
34.4 Summing up
34.5 Answers to exercises

34.0 OBJECTIVES

In the first unit we saw *Hyperion: A Fragment* in relation to Keats's life and times. In this unit we will focus on the poem itself. You will notice that the meaning of the poem becomes clearer because we can relate it to Keats's life.

- After reading this unit you will know about
- The content of the poem,
- *Hyperion* as a political allegory and as a poem about poetry. These are the two chief ways of reading the poem
- Why Keats stopped writing it and whether it is really incomplete
- The difference in structure and meaning of the two *Hyperions*

34.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn about the structure of *Hyperion*, why its meaning seems unclear, what did Keats mean by "Negative Capability," and the two major ways of reading it, as a political allegory and as a poem about poetry. You will learn about what is meant by calling *Hyperion* a "fragment." Finally, we will look at Keats's criticism of his poem and the difference between the two *Hyperions*.

Once again, you should read the poem before and after you read the discussion. After you have understood the poem and the discussion, answer the questions on the unit and then check them with the answers at the end of the unit.

34.2 *HYPERION: A FRAGMENT*

The structure of this section is given at the start of the Unit 2. First reread the discussion on why Keats wanted to write an epic (33.3.1), then read the following.

34.2.1 A Critical Summary of *Hyperion*

Books I and II: Following the opening of *Paradise Lost*, Keats starts *Hyperion in medias res*, or in the middle of things. The war between the Titans and Olympians is over. The defeated, bewildered Titan chief, Saturn, is sitting alone. Thea, consort of

e sun god, Hyperion, leads Saturn to the other Titans. They discuss reasons for their defeat and what tyey should do next. Most of the Titans hope to recover "the old legiance once mor," to recover happiness by returning to power (Hyperion 1. 162 ceanus and Clymene are the exceptions

three important points are made in the conference. Oceanus, god of the sea, says that manage is natural and that is why they have been replaced by the more beautiful lympians

> much comfort will I give
> If ye will take that comfort in its truth
> We fall be course of Nature's law, not force
> Of thunder, or ofJove. . . . (*Hyperion* 2.179-182)

He represents the Enlightenment belief that the world progresses naturally in a aright line towards perfection. Warlike Enceladus disagrees. He says that an era of par has begun, that they must fight to regain their power, and that Hyperion who is t undefeated is their hope. He represents those aristocrats of the ancien regime who tstigated the Revolutionary wars because they did not accept that monarchies were obsolete. Clymene tells of her experience when she tried to make music to soothe her brief at defeat. A new, unfamiliar, more beautiful music overpowered her with grief and joy. Through that "new blissful golden melody," she heard Apollo's name being called out (Hyperion 2.280). She cannot explain what this means. We are to assume that the hero of the new order is to be Apollo, Olympian god of music, poetry and the an, and that knowledge will be more complex in the new world. Glymene represents intuitive, non-rational knowledge as well as the idea that a new era gives rise to new rat forms. Her report is Keats's clue to the reader that the poem must be judged on its .Own terms had not by the standard of older epics

pics have several simultaneous stories. So, while die Titans talk, Hyperion is uneasy the heavens, At his disembodied father's suggestion, he visits the Titans and is .locked by their despair

ook MI: We are taken to the sacred island of Delos , the birthplace and home of apollo and his twin sister, Artemis. Apollo has never been outside Delos and is lerefore ignorant. But he has an intuitive perception of what he does not know. He nows that he is ignorant about nature laws and die suffering of the world and uestions Mnemosyne, mother of the muses and goddess of memory, about them hrough mystic or intuitive communion with Apollo, Mnemosyne gives him knowledge enormous," chiefly of others' sorrow., which makes a god of him We are seen that Keats believed a great poem had to be based upon great knowledge that would come from reading. By 1819, when he did not have the time to read ecause of his rapidly developing consumption, he had begun to think of sorrow and wisdom as synonymous. The ideal was to shoulder others' sorrow as Apollo does Muir

As Apollo's ignorance dies and great knowledge is bom within him, he goes through Physical convulsion like labour pains. In feet, Keats uses die metaphor of birth hen he says that Apollo dies into life, deliberately linking wisdom and female activity. Poetry works at many levels, i.e., there can be several simultaneous hearings indicated by details of the poem. Thus, the recurring association of Apollo with female deities and qualities is significant. He lives with his mother and sister and then is made a god by another female deity Among the many new, liberating alues of the period expressed, by some of the Romantics is the importance they gave female deities and' forces as 'the-sources of wisdom- (But -see the-entry for Margaret Humans in the bibliography

Apollo's knowledge makes him superior to the Titans. They have questions but no answers. They try out several possible explanations but do not have the certainty Apollo's knowledge. They lose their divinity because they are ignorant.

The poem breaks off in the middle of a sentence. We are not sure how Keats would have continued the story. Whether it is complete at this point or not will be discuss in 2.2.6.

34.2.2 Critical views on *Hyperion*

This section is in two parts. 1) An overview of critics' responses to Keats from his time to the present. 2) Two usual ways of reading *Hyperion*

1) An over view of critical responses to Keats from his time to the present:
Nineteenth century views of Keats:
   a. The early nineteenth century:

In his own time, Keats was condemned by conservative critics and admired by son though not all, Radicals. Byron, for example, was savagely funny about his poetry later, possibly influenced by Shelley, became more sympathetic to him. *Hyperion* was almost universally admired in Radical sections. Shelley is said to have had a copy of it in his pocket when he drowned, and even Byron thought it was a magnificent fragment.

   b. The mid-nineteenth century:

Keats remained among minor poets of the nineteenth century until about 1848 who the influential middle-class intellectuals known as the Cambridge Apostles project him as a poet of "sensuousness." Arthur Hallam was the first to use the word for Keats in an admiring essay which, along with Monckton Milne's biography of Ke did much to create a readership that Keats did not find in his own lifetime.

   c. The end of the nineteenth century:

By this time, Keats was established as a poet who understood personal joys and sorrows. Keats, who often wrote of his interest in contemporary affairs, would have been surprised at this description of himself. But we must remember that the middle classes were playing down radicalism because stability was needed to continue the remarkable economic prosperity their class was then enjoying.

Twentieth century views of Keats:

   a. Up to the 1940s and beyond:

T.S.Eliot's and F.R.Leavis's disdain for the Romantics dominated criticism for decades. Eliot, however, is often very perceptive about them while Leavis's student D.G.James, included a good analysis of the two *Hyperions* in his book, *The Romance Comedy* (1948).

In the 1940s, Keats became a favourite subject for the American New Critics who tended to discuss poetry without reference to the poet's life and times. They helped to appreciate Keats's craftsmanship and his aesthetics, i.e., his concern with poets : poetry.

   b. 1989 onwards:

After the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989, there has been a lot rethinking about the Romantic poets and what we mean by Romanticism.

eral articles published to coincide with Keats's bicentennial year, 1995-96, show new trends in Keats criticism. Most critics have tried to restore Keats's poetry to a erial context. That is, they have used biographical, cultural and political material luminate Keats's poems.

ticularly interesting are those who have analysed certain recurrent imagery in ts's poetry, such as gardens or flowers, or recurrent terms of abuse used for him, as "suburban." They have used contemporary literature and social hierarchies to al that these images and terms are politically and socially biased, and that what n to be pretty and harmless images are often statements of rebellion. Keats's lership has been analysed according to gender and it has been found that more nen read him than men. Was this Keats's intention? These and other questions e been asked and answered with documentary evidence to prove the arguments.

Two usual ways of reading *Hyperion:*

pite of this apparent variety of readings, critics take two opposed stands on the ning of *Hyperion.* One view is that *Hyperion* is a political allegory. The second is the poem is about the nature and function of the poet, i.e., about aesthetics.

se have been discussed in 2.2.3 and 2.3.4 respectively.

2.3 Hyperion as political allegory

allegory is a story whose meaning is something different to what one reads. The nal stories of the *Panchtantara,* for instance, are allegories about human aviour. During times of political repression, writers often use allegory to evade sorship. They may wish to criticise the government but cannot do so openly. They ht, therefore, write about Greek gods and goddesses as Keats did, but so sparently that readers would know it was an account of contemporary politics.

ne political reading of *Hyperion,* the Titans represent the *ancien regime* or the tical system before the Revolution in France. They embody its notion of power its values.

a king of the *ancien regime.* Saturn has ruled alone. When he is overthrown, he apart from the other Titans. Unused to sharing, he stays apart even in defeat. ts wrote much against the danger of being separate from others. He thought of it thal and wrote of "The deadly feel of solitude" (*Endymion* 2.284). Apollo, by trast, wants the share the experience of others.

rn represents absolute, solitary power and is nothing without power. Once it is n away, he reacts with despair, unable to think or act. He has been so blinded by er that he has not even suspected the possibility of revolt. Even Oceanus tells him he has been "blind from sheer supremacy" and therefore unable to learn that they t submit to change (*Hyperion* 2.185). Naturally, then, he cannot understand why as been defeated nor what he should do next. He is sporadically full of boastful ds but has no ideas to offer at the Titans' conference. He cannot lead but has to be Another deity suggests that he should join the other Titans and she has to lead the

rn's being led by a female deity symbolises the end of values that are important e Titan's reign. Like the *ancien regime,* the Titan reign is patriarchal. It is the n of older, male deities. Goddesses are relatively unimportant until Thea comes to rn. You will see how Enceladus encapsulates the patriarchalism of the Titans.

eladus stands for war. The Radical view of war was that kings indulged in it for r own gain and did not care that ordinary people were destroyed by it. The post-

Revolution world was to be without kings and therefore peaceful, something like Delos.

Enceladus also asserts the patriarchal values of the *ancien regime*. For him, the opinion of a male, especially a senior male, is valuable, nothing else is. Clymene is younger and a female which is why he contemptuously dismisses her views. In contrast, Apollo gains wisdom from another female deity, Mnemosyne.

Hyperion is the decisive figure in this political allegory. Worried that he will suffer the fate of the other Titans, he says

> Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
> Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
> This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
> This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
> These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
> Of all my lucent empire? (*Hyperion* 1. 234-239)

Hyperion is motivated by self-interest. He is distant from those who worship him and he is not concerned about the grief of the other Titans. His solitariness is a lot like Saturn's. He represents an aristocrat of the *ancien regime* surrounded by comfort. His wants to help Saturn regain his throne only because he can then continue to be the god of the sun and retain his luxury. In contrast, Apollo leaves his home to learn about the world's sorrows.

It is interesting to see how often Keats gives importance to deities who are in some way marginal to the mythology. For example, he celebrates Apollo as the god of music, harmony, beauty, knowledge and everything he held dear. Apollo was deifier very late in Greek history, the earlier Olympian sun god being Phoebus. Clymene is only a nymph and nymphs came low in the hierarchy of immortals but she alone among the Titans is open to the new world and its knowledge. These marginal figure are the sources of knowledge and vision in Keats's poetry. Oceanus says something like this to Saturn who claims that nothing in his existing sources of knowledge can explain their condition:

> But for this reason, that thou art the King,
> And only blind from sheer supremacy,
> One avenue was shaded from thine eyes
> Through which I wandered to eternal truth.

Constructing knowledge from what had been the marginal groups in society was a prominent part of Radical activity in the early nineteenth century. E.P.Thompson ha an interesting account of this phenomenon (see bibliography. See also the entry for Keach).

Knowledge of the period will help you to work out several other political parallels.

34.2.4 Hyperion as a poem about poets and poetry

In this section, we will interpret the three issues raised by Oceanus, Envaladus, and Clymene, and Apollo's dying into life in the context of Keats's views on poetry. At the time of writing his last poems, Keats had not settled the debate about poetry that he had with himself. To know how his ideas changed, if they changed at all, we need to look at poems other than *Hyperion*. We will briefly discuss *Hyperion* in the content of *Endymion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*.

The Romantics, including Keats, were conscious that older forms of poetry had become irrelevant. They thought deeply on what the subject, style, and social

function of the poet should be and created a variety of new forms. Periods of radical change give rise to new art forms but experimental literature is not well received by readers. Knowing this, the Romantics felt it necessary to educate readers on the how to read their poetry.

Keats's explanations of his poetry are to be found in his letters, mostly.

His statements about poetry rose out of two issues: 1) What should poetry be about? 2)What kind of poetry would ensure his place among the "mighty dead?"

We have discussed the issues in relation to *Hyperion*.

1) Everything that is beautiful__love, youth, seasons__deteriorates with time and makes one very unhappy. Should poetry be escapist and create unreal worlds where nothing changes and is therefore always beautiful? Or should it be about "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" ?

Keats felt he was too inexperienced to have answers. Yet by 1819 he seems to have settled the first issue by replacing "beauty" with "truth." The subject of poetry should be truth, and if it was true, it was beautiful. The truth was that time causes change and often change creates sorrow but it had to be accepted. This is what Oceanus says. It seems close to Keats's own view that "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" is the truth a poet should write about.

From Enceladus' speech, we know that Titans are not willing to accept change. Enceladus wants to fight against it and restore the past as it was. Hyperion, too, wants Saturn to regain his throne and thus return to the past. Since the Titans refuse to accept change, they lose their divine power. By contrast, Apollo becomes a god because he makes the sorrows of the world his own. The change in him from ignorance to knowledge is accompanied by pain. Unlike the Titans, he does not shrink from change, knowledge, or pain.

Clemene reacts to the new music she hears with simultaneous pain and sorrow. It is an uncomfortable experience. She wishes to shut her ears to it, to run away from it, but she cannot. She is not like Enceladus and Hyperion who reject the new order as unimportant. But she cannot be among the new gods because unlike Apollo, she does not understand that this is true knowledge.

A related issue here is of how one gains knowledge. Is it through reason and the conscious mind? Or is it through the emotions and intuition? Keats had not settled this either, but we have seen that he preferred Wordsworth's understanding of the human heart to Milton's reason. Both Clymene and Apollo have intuitive, emotional experiences. We can assume, then, that Keats felt that emotions and intuition were more important ways of gaining knowledge than reason.

2) What kind of poetry would ensure posthumous fame for Keats?

The answer follows from the possibility that knowledge is personal, intuitive, and emotional. If it is indeed personal, then a poet's dreams are a valid subject for poetry.

But poems are written for readers. Would readers accept poetry that was about one man's dreams? Keats's experience was that they would not. *Endymion*, Keats's long poem about one man's dreams, was badly received. It was in his review of *Endymion* that Lockhart had belittled Keats for being of the Cockney School of Poetry. Lockhart's was only the most vicious review. Most reviewers had not liked the poem.

This brings us to the issue of fame. We know that Keats wanted to be among the "mighty dead." What sort of poetry would ensure this? Clearly not the luxuriant, almost self-indulgent poetry of *Endymion*. Milton was among the "mighty dead," so

were the ancient Greeks. Why not write an epic about contemporary events as Milton did but in the "naked, Grecian" style? This is what Keats attempted in *Hyperion* and he disapproved of the result.

In *The Fall of Hyperion*, Keats seems a different poet. The doubtful and uncertain meaning of the first *Hyperion* is replaced with confidence about the subject and style of poetry. We will isolate salient points about *The Fall of Hyperion* that have been further elaborated in 2.2.8.

i) First and most important, Keats is not worried about posthumous fame because he cannot control readers' responses. This leaves him free to write about what he believes in strongly regardless of fame.

ii) The subject is the personal dream of the poet.

iii) The poet internalises "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts." In this he is like Apollo but because knowledge of sorrow comes to him before it comes to Apollo, he is superior to the god who is only a creature of the poet's imagination. The idea that human beings are superior to gods, if there are any gods, is in keeping with the humanism and atheism of the time that Keats shared with the Radicals and many of the other Romantics poets.

34.2.5 *Uncertainties and "Negative Capability"*

The title of the poem is from the name of the fallen Titan god of the sun, not of the new Olympian god, Apollo. Keats was inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost* which also begins with the loser of the war in heaven, Satan. Milton, however, is very clear that Satan had sinned against God and was justly punished with defeat. Keats seems less sure about the wrongness of the Titans. His apparent uncertainty could be because unlike in *Paradise Lost*, there is no "argument" to tell the reader what to think about the poem.

There are many reasons why the Romantic writers left readers to form their own opinions. Readers and writers no longer shared common values so writers could not assert opinions and be certain that they would be understood. Then, writers were genuinely uncertain about their evaluation of events, and their writing embodies this uncertainty. Finally, reacting against the authoritarian style of the eighteenth century, Romantic poets wrote as if they were sharing an experience or idea in such a way that the reader could make up his own mind about the meaning of the poem.

The uncertainty was often only a pose because they provided plenty of clues on how to read their work. Wordsworth's description of his own writing as a cathedral is a useful guideline. What he meant was that any one poem must be read along with everything else the poet had written in prose and verse. This has become the usual way of reading the Romantics. *Hyperion*, for example, gains in meaning when we read it along with Keats's letter on "Negative Capability" (Gittings 43).

We have seen that Hyperion is like a selfish aristocrat of the *ancien regime*. Why Keats did not draw him in strong outlines as a villain is explained by his ideal of poetry which he called "Negative Capability" in a letter of 21, 27 December, 1818:

> . . .it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare posessed [sic] so enormously__I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason__
>
> (Gittings 43)

Keats's ideal seems to have been a style of writing in which the writer does not bully the reader towards his point of view. "We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us," he said. In his own best poetry, the reader is allowed to decide the meaning of the poem for himself only after being gently pushed towards the right interpretation by the poet. For example, Hyperion's concern for his comfort contrasts with Apollo's concern for the sorrows of the world. Hyperion forfeits divinity, Apollo gains it. This is how we know that Apollo and not Hyperion is the hero of the poem.

34.2.6 *Is Hyperion incomplete?*

Some critics say that the fragment is a regular Romantic poetic form, therefore the poem is complete. But Keats's contemporaries referred to it as a fragment, i.e., as incomplete.

Critics have tried to explain why Keats did not finish it. Some say that Keats did not continue the poem because the main difference between the Titans and Olympians is established in two-and-a-half books and anything further would have been repetitious (Muir). Another view is that the poem is about knowledge and that Keats was too young and inexperienced to write any more about knowledge.

Keats himself said he did not finish it because he did not like its echoes of Milton. He was also quite ill. He waited for the spring to improve his health when he wrote several poems. But he did not continue *Hyperion*. Yet he prepared it for publication, using the second *Hyperion* to do so (see Muir). It was published in the volume *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St.Agnes, and Other Poems*, 1820.

Although we cannot be sure why Keats published *Hyperion*, it could have been because of the twin pulls of writing sincerely and fame. Keats had said that though *Endymion* was not a good poem, it was an accurate record of his development until that time. Possibly he saw *Hyperion* as another accurate autobiographical record. Secondly, *Hyperion* was complimented by the critics. Possibly Keats knew it would bring him some fame even if he thought it a flawed poem.

34.2.7 *The difference between the two Hyperions*

Keats spoke of his two *Hyperions* as if they were one poem. He probably thought of the second poem as a revised version of the first.

He had said that the first *Hyperion* would be in the "naked, Grecian manner," without the digressions and luxuriant imagery of *Endymion*. Critics feel that he succeeded well in this aim. He does not deviate from the story of the Titans and the rise of Apollo. There is little of *Endymion's* chief weakness, namely, the development of images simply because he wants to develop them even if they add nothing to the story. He is completely impersonal, as if he had mastered the technique of "Negative Capability." And yet he was dissatisfied with the poem and rewrote it as *The Fall of Hyperion*. He retained the blank verse but divided it into cantos instead of books. The second *Hyperion* has one complete canto and the small part of a second one. The poem starts with an induction.

The chief difference between the two poems is that the opening of *The Fall of Hyperion* is uncompromisingly personal. In the induction, Keats speaks for poets. Though everyone has dreams, he says, the poet has the power of words by which he can prevent his dreams from being lost. He asserts very strongly that a poet's materials are his personal dreams and knowledge. As for the problem of fame, he says that future generations will settle the question. He seems to accept that he has no control over whether he will be among the "mighty dead." Keats changed the structure of the second *Hyperion* to accommodate the idea that the poet makes poetry out of his own dreams. He recast that the narrative as a dream in which the poet is the most important character, as he is of the entire poem.

A new deity, Moneta, explains a vision to the poet. She values him because she says he is one for whom the miseries of the world are misery. In other words, the ability to shoulder the world's sorrow which was Apollo's alone in the first *Hyperion* is here given first to the poet and then to Apollo.

The mythological story is delayed and shown as a dream within a dream, making the poet's story more immediate than the ancient Greek story.

In style, the difference is that Keats abandons the austere impersonality of *Hyperion* and returns to the sensuous, intensely personal voice of his early poetry. The verse is more rhythmic and focused. The two poems together are an accurate autobiography than either by itself.

Some critics maintain that Keats's development into maturity was reflected in his writing more impersonal, "objective" verse. A comparison of the two *Hyperions* shows that Keats had not yet settled whether personal poetry was necessarily inferior.

34.3 EXERCISES

These exercises are to help you to see how much you have learnt. Try to answer them in your own words then check them against the answers in 2.5.

Q.1. Sum up *Hyperion* in about 150 words using your own language.

Q.2. *The immortals*

i. Who is the father of the Titans? What does he look like?

ii. Who are the Titan and Olympian gods of the sun, sea, and sky?

iii. Who is the unfallen Titan in the poem?

iv. Who is Hyperion's consort?

v. Which females does Apollo live with on Delos?

vi. Whom does Apollo gain knowledge from?

vii. Why is Apollo associated with a harp?

Q.3. *The Titan conference*

i. How many significant issues are raised and by whom?

ii. Which of these views represents the Enlightenment and why?

iii. Who supports the war? What does Keats feel about this?

iv. Sum up Clymene's experience.

v. What is Saturn's contribution to the discussion? What does it tell you about him as a leader?

Q.4. What makes Apollo divine?

Q.5. What is an allegory? Why do periods of social repression produce allegories?

Q.6. What are the two chief ways of reading *Hyperion*?

Q.7. Sum up Hyperion as a political allegory in about 75 words.

Q.8. What were the two kinds of poetry that Keats considered writing? Which did he seem to prefer?

Q.9. What did Lockhart say about Keats in his review of *Endymion*?

Q.10. What is the similarity between the poet and Apollo in *The Fall of Hyperion?*

Q.11. How did Keats describe the style of *Hyperion*?

Q.12. What does Keats feel about posthumous fame in *The Fall of Hyperion*?

Q.13. Compare the attitudes of Enceladus and Apollo towards female deities.

Q.14. What are the three ways of considering *Hyperion* as a fragment?

Q.15. *The Fall of Hyperion*

i. Who is the protagonist of the second *Hyperion*?

ii. Who gives him knowledge?

iii. What compliment does she pay him?

iv. How did Keats rearrange the material of the poem, or what is its structure?

Q.16. What do you understand by "Negative Capability?" Which of the two *Hyperions* seems to follow the ideal of "Negative Capability?"

34.4 LET'S SUM UP

Hyperion as a political allegory or as about aesthetics continue to be the two chief ways of reading it. Newer criticism usually fits into these categories but the balance seems to be shifting towards seeing *Hyperion* within its cultural context. Though we have discussed political and aesthetic interpretations of *Hyperion* in separate sections, it was because of social and political change that Keats, like his contemporaries, rethought the nature of poetry and the social role of poets. In addition, his views were influenced by personal circumstances such as poverty and illness.

In short, *Hyperion* was created out of Keats's life and times.

34.5 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Q.1. A summary should include the major events in the narrative. Some critical comments are permitted. Check your summary against the poem and the synopsis in 2.2.1.

Q.2.
i. a. Cœlus is the father of Saturn and Hyperion and of most of the major Titans.
b We do not know what he looks like since he is only a voice.
ii. The Titan gods of the sun, sea, and sky are Hyperion, Oceanus, and Saturn.
The Olympian gods of the sun, sea, and sky are Apollo, Poseidon, and Jove.
iii. Hyperion is the unfallen Titan.
iv. Hyperion's consort is Thea.
v. Apollo lives with his mother, Leto, and twin sister, Artemis, on Delos.
vi. He gains knowledge from Mnemosyne, goddess of memory and mother of the muses.
vii. Because he is the god of poetry. Traditionally he is associated with the lyre. Keats calls it a harp in this poem.

Q.3. *The Titan conference*

i. Three significant issues are raised by Oceanus, Enceladus, and Clymene respectively.
ii. Oceanus' view is closest to the Enlightenment view of progress. He says that their downfall is natural because at their "heels a fresh perfection treads," i.e., the world progresses naturally towards greater perfection. Change is therefore always a change for the better. Since the Olympians are more beautiful than the Titans, they must inevitably replace the Titans.
iii. Enceladus. Keats's view is not expressed in the poem but he had Radical sympathies and Radicals were against war. He therefore probably disliked Enceladus' support of war.
iv. Clymene says that she was trying to forget her grief by making music when a new music overwhelmed her. It filled her with joy and sorrow but was uncomfortable. It did not make her happy yet she could not shut her ears to it. She also heard Apollo's name called out.

What this means is probably the Titans cannot escape sorrow; that Apollo is the deity of the future; that knowledge will be more complex after the fall of the Titans because it will embrace joy as well sorrow.

v. Saturn initiates the discussion by asking the Titans why they are so filled with despair and that there is nothing in all he knows to explain their gloom. He has searched in stories of the past ("legends of the first of days" *Hyperion* 2.132) for an explanation but found nothing. He has not understood that since their fall has never occurred before, past knowledge is not likely to help them. A new stage in history demands fresh thinking which Saturn cannot provide. He is therefore not worthy of leading the Titans any more.

Q.4. "Knowledge enormous" makes Apollo divine.

Q.5. a. An allegory is a story whose real meaning is quite different from its surface meaning.
b. Repression, especially political repression usually includes censorship and harsh punishment for those who criticise the state. To avoid such punishment, writers partially hide their criticism in allegorical writing.

Q.6. The two chief ways of reading *Hyperion* are

a. As a political allegory
b. As a poem about poets and poetry, or aesthetics.

Q.7. Check your summary against 2.2.3. If you use you own language, you will be sure that you have understood the ideas.

Q.8. The two kinds of poetry were

a. Escapist poetry in which time does not pass and everything is permanently beautiful
b. Poetry about change and sorrow, about "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts." He seemed to prefer this kind of poetry.

Q.9. Lockhart called Keats Leigh Hunt's "bantling" and said that he belonged to the "Cockney School of Poetry" as well as to the "Cockney School of Politics."

Q.10. Both participate in the world's sorrow. This is "knowledge enormous" from which poetry is made and which makes Apollo a god.

Q.11. He said it was in the "naked, Grecian manner."

Q.12. Keats's view about posthumous fame is in the induction to *The Fall of Hyperion*. He felt that it was beyond his control and that all that he could do was to write sincerely.

Q.13. Female deities as sources of knowledge are unimportant for Enceladus but important for Apollo. Because of his attitude, Enceladus dismisses Clymene's experience of the new world. Apollo, however, has dreamed of Mnemosyne and when he meets her, he questions her and gains knowledge from her that makes a god of him.

Q.14. a. When Keats called it a fragment, he meant that it was an unfinished poem. This is how most of his contemporaries saw it.

b. Some twentieth century critics think that Keats could not have written any more of the poem because the main conflict has been stated and because he was too inexperienced to write any further on a poem about knowledge. Kenneth Muir's essay has a good discussion on this.

c. More recently, Marjorie Levinson has said that the fragment is a regular poetic form in Romantic poetry. She argues that the Romantics deliberately left their poems unfinished, and that these fragmentary poems are actually complete.

Q.15. i. The poet.

ii. Moneta

iii. That he is among those to whom the misery of the world is misery, i.e., that he does not try and escape sorrow by transforming it into something else.

iv. He structured it as a dream within a dream. The poet dreams that he is near as altar in a forest when he meets Moneta. He then has another dream while he is already dreaming, In this second dream, he sees the Titans. Thus, he starts by telling us about himself and then includes the Hyperion's story. The effect is to emphasise that the story is the poet's invention, i.e., entirely subjective.

Q.16. a. By "Negative Capability," Keats meant that a poet should negate his personality and opinions, leaving the reader free to make up his own mind about the meaning of the poem. The writer should not force his vies on the reader.

b. The first *Hyperion.*

UNIT 35 THE ROMANTIC AGE : A REVIEW

Structure

35.0 Objectives
35.1 Introduction
35.2 Romanticism and the real world
35.3 Romanticism, emotion and imagery
35.4 Political discontent and humanitarian aspirations
35.5 Wonder of the romantics
35.6 Awe and wonder in things familiar
35.7 Let's sum up

35.1 OBJECTIVES

You would be able to achieve three objectives by reading this unit. They are as below:

- Review your study of blocks six and seven ;
- Look at the Romantic movement as a whole ; and
- Gain insights into the writing of critical questions.

35.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit on the Romantic period. What would we have done if we had been in a face to face situation ? After having completed a period such as the Romantic Revival we would have thrown the discussion open for your participation. Perhaps we who had taught this period to you over a period of two or three months would have taken our seat in the audience and asked you to present your papers. Alternatively we would have given you a set of questions and asked you to write your answers. We would have then evaluated your answers and may be asked some of you to read your essays aloud for the benefit of your friends. As I am aware that quite a few of you would not visit the study center due to your personal problems so this unit should help you partially overcome the handicap.

In this unit you are going to read five short essays such as you might be asked to write at the final exam. On the one hand they will help you review what you have read in the present and the previous blocks and on the other offer you models for your own answers to critical questions.

You should not have to spend too long on this block because new ideas are not being presented here; new facts will not be discussed. What you are going to learn is the manner of presentation. Each section in this unit has a question written in the italics and the answers to those questions follow in the remaining part of that section.

35.2 ROMANTICISM AND THE REAL WORLD

The peculiar quality of Romanticism lies in this that in apparently detaching us from the real world, it restores us to reality at a higher point.' Discuss, illustrating from the poetry of the nineteenth century.

The statement presumes that Romanticism detaches us from the real world in some sense. This deserves examination.

The Augustan poets took the urban society as their milieu. The British poets of the early nineteenth century found this society not a society in perfection but being made bad and unhygienic by the Industrial Revolution. Its polite character was being spoilt by the increasing number of the uneducated, homeless workers in the towns. This society became a symbol of greed and trickery, deceit and hypocrisy and the Romantic poets, emerged from this old centre and base of culture and politeness. This may be more true of Blake than of Keats but there would have been some agreement among the Romantic poets on this issue.

This social change affected the thoughts of the people. The range of experience of the previous age was found to be narrow and limited and the permissible interests and sentiments few and limits of good sense and decency soon–reached. The new themes thus were the child's experiences, or interests of peoples remote from the cities or even national life or the unexplored human passions, sentiments and feelings that were more a part of human existence than just reason.

Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner, Christabel,* and *Kubla Khan* demonstrate the effectiveness of the non–rational and discursive in literature as vehicle for communicating states of mind and feeling that cannot be readily justified in explicit statements. *The Ancient Mariner* is set in the solitariness of the gruesome sea. It is a tale of adventure and more than that, a tale of adventure into the unexplored areas of the psyche. The Mariner is afflicted by a strange urge to tell his tale to someone who is fit for it. Still the morality is a mundane one, but something that was not considered worthy of notice by the predecessors of the Romantics:

> He prayeth well who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.

Christabel has the setting of a medieval castle, where an innocent girl like the kin of the bridegroom in *The Ancient Mariner* is introduced into the complexity of a world of love, witchery, supernatural elements and senility. All these poems express man's willingness to pay serious attention to facts of mind untainted by reason.

Coleridge however was not alone in this matter. Blake had gone farther than Coleridge and imagined a whole world of beings. *America, The Four Zoas, Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* and *The Book of 'Urizen'* are all inhabited by mythical beings of Blake's creation. But analysed on the level of symbols like Uri[illegible] for reason they all explain their validity and meaning.

Wordsworth took for the subject of his poetry the common people, uncorrupted by civilization or the child who has not allowed his innocence to get corrupted by understanding. 'Michael', 'The Cumberland Beggar' and the girl in 'We are Seven' are symbols of innocence. Michael gets corrupted by the new society which he joins. Civilization has not reached others (in the two poems mentioned above), to corrupt them.

In poems like 'The Daffodils' or 'The Sky Lark' or 'The Solitary Reaper' artefacts of nature are seen as a personal, not a public object.

> Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
> As if her song could have no ending;
> I saw her singing at her work
> And o'er the sickle bending ; -
> I listen'd, motionless and still ;
> And, as I mounted up the hill,
> The music in my heart I bore
> Long after it was heard no more.

As the anarchism of Godwin professed man's complete independence from external control the Romantics emphasized the autonomy of a poet's world

Byron was not an escapist. He remained highly sociable. But while in the society, he wished to fight with the despotism of his time. He set himself against all the monarchies of his day. On the question of Greek independence he recalled Homer, the battles of the Greeks against the Trojans; and nearer in time the memory of the Crusades came surging over his mind. The poetry of *The Vision of Judgment* in theme and treatment is of the previous age. *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* are earthly and even profane. But they are at a great remove from the setting of the poetry of Dryden, Pope and Dr. Johnson.

Shelley was a revolutionary and joined Byron in his philhellenism. He declared – 'we are all Greeks'. But his poetry is more airy and more than any other romantic poet, worthy of Arnold's sneer.

It asserts the romantic heresy which the poetry of the age had committed in proclaiming the self-sufficiency of the individual. 'To a Skylark' is perhaps the most perfect example of airiness converted into the charms of poetry :

> What thou art we know not;
> What is most like thee?
> From rainbow clouds there flow not
> Drops so bright to see
> As from, thy presence showers a rain of melody.

In sublimating the concrete Shelley licenses our imagination to the extremes of flight and offers a portrait of the purest of human aspirations, not of concrete objects.

Keats loved the vernal bloom, the taste of wine, the fragrance of flowers, the gentle breeze and above all to be lulled to sleep by the one sweet call of a nightingale :

> With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
> And purple-stained mouth;
> That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
> And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Keats later repudiated his cult of beauty. In his later poetry such as 'Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds' he laments,

> "... Oh, never with the prize,
> High reason, and the love of good and ill,
> Be my award."

Or again,

> Or is it that imagination brought
> Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd
> Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
> Cannot refer to any standard law
> Of either earth or heaven ?

Still the standard law which Keats and his contemporary poets adhered to, and recognized the short-comings of, did restore the honour and mystery that surrounded human beings. It is in this sense that they portrayed reality but again it was a part of the reality. In the change of focus if new areas had been discovered old ones had gone into the shade, if not completely eclipsed.

Deb Ratna

35.3 ROMANTICISM, EMOTION AND IMAGERY

'Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the new literature.' Discuss the Romantic Revival in the light of this statement.

Intense emotions of love, beauty and patriotism are generally accompanied with an intense display of images. But when a poet meditates upon an object or an idea his intellect provides him with philosophy or a sublime strain of poetry rather than the glimmer of images.

Shelley's skylark is a product of quivering imagination. The bird has been compared with a 'Cloud of fire', an 'un-bodied joy', a 'star of heaven', 'the arrows of that silver sphere', 'a poet hidden in the light of thought', 'a high-born maiden', 'a glow-worm golden' and 'rose embower'd in its own green leaves', and with these images go intense emotions. To quote a few stanzas

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

Or

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee;
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Or

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now !

For Shelley, the bird becomes a symbol and then it grows until it becomes an agent which participates with him in his flights of fancy, his passions of life, his yearnings for freedom.

Keats is another poet whose emotional experience is conveyed through images. The nightingale is called 'light-winged Dryad of the trees' and Keats thinks of the emperors and clowns of the past:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :

But Wordsworth's emotional response is for meditation. Much of his imagery is replaced by a 'visionary gleam'. Still his Skylark is 'Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !' And Wordsworth requests humanity to,

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
A privacy of glorious light is thine,
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine
Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam –
True to the kindred point of Heaven and Home.

This coupling of emotion and imagery is true in other contexts as well. Byron's portrait of the ocean is majestic and conveyed through bold images:

Roll on thou deep and dark and blue Ocean – roll !
Ten thousand fleets sweep over there in vain ;
Man marks the earth with ruin - his control
Stops with the shore ; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

The majesty and grandeur of the ocean is put in contrast with the littleness of man through appropriate images.

Byron used such images for other purposes like the expression of love of the beauty of women :

She Walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes ;

The lady is as beautiful and majestic as a cloudless night, full of stars.

Wordsworth finds the image of an 'apparition' in his 'phantom of delight':

A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament ;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight's too, her dusky hair
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn
A dancing shape, an image gay
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

When he sees her from a nearer view she remains 'a spirit, yet a woman too !' and in the last stanza when Wordsworth sees her with his 'serene' eyes she appears to be

The very pulse of the machine
A being breathing thoughtful breath
A traveller between life and death.

Shelley's call to his beloved is the most intense in this series :

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion ;
Nothing in the world is single,
All things by a law divine

In one another's being mingle –
Why not I with thine ?

Here once again intense emotion has been mixed with intense imagery with a telling effect. The elements of nature wake us to the elements of our own sweet being.

Keats in the 'Ode on the Grecian Urn' talks of the '...still unravished bride of quietness thou foster-child of silence and slow time'. The coming together of 'still unravished bride' with a product of 'silence and slow time' make the portrait on the urn a permanent source of inspiration.

This intensity of emotion when coupled with an intense display of imagery produces the sweeping, pervasive and permanent effect of Romantic poetry.

Gyan Ratna

35.4 POLITICAL DISCONTENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASPIRATIONS

'The Romantic movement at the end of the eighteenth century expressed the aesthetic and emotional sensibilities of the age, the political discontents, and the humanitarian aspiration. Discuss.

George I and George II had been interested more in their province of Hanover from where whey had come than their new kingdom of Great Britain. George III ascended the throne in 1760 and remained on it until his death in 1820. He wanted to get back for himself what his two predecessors had lost, i. e. the power to reign as well as rule. This involved a great deal of shady dealings and false play, unfair elections and bribery of parliamentarians and voters. The society had become corrupt and the elite wished a change. The days of despotic rule were over and democracy had dawned across the Atlantic on their (The English men's) own kins in 1776 in the United States of America. The poet of *The Traveller* recorded this passing away of reliance on the king and the waning of the adoration of authority :

How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure,

The narrowness of the urban society and 'good sense' in philosophy and in poetry, the 'ancient rules'and the crippling medium of the 'heroic couplet', were felt to be a burden which the new age wished to discard. Writing about the metre of the previous age, Blake wrote in his *Poetical Sketches:*

The languid strings do scarcely move !
The sound is forc'd, the notes are few !

But more than the disenchantment with the old medium was the asperity towards the old subjects which desiccated the hearts of men, and narrowed the range of the experience of the educated. These new romantic poets lived in remote places, away from the control-room of the state. The poets of the previous age – Swift and Prior, Milton, Marvell Addison and Donne – were close to the powers that were.

Blake took for his subject the chimney sweeper or the village green and innocent children. Wordsworth directed his interest towards the poor people like the Cumberland beggar or Michael's father and mother. An innocent girl like Lucy or the one in 'We are Seven' drew his attention as much as his own childhood, the 'fair seed time' in which he was 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear.' In this novel realization of man as an autonomus being, his self-sufficient status, lay the secret of Wordsworth's poetic gleams, his aesthetic expressions :

An auxiliary light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour ; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye :
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.

Scott, similarly took Young Lockinvar or an innocent Maisie for his theme :

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early
Sweet Robin sits on the bush
Singing so rarely.
'Tell, me thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?'
When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry me.

Coleridge's imagination, however, did not turn to things so simple. His imagination was conditioned by his addiction to laudanum. Poetry depicts man's response to uncommon situations. 'Kubla Khan', said to be written in a dream is in its very perfection in this class of poetry :

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure–dome decree
Where Alph, the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

The 'measureless caverns' that Coleridge envisioned was a great fact of his humanitarian aspiration and in accepting the remote and the far fetched as a theme for his poetry, he countenanced the immense possibilities that man was capable of. This conditioned the music of his poetry and ensured its charm :

Weave a circle round me thrice
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey due hath fed
And drunk the milk of paradise.

The music of 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner' is gruesome:

Alone, alone, all all alone,
Alone, on a wide wide sea,
And never a saint took pity on,
My soul in agony.

Or

Day after day, day after day :
We stuck nor breath nor motion ;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Coleridge's gruesome music occupies its place in the full bloom of the joy of marriage :

What loud uproar burst from that door !
The wedding-guests are there :
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer.

The poetry of Coleridge re-enacts the medieval motif of *Est in Arcadia ego* – death in Arcady, right in the heart of joy of life. It responds in this way to a deep seated psychological aspect of the human mind.

But the romanticism of the carly generation of the romantic poets did not go farther. Wordsworth had written of the Fall of Bastille:

Bliss was it in that down to be alive
But to be young was very heaven

But when the dawn turned into a gory afternoon, repressive and conservative attitudes took hold of the minds of men. Pitt, who was in favour of reforms set all his energy against any liberal measure till the Battle of Waterloo relieved the British people of the liberal sympathies upsetting the pattern of the society. The second generation came to express views against opression and in favour of liberalism, in support of reforms and the utopian creed of anarchism of Godwin and Bakunin and of the socialistic creed of Robert Owen of New Lanark.

Ajay Kumar

35.5 WONDER OF THE ROMANTICS

'The 'wonder' of the Romantics is the enthralling discovery, the progressive lightning-up of an inner horizon, which extends beyond the limits of clear consciousness. ' How far is this an adequate assessment of the Romantic Movement in English literature?

The great neo-classical poets from Dryden to Dr. Johnson wrote on themes of peoples, which the titles of their poems bear out – 'An Essay on Man', 'An Essay on criticism', 'London', 'The Vanity of Human Wishes' or 'The Village School-Master' The Romantic poets took private themes and glorified the individual. In the absence of public themes they looked for private matters as the proper stuff for poetry.

Children, birds, beauty of nature, flowers, remote lands, mysterious and even fear inspiring landscape or seascape became their themes for poetry. Hence there could not emerge an organized society and a familiar set of norms to which Pope claimed to conform :

That not in fancy's maze he wander'd long
But stoop'd to Truth, and moralized his song

Keats's and in some ways the dilemma of all romantics was whether they were 'fanatics', i.e. of the dreamer tribe or poets.

Fanatics have their dreams,
Wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect;
The savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at Heaven ;

The poet, Keats resolved

... is a sage ;
A humanist physician to all men.

As 'physicians' that the Romantic poets were, they reclaimed imagination for the polite society. A child was born with the 'glories of the imperial palace' whence he had come. Wordsworth behoids

... the child among his newborn blisses
A six year's darling of a pigmy size !
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses
With light upon him from his father's eyes !

But this was common. What others could not see was

... at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life
Shaped by himself with newly learned art ;

Whether Wordsworth succeeded in persuading his contemporaries of the 'Mighty prophet ! Seer Blest' we do not know but he did incite curiosity into a new field or rather a dormant field of human interest.

'The Daffodils' records another aspect, towards which the romantic poets looked with wonder :

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood.
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

The beauty of flowers extended to all things of nature. Shelley heard in the West Wind the "trumpet of a prophecy" ;

O wild West wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale and hectic red,

This mighty force gradually goes far away, beyond the range of clear–sight of the poet somewhat like the two children, in 'Dream Children' who from realities slip to the spectral unrealities on the shores of Lethe or like the Sky lark which floats and runs 'like an unbodied joy whose race has just begun' –

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire ;
The blue deep thou wingest
And singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest.

Keats's nightingale does not soar in the sky. It has its

Melodious plot
Of beechen green and shadows numberless

from where it invites Keats and he is ready to 'fade far away, dissolve and quite forget.'

Coleridge's imagination hardly woke up from the forgetfulness imposed upon him by opium. He heard mysterious voices in the air, in the ghostly moonlit nights, in the strikings of the clocks, and in the howls of an old toothless maistiff :

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock ;
Tu–whit ! – Tu – whoo !
And hark, again ! The crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

What wonder enwrapped the inland objects with the medieval *leit motif* was given a ghostly tinge when the scene was the sea or the 'ancestral voices prophecying war' when the same was Kublai Khan's palace in China.

All the concrete objects in major Romantic poetry except perhaps those of Byron and Southey have a tendency to 'dissolve' into the liquid state and in vapours. Here is kets in *Hyperion*:

His flaming robes steamed out beyond his heels
And gave a roar as if of earthly fire,
That scar'd away the meek ethereal hours
And made their dove wings tremble. On he flared
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond–paved lustrous long arcades
Until he reached the great main Cupola ;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamped his foot,
And from basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region.

It was in this ability of the romantic poets to turn a massive character like Hyeprion into liquid fire and only sound that the unique achievements of the romantic poets lie.

Devraj Kumar

35.6 AWE AND WONDER IN THINGS FAMILIAR

'By associating single sensible experiences with some undefinable superior order of things the Romantics have enriched our appreciation of the familiar world and awakened a new awe and wonder at it.' Discuss.

It is often assumed that there is no human emotion that cannot be found in Shakespeare. Dryden said, ' ... he had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him ... ' Nature, to Dryden and his contemporaries meant far more than it means to us and included human nature as well, but the treatment of nature that we find in the poetry of the Romantic poets was a revolution in literature.

The case of 'the daffodils' of wordsworth may be taken for example. Wordsworth reports,

Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

Buy these ' ten thousand' flowers are immediately seen against the background of the milky way, the dance of the waves and the dance of the flowers themselves. As it were, the entire creation is seen in a cosmic dance. We are forced to question whether Wordsworth knew something bout the cosmic dance of Shiv. Ultimately, he thinks of the value of this encounter with a 'never ending line' of daffodils;

> For oft when on my couch I lie
> In vacat or in pensive mood
> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude;
> And then my heart with pleasure fill
> And dances with the daffodils

By the time we reach these lines we start questioning about the sources and aims of romatic poetry. Is Romantic Poetry about nature? Or is it about man. Romantic poetry is primarily about man and only secondarily about nature, but it is nature–poetry because nature is the measure of all things and both the medim and object of the search. The poets of the classical age had the urban society as the standard, the romantic poets replaced in with nature. The song of the solitary reaper reminds Wordsworth of a grand order: 'of old unhappy far off things and battles long ago' of the nightingale and the cuckoo, the traveller in a desert and the voice of the cuckoo from Hebrides in spring. Once again a common song is heard against the bckground of entire creation as it were. Once again we get tempted to know whether Wordsworth had any knowledge of the 'Natya Shastra' of Bharata and our concept of Rasas for in one lyric Wordsworth invokes the entirety and our experience becomes universal. The same applies to fearful sights as well. Wordsworth saw his own boating experience against the background of fearful forms, of the rock extending toward him like a ghost and the mountains all around. All his childish delinquencies, he admits, were reproved by nature's 'ministries of fear'.

It is for such a treatment of nature that common experiences became so valuable to the people of nineteenth century Britain. Coleridge decided to keep his child in the midst of nature:

> ...thou my babe, shall wander like a breeze
> By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
> Of ancient mountain and beneath the clouds

It was Wordsworth's influence, besides being the influence of the age that made him think that nature was the repository of grand forms and of Eternity.

> ...So shall thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language, which thy god
> Utters who from eternity doth teach
> Himself in all and all things in Himself.

Hence it was a common belief among the poets of the romantic revival that in nature existed something more than the casual more than the eye could meet without the assistance of the seeking mind. Nature could be a reflection of God himself, was what Coleridge felt. The matin bells, or the bark of the toothless maistiff are agencies of some preternatural beings. Caverns to him were measureless and passed into the sunless sea. The experience of marriage was to be seen against the perspective of the experiences of the Ancient Mariner who felt a pain at certain hours and must tell his experiences to others.

Keats and Shelley see things and evaluate experiences less against the background of mysterious forces and supernatural visitations. To the former, love and immortality are the connecting principles. To the latter, human aspirations of freedom and liberty

and revolution and reform and the amelioration in the condition of mankind take the place of Wordsworth's 'ministeries of nature'. The nightingale's voice cannot be overlooked by generations to come:

> Thou wast not born for death immortal bird,
> No hungry generations tread thee down,
> The voice I hear this passing night was heard,
> In ancient days by emperors and clowns.

And it was heard in ancient days by the 'emperors and clowns' just like Yeats's handiwork;

> Once out of nature I shall never take
> My bodily form from any natural thing
> But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
> Of hammered gold or gold enamelling
> To keep a drowsy emperor awake
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium
> Of what is past or passing or to come.

But the difference is all the more pronounced. While the 'golden bird' is a classical image – Yeats eager to live in his peculiar classical past – the nightingale is something that communicates with us in our real existence. The golden bird is part of a bardic pose. The nightingale is the passionate dream of the poet's life. The bird singing on the golden bough is avowedly unreal and elevates the familiar; the nightingale so common to our daily life becomes thing unreal and awful.

Shelley's treatment of the skylark make the romantic stance clear once again. It is raised to the highest heavens:

> Hail to thee blithe spirit
> Bird thou never wert,
> That from Heaven or near it
> Pourest thy full heart
> In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Although the bird is unreal when looked through Shelley's eyes – 'bird thou never wert', - it can still give a message to humanity

> Teach me half the gladness
> That thy brain must know
> Such harmonious madness
> From my lips would flow

The world should listen then, as I am listening now!

However unreal the bird may become in the intensity of experience, of aspiration, dreams or desires it still communicates with humanity whereas the golden handiwork of Yeats, or any other classicist for that matter, speaks only to lords and ladies of the august company. It is for this reason that nature, before the Romantic poets started writing was never seen with the wonder and awe with which it came to be seen after them. Wordsworth expressed the ethos of his age in just two lines:

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The meanest flower, the Cumberland beggar, Peter Bell, Michael, the river Duddon were never seen before in the same spirit nor were the matin bells or the marriage songs heard with the same intensity or the dance of lovers on a grecian urn seen with

the same passion or the west wind welcomed as 'destroyed or preserver' with the same compelling force that it was by the great Romantics.

Upendra Sharma

35.7 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you reviewed the poetry of the Romantic Revival as a whole and gained insights into the craft of writing answers of critical questions that you may be asked in the term-end (i.e. final) examination. Hope you found the unit useful for your self-study. Would you like to read out some of your essays before your friends at the Study Centre or a self-organised group as some students did in this class?



JOHN CONSTABLE THE HAYWAIN. 1821, Oil on canvas, 51¼ x 73"
(130.1 x 185.4 cm). The National Gallery London.



JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER THE SLAVE SHIP
1840. Oil on canvas, 35¾ x 48" (90.5 x 122 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

APPENDIX

POEMS PRESCRIBED FOR DETAILED STUDY

I

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

P.B. SHELLEY

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.
The smokeless altars of he mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray

Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air,
And in succession due, did Continent,

Isle, Ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil which he of old
Took as his own and then imposed on them;
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold

Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep,
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem
Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the Deep

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread

Was so transparent that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
Bathed in the same cold dew my brow and hair
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn.

Under the self same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains and the Ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air.
And then a Vision on my brain was rolled.....

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay
This was the tenour of my waking dream.
Methought I sate beside a public way

Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, yet so

Was borne amid the crowd as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summers bier.-
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
Some flying from the thing they feared and some
Seeking the object of another's fear,

And others as with steps towards the tomb
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom

Of their own shadow walked, and called it death...
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.

But more with motions which each other crost
Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw
Or birds within the noonday ether lost,

Upon that path where flowers never grew;
And weary with vain toil land faint for thirst
Heard not the fountains whose melodious dew

Out of their mossy cells forever burst
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths, land wood lawns interspersed

With overarching elms and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old.....

And as I gazed methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the South wind shakes the extinguished day.—

And a cold glare, intenser than the noon
But icy cold, obscured with [blinding] light
The Sun as he the stars. Like the young Moon

When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might

Doth, as a herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of the her dead Mother, whose dim form
Sends in the dark ether from her infant's chair.

So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within as one whom years deform

Beneath a dusky hood and double cape
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb,
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud like crape

Was bent, a dun and faint etherial gloom
Tempering the light; upon thechariot's beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-winged team.
The Shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost: I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded... little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the Sun
Or that these banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been, or will be done—
So ill was the car guided, but it past
With solemn speed majestically on...

The crowd gave way, and I arose ghast,
Or semed to rise, so mighty was he trance,
And saw like clouds upon the thunder blast

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around; such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance

Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senatehouse and prison and theatre
When Freedom left those who upon the free

Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the just similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er

The chariot rolled a captive multitude
Was driven; all those who had grown old in power
Or misery, —all who have their age subdued,

By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit and flower;

All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form and name
Of their own earth with them forever low—

All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits tot he Conqueror, but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame

Fled back like eagles tot their native noon,
Or those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems, till the last one

Were there; for they of Athens and Jerusalem
Were neither mid the mighty captives seen
Nor mid the ribald crowd that followed them

Or fled before... Swift, fierce and obscene
The wild dance maddens in the van, and those
Who lead it, fleet as shadows on the green,

Outspeed the chariot and without repose
Mix with each other in tempestuous measure
To savage music... Wilder as it grows,

They, tortured by the agonizing pleasure,
Convulsed and on the rapid whirlwinds spun
Of that fierce spirit, whose unholy leisure

Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
Throw back their heads and loose their streaming hair,
And in their dance round her who dims the Sun

Maidens and youths fling their wild arms in air
As their feet twinkle; now recede and now
Sending within each other's atmosphere

Kindle invisibly; and as they
Like moths by light attracted and repelled,
Oft to new bright destruction come and go,

Till like two clouds into one vale impelled
That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
And die in rain, —the fiery band which held

Their nautres, snaps.....ere the shock cease to tingle
One falls and then another in the path
Senseless, nor is the desolation single,

Yet ere I can say *where* the chariot hath
Past over them; nor other trace I find
But as of foam after the Ocean's wrath

Is spent upon the desart shore. —Behind,
Old men, and women doully disarrayed
Shake their grey hair in the insulting wind,

Limp in the dance and strain with limbs decayed
To reach the car of light which leaves hem still
Frther behind and deeper in the shade.

But not the less with impotence of will
They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
Round them and round each other, and fulfill

Their work and to the dust whence they arose
Sink and corruption veils them as they lie—
And frost in these performs what fire in those.

Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
Half to myself I said, "And what is this?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why"-

I would have added-"is all here amiss?"
But a voice answered.." Life"...I turned and knew
(O Heaven have mercy on such wretchedness!)

That what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill side
Was indeed one of that deluded crew,

And that the grass which methought hung so wide
And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
And that the holes it vainly sought to hide

Were or had been eyes.-"If thou canst forbear
To join the dance, which I had well forborne,"
Said the grim Feature, of my thought aware

"I will tell all that which to this deep scorn
led me and my companions, and relate
The progress of the pageant since the morn;

"If thirst of knowledge doth not thus abate,
Follow it even to the night, but I
Am Weary"...Then like one who with the weight

Of his own words is staggered, wearily
He paused, and ere he could resume, I cried,
"First who art thou?"..."Before thy memory

"I feared, loved , hated, suffered, did, and died,
and if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Earth had with purer nutriment supplied

"Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau-nor this disguise
Stain that within which still disdains to wear it.-

"If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
A thousand beacons from the spark I bore."
"And who are those chained to the car?" "The Wise,

"The great, the unforgotten they who wore
Mitres and helms and crowns, or wreathes of light,
Signs of thought's empire over thought; their lore

"Taught them not this-to know themselves; their might
Could not repress the mutiny within,
And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night

"Caught them ere evening." "Who is he with chin
Upon his breast and hands crost on his chain?"
"The Child of a fierce hour; he sought to win

"The world, and lost all it did contain
Of greastness, in its hope destroyed; and more
Of frame and peace than Virtue's self can gain

Without the opportunity which bore
Him on its eagle's pinion to the peak
From which a thousand climbers have before

"Fall'n as Napoleon fell."-I felt my cheek
Alter to see the great form pass away
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak

That every pigmy kicked it as it lay-
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day-

And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; and for despair
I half disdained mine eye's desire to fill

With the spent vision of the times that were
And scarce have ceased to be..."Dost thou behold,"
Said then my guide "those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,

"Frederic, and Kant, Catherine and Leopold,
Chained hoary anarchs, demagogue and sage
Whose name the fresh world thinks already old-

"For in the battle Life land they did wage
she remained conqueror-I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age

"Nor tears nor infamy nor now the tomb
could temper to its object."-"Let them pass"-
I cried-"the world and its mysterious doom

Is not so much more glorious than it was
That I desire to worship those who drew
New figures on its false and fragile glass

"As the old faded"-"Figures ever new
Rise on the bubble, paint them how you may;
We have but thrown, as those before us threw,

"Our shadows on it as it past away.
But mark, how chained to the triumphal chair
The mighty phantoms of an elder day-

"All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not;
That star that ruled his doom was far too far;-

"And Life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
Conquered the heart by love which gold or pain
Or age or sloth or slavery could subdue not-

"And near [him] walk the [Macedpmoam] twaom.
The tutor and his pupil, whom Dominion
Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.-

"The world was darkened beneath either pinion
Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
Fame singled as her thunderbearing minion:

"The other long outlived both woes and wars,
Throned in new thoughts of men, and still had kept
The jealous keys of truth's eternal doors

"If Bacon's spirit [eagle] had not leapt
Like lightning out of darkness; he compelled
The Proteus shape of Nature's as it slept

"To wake and to unbar the caves that held
The treasure of the secrets of its reign-
See the great bards of old who inly quelled

"The passions which they sung, as by their strain
May well be known: their living melody
Tempers its own contagion to the vein

"Of those who are infected with it-I
Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!-

"And so my words were seeds of misery-
Even as the deeds of others"-"Not as theirs,"
I said-he pointed to a company

In which I recognized amid the heirs
Of Caesar's crime from him to Constantine.
The Anarchs old whose force and murderous snares

Had founded many a sceptre beariang line
And spread the plague of blood and gold abroad,
And Gregory and John and men divine

Who rose like shadows between Man and god
Till that eclipse, still hanging under Heaven,
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode

For the true Sun it quenched.-"Their power was given
But do destroy," replied the leader-"I
Am one of those who have created, even

"If be but a world of agony"-
"Whence camest thou and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin." I said, "and why?

"Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart of one sad thought.-
Speak" "Whence I lcame, partly I seem to know,

"And how and by what paths I have lbeen brought
To lthis dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;
Why this should be lmy mind can compass not;

"Whither the conqueror hurries me still less
But follow thou, and from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness,

"And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
From thee-Now listen...In the April prime
When all the forest tops began to burn

"With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young year, I found myself asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time

"Had yawned into a cavern high and deep
And from it came a gentle rivulet
Whose water like clear air in its calm sweep

"Bent the soft grass and kept for ever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sound which all who hear must needs forget

"All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love,
Which they had known before that hour of rest:
A sleeping mother then would dream not of

The only child who died upon her lbreast
At eventide, a king would mourn no more
The crown of which his brow ws dispossest

"When the sun lingered o'er the Ocean floor
To gild his rival's new prosperity-
Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore

"Ills, which if ills, can find no cure from thee,
The thought of which no other sleep will quell
Nor other music blot from memory-

"So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell.-
Whether my life had been before that sleep
The Heaven which I imagine, or a Hell

"Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
I know not, I arose and for a space
The scene of woods and waters seemed to keep

"Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common Sun
Sheds on the common Earth, but all the place

"Was filled with many sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun:

"And as I looked the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the Sun's image radiantly intense

"Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest maze
With winding paths of emerald fire-there stood

"Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays

"A shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the Dawn
Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing

"A silver music on the mossy lawn,
And still before her on the dusky grass
Is her lmany coloured scarf had drawn.-

In her right hand she bore a chrystal glass
Mantling with bright Nepenthe; —the fierce splendour
Fell from her as she moved under the mass

Of the deep cavern, and with palms so tender
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow,
Glided along the river, and did bend her

"Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be their pillow. —

"As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O'er lily-paven lakes mid silver mist
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem

"Partly to tread the waves with feet which kist
The dancing foam, partly to glide along
The airs that roughened the moist amethyst,

"Or the slant morning beams that fell among
The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees;
And her feet ever to the ceaseless song

"Of leaves and winds and waves and birds and bees
And falling drops moved in a measure new
Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze

"Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Dances!' the wind where eagle never flew. —

"And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved, to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them, and soon

"All that was seemed as if it had been not,
As if the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers, and she, thought by thought,

"Trampled its fires into the dust of death,
As Day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

"Of darkness reillumines even the least
Of heaven's living eyes—like day she came,
Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased

"To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said—if, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name,

"Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why-
Pass not away upon the passing stream.

"Arise and quench thy thirst, was her reply.
And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning's vital alchemy,

"I rose and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

"Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador,
Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed

"Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
Until the second bursts—so on my sight
Burst a new Vision never seen before—

"And the fair shape waned in the coming light
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite

"Of sunrise ere it strike the mountain tops—
And as the presence of that fairest planet
Although unseen is felt by one who hopes

"That his day's path may end as he began it
In that star's smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,

"Or the soft notes in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content. —

"So knew I in that light's severe excess
The presence of that shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,

"More dimly than a day appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep,
A light from Heaven whose half extinguished beam

"Through the sick day in which we wake to weep
Glimmers, forever sought, forever lost, —
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep

"Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and its cold bright car,
With savage music, stunning music, crost

"The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star. —

"A moving arch of victory the vermilion
And green and azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,

"And underneath aetherial glory clad
The wilderness, and far before her flew
The tempest of the splendour which forbade

"Shadow to fall from leaf or stone;-the crew
Seemed in that light like atomies that dance
Within a sunbeam. —Some upon the new

"Embroidery of flowers that did enhance
The grassy vesture of the desart, played,
Forgetful of the chariot's swift advance;

"Others stood gazing till within the shade
Of the great mountain its light left them dim. —
Others outspeeded it, and others made

"Circles around it like the clouds that swim
Round the high moon in a bright sea of air,
And more did follow, with exulting hymn,

"The chariot and the captives fettered there,
But all like bubbles on an eddying flood
Fell into the same track at last and were

"Borne onward—I among the multitude
Was swept; me sweetest flowers delayed not long,
Me not the shadow nor the solitude,

"Me not the falling stream's Lethean song
Me, not the phantom of that early form
Which moved upon its motion-but among

"The thickest billows of the living storm:
I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform-

"Before the chariot had begun to climb
the opposing steep of that mysterious dell.
Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme

"Of him who from the lowest depths of Hell
Through every Paradise and through all glory
Love led serene, and who returned to tell

"In words of hate and awe the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured, except Love,
For deaf as is a sea which wrath makes hoary

"The world can bear not the sweet notes that move
The sphere whose light is melody to lovers-
A wonder worthy of his rhyme-the grove

"Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was grey with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers

A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, brining re evening
Strange night upon some Indian isle, -thus were

Phantoms diffused around, and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them some like eaglets on the wing

"Were lost in the white blaze, others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
Upon the sunny streams and grassy shelves;

"And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar paws and voluble like fire
Some made a cradle of ermined capes

"Of kingly mantles, some upon the tiar
of pontiffs sale like vultures, others played
Within the crown which girt with empire

"A baby's or an idoit's brow, and made
Their nests in it; the old anatomies
Sale hatching their bare brood under the shade

"Of demon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power
Arrayed in which these worms did monarchize

"Who make this earth their channel-Others more
Humble, like falcons sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar,

"Or like small gnats and flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyer, statesman, priest and theorist.

"And others like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow

"Which they extinguished; for like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow-I became aware

"Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved; after brief space
From every form the beauty slowly waned.

"From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left
The action and the shape without the grace

"Of life; the marble brow of youth was cleft
With care, and in the eyes where once hope shone
Desire like a lioness bereft

"Of its last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown

"In Autumn evening from a poplar tree-
Each, like himself and like each other were,
At first, but soon distorted, seemed to be

"Obscure clouds moulded by the casual air
And of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there.

"As the sun shapes the clouds—thus, on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all, and long before the day

"Was old, the joy which waked like Heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died,
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance

"And fell, as I have fallen by the way side,
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows past
And least of strength and beauty did abide." —

"Then, what is Life?" I said....the cripple cast
His eye upon the car which now had rolled
Onward, as if that look must be the last,

And answered.....: "Happy those for whom the fold
Of

II
HYPERION: A FRAGMENT
JOHN KEATS
HYPERION. BOOK I

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat grey-hair'd **Saturn**, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet has stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one, who with kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of **the infant world**;
By her in stature the tall **Amazon**
Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of **Memphian sphinx**,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a 'friening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward cloud of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though and immortal, she felt cruel pain:
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!
"Saturn, look up!__though wherefore, poor old King?

I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
I cannot say, 'O wherefore sleepest thou?'
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;
And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
And thy sharp lightning **in unpractised hands**
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
O aching time! O moments big as years!
All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
And press it so upon our weary griefs
That unbelief has not space to breathe.
Saturn, sleep on:__O thoughtless, why did I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn, sleep on! while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words and went; the while in tears
She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might outspread
A soft silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postures motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady:
"O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face;
Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
Naked and bare of its great diadem,
Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
While fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
But it is so; and I am smother'd up,
And buried from all godlike exercise
Of influence benign on planets pale,
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,

And all those acts which Deity supreme
Doth ease its heart of love in.__I am gone
Away from my own bosom: I have left
My strong identity, my real self,
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search!
Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
Upon all space: space starr'd, and lorn of light;
Space region'd with life-air; and barren void;
Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.__
Search, Thea, search! and tell me , if thou seest
A certain shape or shadow, making way
With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
A heaven he lost erewhile: it must__it must
Be of ripe progress__Saturn must be King.
Yes, there must be a golden victory;
There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells: and there shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children; I will give command:
Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?"

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep;
A little time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus.__"But cannot I create?
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,
To overbear and crumble this to naught?
Where is another chaos? Where?"__That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.__Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

"This cheers our fallen house: come to our friends,
O Saturn! come away, and give them heart;
I know the covert, for thence came I hither."
Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space:
He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe:
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison -bound,
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;__
Blazing Hyperion on his orbed fire

Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God; yet unsecure:
For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or at the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;
But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angerly: while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by the Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick:
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amaz'd and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious **Zephyrs**, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamped his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region; and before

The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result: "O dreams of day and night!
O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
O lank-ear'd Phantoms of black-weeded pools!
Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why
Is my eternal essence thus distraught
To see and to behold these horrors new?
Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
Of all my lucent empire? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
The blaze, splendour, and the symmetry,
I cannot see__but darkness, death and darkness.
Even here, into my centre of repose,
The shady visions come to domineer,
Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.__
Fall!__No, by **Tellus** and her briny robes!
Over the fiery frontier of my realms
I will advance a terrible right arm
Shall scare the infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
And bid old Saturn take his throne again,"__
He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out "Hush!"
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold;
And from the mirror'd level where he stood
A mist rose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk in agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the **nadir** deep
Up to the **zenith**,__hieroglyphics old
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries:
Now lost, save what we find **on remnants huge**
Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled__Two wings this orb

Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach:
And now, from forth the gloom of their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were;
While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin if but for change.
He might not:—No, though a primeval God:
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb; The porches wide
Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night;
And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,
Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.
"O brightest of my children dear, **earth-born**
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
All unrevealed even to the powers
Which met at thy creating; at whose joys
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence;
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
Distinct, and visible; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space:
Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child!
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
Unruffl'd, like high Gods, ye liv'd and rul'd:
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;
Actions of rage and passion; even as
I see them on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die.—This is grief, O Son!
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!
Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God;
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence:—I am but a voice;
My life is but the life of winds and tides,
No more than winds and tides can I avail:—

But thou canst__Be thou there fore in the van
Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur__To the earth
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse."__
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceas'd; and still he kept them wide:
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

HYPERION. BOOK II

Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous water falls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd
Ever as if rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns:
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing for this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled:
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolon, and Porphyrion,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their **clenched** teeth still **clench'd**, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp't and screw'd;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
Far from her moon had Phoebe wandered;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce **images of life, one here, one there,**
Lay vast **and edgeways**; like a dismal cirque
Of **Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor**,
When the chill rain begins at the shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creüs was one; his ponderous iron mace

Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iäpetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all his uncurl'd length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain; for still upon that flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most **enormous Caf,**
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons:
More thought than woe was on her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk,
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve,
Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,
Shadowed Enceladus; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delayed, that scar'd the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of the Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and **Tethys,** in whose lap
Sobb'd **Clymene** among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay **Themis,** at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded from the sight;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds;
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight? and she must chaunt
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease:
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face:
There saw she direst strife; the supreme God
At war with the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain; for Fate
Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
A **disanointing** poison: so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise;
So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration; and he shouted,
"Titans, behold your God!" at which some groan'd;
Some started to their feet; some also shouted;
Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
Her eye-brows thin and jet, her hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice; there is a noise
Among the immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of **utterless thought,**
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp:
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines:
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,
No other sound succeeds; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up__ "Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
Not in the legends of the first of days,
Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
Which starry Uranus with finger bright
Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves
Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom;__
And the book ye know I ever kept
For my firm-based footstool:__Ah, infirm!
Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,__
At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling
One against one, or two, or three, or all
Each several one against the other three,
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
Drown both, and press them both against the earth's face,
Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
Unhinges the poor world;__not in that strife,
Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
And pour on Nature's universal scroll
Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods
Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
Is **untremendous might**. Yet ye are here,
O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here!
O Titans, shall I say, 'Arise!'__Ye groan. **What can I then?**
O Heaven wide! O **unseen parent dear!**

What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
How we can war, how engine our great wrath!
O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face
I see, astonied, that severe content
Which comes of thought and musing: give us help!"

So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with **locks not oozy**, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.
"O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-stung,
Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies!
Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
My voice is not bellows unto ire.
Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:
And in the proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-universe;
But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light, engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest:
Then thou first-born, and we the giant race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
As Heaven and Earth are fair, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,
In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil

Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed
And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feather'd who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty must be first in might:
Yea, by that law, another race may drive
Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
By noble winged creatures he hath made?
I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
Give consolation in this woe extreme.
Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus
Left murmuring , what deepest thought can tell?
But so it was, none answer'd for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;
And yet she answered not, only **complain'd**,
With **hectic** lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
"O father, I am here the simplest voice,
And all my knowledge is that joy is gone.
And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
There to remain forever, as I fear:
I would not bode of evil, if I thought
So weak a creature could turn off the help
Which by just right should come of mighty Gods,
Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
And know that we had parted from all hope.
O stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief;
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
So that I felt a movement in my heart
To chide, and to reproach that solitude
With songs of misery, music of our woes;
And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
And murmur'd into it, and made melody__
O melody no more! for while I sang,
And with poor skill made let into the breeze
The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
Just opposite, **an island of the sea,**

There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
With that new blissful golden melody.
A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl beads falling sudden from their string:
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
And still it cried, Apollo! young Apollo!
The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!'
I fled, it follow'd me, and cried 'Apollo!'
O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard."

So far her voice flow'd on, like a timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea: but sea it met,
And shudder'd; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath:
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He lean'd; not rising, from supreme contempt.
"Or shall we listen to **the over-wise**,
Or to **the over-foolish**, Giant-Gods?
Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
Not world upon world these shoulders piled,
Could agonize me more than baby-words
In midst of this dethronement horrible.
Speak! roar! shout! yell! ye sleepy Titans all.
Do ye forget the blows? the buffets vile?
Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm?
Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
Thy scalding in the seas? What, have I rous'd
Your spleens with so simple words as these?
O joy! for now I see ye are not lost:
O jcy! for now I see a thousand eyes
Wide-glaring for revenge!"__As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus:
"Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
And purge the ether of our enemies;
How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
O let him feel the evil he hath done;
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,

Much pain have I for more than loss of realms:
The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled;
Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
When all the fair Existences of heaven
Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak:—
That was before our brows were taught to frown,
Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds;
That was before we knew the winged thing,
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
And be yet mindful that Hyperion,
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
Hyperion, lo! his radiance is here!"

All eyes were on Enceladus' face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern:
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendider in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams:
And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion:—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of **Memnon's image** at the set of the sun
To one who travels from the dusking East:
Sighs, too, as that Memnon's harp
He utter'd, while his hands contemplative
He press'd together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light:
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,
And Phorcus, sea-been, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
There were four shouted forth old Saturn's name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, "Saturn!"
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of "Saturn!"

Thus in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazed were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes;
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire:
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
Meantime touch piously the **Delphic harp**,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute;
For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and morn
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills;
Let the wine within the goblet boil,
Cold as a bubbling well; let faint-lipp'd shells,
On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths; and let the maid
Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris'd.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade:
Apollo is once more the golden theme!
Where was he, when **the Giant of the Sun**
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers?
Together had he left **his mother** fair
And **twin-sister** sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.
The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
With solemn step and awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said:
"How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea?
Or hath that antique mien and robed form
Mov'd in these vales invisible till now?
Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
The rustle of those ample skirts about

These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,
And their eternal calm, and all that face,
Or I have dream'd."__"Yes," said the supreme shape,
"Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
Unwearied ear of the whole universe
Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me, youth,
What sorrow thou canst feel; for I am sad
When thou dost shed a tear: explain thy griefs
To one who in this lonely isle hath been
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
From the young day when first thy infant hand
Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
Of loveliness new born."__Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
Throbb'd with the syllables.__ "Mnemosyne!"
Thy name is on my tongue, I now not how;
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest?
Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark,
And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs;
And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
Like one who once had wings.__O why should I
Feel curs'd and thwarted when the liegeless air
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing:
Are there not other regions than this isle?
What are the stars? There is the sun, the sun!
And the most patient brilliance of the moon!
And stars by thousands! Point me out the way
To any one particular beauteous star,
And I will flit into it with my lyre,
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
I have heard the cloudy thunder: Where is power?
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarum in the elements,
While I here idle sit on the shores
In fearless yet in aching ignorance?
O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
That waileth every morn and eventide,
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
Mute thou remainest__mute! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,

Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal."__Thus the God.
While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
Or like still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd:
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.__At length
Apollo shriek'd;__and lo! from all his limbs
Celestial * * * * * * *

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SUPPLEMENTARY READING

I
ROMANTICISM AND CLASSICISM
T. E. HULME

I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival, and that the particular weapon of this new classical spirit, when it works in verse, will be fancy. And in this I imply the superiority of fancy - not superior generally or absolutely, for that would be obvious nonsense, but superior in the sense that we use the word good in empirical ethics - good for something, superior for something. I shall have to prove then two thing, first that a classical revival is coming, and secondly, for its particular purposes, fancy will be superior to imagination.

So banal have the terms Imagination and Fancy become that we imagine they must have always been in the language. Their history as two differing terms in the vocabulary of criticism is comparatively short. Originally, of course, they both mean the same thing; they first began to be differentiated by the German writers on aesthetics in the eighteenth century.[1]

> I know that in using the words 'classic' and 'romantic' I am doing a dangerous thing. They represent five or six different kinds of antitheses, and while I may be using them in one sense you may be interpreting them in another. In this present connection I am using them in a perfectly precise and limited sense. I ought really to have coined a couple of new words, but I prefer to use the ones I have used, as I then conform to the practice of the group of polemical writers who make most use of them at the present day, and have almost succeeded in making them political catchwords.

I mean Maurras, Lasserre and all the group connected with *L'Action Franaise*.[2]

At the present time this is the particular group with which the distinction is most vital. Because it has become a party symbol. If you asked a man of a certain set whether he preferred the classics or the romantics, you could deduce from that what his politics were.

The best way of gliding into a proper definition of my terms would be to start with a set of people who are prepared to fight about it - for in them you will have no vagueness. (Other people take the infamous attitude of the person with catholic tastes who says he likes both.)

About a year ago, a man whose name I think was Fauchois gave a lecture at the Odeon on Racine, in the course of which he made some disparaging remarks about his dullness, lack of invention and the rest of it. This caused an immediate riot: fights took place all over the house; several people were arrested and imprisoned, and the rest of the series of lectures took place with hundreds of gendarmes and detectives scattered all over the place. These people interrupted because the classical ideal is a living thing to them and Racine is the great classic. That is what I call a real vital interest in literature, They regard romanticism as an awful disease from which France had just recovered.

The thing is complicated in their case by the fact that it was romanticism that made the revolution. They hate the revolution, so they hate romanticism.

I make no apology for dragging in politics here; romanticism both in England and France is associated with certain political views, and it is in taking a concrete example of the working out of a principle in action that you can get its best definition.

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What was the positive principle behind all the other principles of 1789 ? I am talking here of the revolution in as far as it was an idea; I leave out material causes - they

only produce the forces. The barriers which could easily have resisted or guided these forces had been previously rotted away by ideas. This always seems to be the cast in successful changes; the privileged class is beaten only when it has lost faith in itself, when it has itself been penetrated with the ideas which are working against it.

It was not the rights of man - that was a good solid practical war-cry. The thing which created enthusiasm, which made the revolution practically a new religion, was something more positive than that. People of all classes, people who stood to lose by it, were in a positive ferment about the idea of liberty. There must have been some idea which enabled them to think that something positive could come out of so essentially negative a thing. There was, and here I get my definition of romanticism. They had been taught by Rousseau that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him. Remove all these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance. This is what made them think that something positive could come out of disorder, this is what created the religious enthusiasm. Here is the root of all romanticism : that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress.

One can define the classical quite clearly as the exact opposite to this. Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organization that anything decent can be got out of him.

This view was a little shaken at the time of Darwin. You remember his particular hypothesis, that new species came into existence by the cumulative effect of small variations - this seems to admit the possibility of future progress. But at the present day the contrary hypothesis makes headway in the shape of De Vries's mutation theory, that each new species comes into existence, not gradually by the accumulation of small steps, but suddenly in a jump, a kind of sport, and that once in existence it remains absolutely fixed. This enables me to keep the classical view with an appearance of scientific backing.

Put shortly, these are the two views, then. One, that man is intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the other that he is intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent. To the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other like a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a reservoir full of possibilities, I call the romantic; the one which regards him as a very finite and fixed creature, I call the classical.

One may note here that the Church has always taken the classical view since the defeat of the Pelagian heresy[3] and the adoption of the sane classical dogma of original sin.

It would be a mistake to identify the classical view with that of materialism. On the contrary it is absolutely identical with the normal religious attitude. I should put it is this way : That part of the fixed nature of man is the belief in the Deity. This should be as fixed and true for every man as belief in the existence of matter and in the objective world. It is parallel to appetite, the instinct of sex, and all the other fixed qualities. Now at certain times, by the use of either force or rhetoric, these instincts have been suppressed - in Florence under Savonarola, in Geneva under Calvin, and here under the Roundheads. The inevitable result of such a process is that the repressed instinct bursts out in some abnormal direction. So with religion. By the perverted rhetoric of Rationalism, your natural instincts are suppressed and you are converted into an agnostic. Just as in the case of the other instincts, Nature has her revenge. The instincts that find their right and proper outlet in religion must come out in some other way. You don't believe in a God, so you begin to believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The concepts that are right and proper in their own

sphere are spread over, and so mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience. It is like pouring a pot of treacle over the dinner table. Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give of it, is spilt religion.

I must now shirk the difficulty of saying exactly what I mean by romantic and classical in verse. I can only say that it means the result of these two attitudes towards the cosmos, towards man, in so far as it gets reflected in verse. The romantic, because he thinks man infinite, must always be talking about the infinite; and as there is always the bitter contrast between what you think you ought to be able to do and what man actually can, it always tends, in its later stages at any rate, to be gloomy. I really can't go any further than to say it is the reflection of these two temperaments, and point out examples of the different spirits. On the one hand I would take such diverse people as Horace, most of the Elizabethans and the writers of the Augustan age, and on the other side Lamartine, Hugo, parts of Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Swinburne.

I know quite well that when people think of classical and romantic in verse, the contrast at once comes into their mind between, say, Racine and Shakespeare. I don't mean this ; the dividing line that I intend is here misplaced a little from the true middle. That Racine is on the extreme classical side I agree, but if you call Shakespeare romantic, you are using a different definition to the one I give. You are thinking of the difference between classic and romantic as being merely one between restraint and exuberance. I should say with Nietzsche that there are two kinds of classicism, the static and the dynamic. Shakespeare is the classic of motion.

What I mean by classical in verse, then, is this. That even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man. He remembers always that he is mixed up with earth. He may jump, but he always returns back; he never flies away into the circumambient gas.

You might say if you wished that the whole of the romantic attitude seems to crystallize in verse round metaphors of flight. Hugo is always flying, flying over abysses, flying up into the eternal gases. The word infinite in every other line.

In the classical attitude you never seem to swing right along to the infinite nothing. If you say an extravagant thing which does exceed the limits inside which you know man to be fastened, yet there is always conveyed in some way at the end an impression of yourself standing outside it, and not quite believing it, or consciously putting it forward as a flourish. You never go blindly into an atmosphere more than the truth, an atmosphere too rarefied for man to breathe for long. You are always faithful to the conception of a limit. It is a question of pitch; in romantic verse you move at a certain pitch of rhetoric which you know, man being what he is, to be a little high-falutin. The kind of thing you get in Hugo of Swinburne. In the coming classical reaction that will feel just wrong. For an example of the opposite thing, a verse written in the proper classical spirit, I can take the song from Cymbeline beginning with 'Fear no more the heat of the sun'. I am just using this as a parable. I don't quite mean what I say here. Take the last two lines:

> Golden lads and lasses must,
> Like chimney sweepers come to dust.

Now, no romantic would have ever written that. Indeed, so ingrained is romanticism, so objectionable is this to it, that people have asserted that these were not part of the original song.

Apart from the pun, the thing that I think quite classical is the word lad. Your modern romantic could never write that. He would have to write golden youth, and take up the thing at least a couple of notes in pitch.

I want now to give the reasons which make me think that we are nearing the end of the romantic movement

he first lies in the nature of any convention of tradition in art. A particular convention **or attitude in art has a** strict analogy to the phenomena of organic life. It grows old and decays. It has a definite period of life and must die. All the possible tunes get played on it and then it is exhausted; moreover its best period is its youngest. Take the case of the extraordinary efflorescence of verse in the Elizabethan period. All kinds of reasons have been given for - this the discovery of the new world and all the rest of it. There is a much simpler one. A new medium had been given them to play with - namely, blank verse. It was new and so it was easy to play new tunes on it.

The same law holds in other arts. All the masters of painting are born into the world at a time when the particular tradition from which they start is imperfect. The Florentine tradition was just short of full ripeness when Raphael came to Florence, the Bellinesque was still young when Titian was born in Venice. Landscape was still a toy or an appanage of figure-painting when Turner and Constable arose to reveal its independent power. When Turner and Constable had done with landscape they left little or nothing for their successors to do on the same lines. Each field of artistic activity is exhausted by the first great artist who gathers a full harvest from it.

This period of exhaustion seems to me to have been reached in romanticism. We shall not get any new efflorescence of verse until we get a new technique, a new convention, to turn ourselves loose in.

Objection might be taken to this,. It might be said that a century as an organic unity doesn't exist, that I am being deluded by a wrong metaphor, that I am, treating a collection of literary people as if they were an organism or state department. Whatever we may be in other things, an objector might urge, in literature in as far as we are anything at all - in as far as we are worth considering - we are individuals, we are persons, and as distinct persons we cannot be subordinated to any general treatment. At any period at any time, an individual poet may be a classic or a romantic just as he feels like it. You at any particular moment may think that you can stand outside a movement. You may think that as an individual you observe both the classic and the romantic spirit and decide from a purely detached point of view that one is superior to the other.

The answer to this is that no one, in a matter of judgment of beauty, can take a detached standpoint in this way. Just as physically you are not born that abstract Intity, man, but the child of particular parents, so you are in matters of literary judgment. Your opinion is almost entirely of the literary history that came just before you, and you are governed by that whatever you may think. Take Spinoza's example of a stone falling to the ground. If it had a conscious mind it would, he said, think it was going to the ground because it wanted to. So you with your pretended free judgment about what is and what is not beautiful. The amount of freedom in man is much exaggerated. That we are free on certain rare occasions, both my religion and are views I get from metaphysics convince me. But many acts which we habitually lebel free are in reality automatic. It is quite possible for a man to write a book almost automatically. I have read several such products. Some observations were recorded more than twenty years ago by Robertson on reflex speech, and he found that in certain cases of dementia, where the people were quite unconscious so far as the exercise of reasoning went, that very intelligent answers were given to a succession of question on politics and such matters. The meaning of these questions could not dessibly have been understood. Language here acted after the manner of a reflex. So **that certain extremely complex mechanisms, suble enough to imitate beauty, can work by themselves. I certainly think that this is the case with judgments about beauty**

I can put the same thing in slightly different form. Here is a question of a conflict of two attitudes, as it might be of two techniques. The critic, while he has to admit that changes from one to the other occur, persists in regarding them as mere variations to a certain fixed normal, just as a pendulum might swing. I admit the analogy of the pendulum as far as movement, but I deny the further consequence of the analogy, the existence of the point of rest, the normal point.

When I say that I dislike the romantics, I dissociate two things: the part of them in which they resemble all the great poets, and the part in which they differ and which gives them their character as romantics. It is this minor element which constitutes the particular note of a century, and which, while it excites contemporaries, annoys the next generation. It was precisely that quality in Pope which pleased his friends, which we detest. Now, anyone just before the romantics who felt that, could have predicted that a change was coming. It seems to me that we stand just in the same position now. I think that there is an increasing proportion of people who simply can't stand Swinburne.

When I say that there will be another classical revival I don't necessarily anticipate a return to Pope. I say merely that now is the time for such a revival. Given people of the necessary capacity, it may be a vital thing; without them we may get a formalism something like Pope. When it does come we may not even recognize it as classical. Although it will be classical it will be different because it has passed through a romantic period. To take a parallel example : I remember being very surprised, after seeing the Post Impressionists, to find in Maurice Denis's account of the matter that they consider themselves classical in the sense that they were trying to impose the same order on the mere flux of new material provided by the impressionist movement, that existed in the more limited material of the painting before.

There is something now to be cleared away before I get on with my argument, which is that while romanticism is dead in reality, yet the critical attitude appropriate to it still continues to exist. To make this a little clearer: For every kind of verse, there is a corresponding receptive attitude. In a romantic period we demand from verse certain qualities. In a classical period we demand others. At the present time I should say tha this receptive attitude has outlasted the thing from which it was formed. But while th romantic tradition has run dry, yet the critical attitude of mind, which demands romantic qualities from verse, still survives. So that if good classical verse were to be written tomorrow very few people would be able to stand it.

I object even to the best of the romantics. I object still more to the receptive attitude. object to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other. I always think in this connection of the last line of a poem of John Webster's[4] which ends with a request I cordially endorse:

> End your moan and come away.

The thing has got so bad now that a poem which is all dry and hard, a properly classical poem, would not be considered poetry at all. How many people now can lay their hands on their hearts and say they like either Horace of Pope? They feel a kind of chill when they read them.

The dry hardness which you get in the classics is absolutely repugnant to them. Poetry that isn't damp isn't poetry at all. They cannot see that accurate description is a legitimate object of verse. Verse to them always means a bringing in of some of the emotions that are grouped round the word infinite.

The essence of poetry to most people is that it must lead them to a beyond of some kind. Verse strictly confined to the earthly and the definite (Keats is full of it) migh seem to them to be excellent writing, excellent craftsmanship, but not poetry. So

much has romanticism debauched us, that, without some form of vagueness, we deny the highest.

In the classic it is always the light of ordinary day, never the light that never was on land or sea. It is always perfectly human and never exaggerated: man is always man and never a god.

But the awful result of romanticism is that, accustomed to this strange light, you can never live without it. Its effect on you is that of a drug.

There is a general tendency to think that verse means little else than the expression of unsatisfied emotion. People say: 'But how can you have verse without sentiment? 'You see what it is : the prospect alarms them. A classical revival to them would mean the prospect of an arid desert and the death of poetry as they understand it, and could only come to fill the gap caused by that death. Exactly why this dry classical spirit should have a positive and legitimate necessity to express itself in poetry is utterly inconceivable to them. What this positive need is, I shall show later. It follows from the fact that there is another quality, not the emotion produced, which is at the root of excellence in verse. Before I get to this I am concerned with a negative thing, a theoretical point, a prejudice that stands in the way and is really at the bottom of this reluctance to understand classical verse.

It is an objection which ultimately I believe comes from a bad metaphysic of art. You are unable to admit the existence of beauty without the infinite being in some way or another dragged in.

I may quote for purposes of argument, as a typical example of this kind of attitude made vocal, the famous chapters in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*,[3] Vol. II, on the imagination. I must say here parenthetically, that I use this word without prejudice to the other discussion with which I shall end the paper. I only use the word here because it is Ruskin's word. All that I am concerned with just now is the attitude behind it, which I take to be the romantic.

> Imagination cannot but be serious ; she sees too far, too darkly, too solemnly, too earnestly, ever to smile. There is something in the heart of everything, if we can reach it, that we shall not be inclined to laugh at .... Those who have so pierced and seen the melancholy deeps of things, are filled with intense passion and gentleness of sympathy. (Part III, Chap. III, S 9.)

> There is in every word set down by the imaginative mind an awful undercurrent of meaning, and evidence and shadow upon it of the deep places out of which it has come. It is often obscure, often half-told; for he who wrote it, in his clear seeing of the things beneath, may have been Impatient of detailed interpretation; for if we choose to dwell upon it and trace it, it will lead us always securely back to that metropolis of the soul's dominion from which we may follow out all the ways and tracks to its farthest coasts. (Part III, Chap. III, S 5.)

Really in all these matters the act of judgment is an instinct, an absolutely unstateable thing akin to the art of the tea taster. But you must talk, and the only language you can use in this matter is that of analogy. I have no material clay to mould to the given shape; the only thing which one has for the purpose, and which acts as substitute for it, a kind of mental clay, are certain metaphors modified it to theories of aesthetic and rhetoric. A combination of these, while cannot state the essentially unstateable intuition, can yet give you a sufficient analogy to enable you to see what it was and to recognize it on condition that you yourself have been in a similar state. Now these phrases of Ruskin's convey quite clearly to me his taste in the matter.

I see quite clearly that he thinks the best verse must be serious. That is a natural attitude for a man in the romantic period. But he is not content with saying that he prefers this kind of verse. He wants to deduce his opinion like his master, Coleridge, from some fixed principle which can be found by metaphysics.

Here is the last refuge of this romantic attitude. It proves itself to be not an attitude but a deduction from a fixed principle of the cosmos.

One of the main reasons for the existence of philosophy is not that it enables you to find truth (it can never do that) but that it does provide you a refuge for definitions. The usual idea of the thing is that it provides you with a fixed basis from which you can deduce the things you want in aesthetics. The process is the exact contrary. You start in the confusion of the fighting line, you retire from that just a little to the rear to recover, to get your weapons right. Quite plainly, without metaphor this - it provides you with an elaborate and precise language in which you really can explain definitely what you mean, but what you want to say is decided by other things. The ultimate reality is the hurly-burly, the struggle, the metaphysics is an adjunct to clear-headedness in it.

To get back to Ruskin and his objection to all that is not serious. It seems to me that involved in this is a bad metaphysical aesthetic. You have the metaphysic which in defining beauty or the nature of art always drags in the infinite. Particularly in Germany, the land where theories of aesthetics were first created, the romantic aesthetes collated all beauty to an impression of the infinite involved in the identification of our being in absolute spirit. In the least element of beauty we have a total intuition of the whole world. Every artist is a kind of pantheist.

Now it is quite obvious to anyone who holds this kind of theory that any poetry which confines itself to the finite can never be of the highest kind. It seems a contradiction in terms to them. And as in metaphysics you get the last refuge of a prejudice, so it is now necessary for me to refute this.

Here follows a tedious piece of dialectic, but it is necessary for my purpose. I must avoid two pitfalls in discussing the idea of beauty. On the one hand there is the old classical view which is supposed to define it is lying in conformity to certain standard fixed forms; and on the other hand there is the romantic view which drags in the infinite. I have got to find a metaphysic between these two which will enable me to hold consistently that a neoclassic verse of the type I have indicated involves no contradiction in terms. It is essential to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things.

The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description. The first thing is to recognize how extraordinarily difficult this is. It is no mere matter of carefulness; you have to use language, and language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise – that which is common to you, me and everybody. But each man sees a little differently, and to get out clearly and exactly what he does see, he must have a terrific struggle with language, whether it be with words or the technique of other arts. Language has its own special nature, its own conventions and communal ideas. It is only by a concentrated effort of the mind that you can hold it fixed to your own purpose. I always think that the fundamental process at the back of all the arts might be represented by the following metaphor. You know what I call architect's curves - flat pieces of wood with all different kinds of curvature. By a suitable selection from these you can draw approximately any curve you like. The artist I take to be the man who simply can't bear the idea of that 'approximately'. He will get the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind. I shall here have to change my metaphor a little to get the process in his mind. Suppose that instead of your curved pieces of wood you have a springy piece of steel of the same types of curvature as the wood. Now the state of tension of concentration of mind, if he is doing anything really good in this struggle against the ingrained habit of the technique, may be represented by a man employing

all his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want. Something different to what it would assume naturally.

There are then two things to distinguish, first the particular faculty of mind to see things as they really are, and apart from the conventional ways in which you have been trained to see them. This is itself rare enough in all consciousness. Second, the concentrated state of mind, the grip over oneself which is necessary in the actual expression of what one sees. To prevent one falling into the conventional curves of ingrained technique, to hold on through infinite detail and trouble to the exact curve you want. Wherever you get this sincerity, you get the fundamental quality of good art without dragging in infinite of serious.

I can now get at that positive fundamental quality of verse which constitutes excellence, which has nothing to do with infinity, with mystery or with emotions.

This is the point I am at, then, in my argument. I prophesy that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming. I have met the preliminary objection founded on the bad romantic aesthetic that in such verse, from which the infinite is excluded, you cannot have the essence of poetry at all.

After attempting to sketch out what this positive quality is, I can get on to the end of my paper in this way: That where you get this quality exhibited in the realm of the emotions you get imagination, and that where you get this quality exhibited in the contemplation of finite things you get fancy.

In prose as in algebra concrete things are embodied in signs or counters which are moved about according to rules, without being visualized at all in the process. There are in prose certain type situations and arrangements of words, which move as automatically into certain other arrangements as do functions in algebra. One only changes the X's and the Y's back into physical things at the end of the process. Poetry, in one aspect at any rate, may be considered as an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters. A poet says a ship 'coursed the seas' to get a physical image, instead of the counters word 'sailed'. Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor; prose in an old pot that lets them leak out. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. Verse is a pedestrian taking you over the ground, prose - a train which delivers you at a destination.

I can now get on to a discussion of two words often used in this connection, 'fresh' and 'unexpected'. You praise a thing for being 'fresh'. I understand what you mean, but the word besides conveying the truth conveys a secondary something which is certainly false. When you say a poem or drawing is fresh, and so good, the impression is somehow conveyed that the essential element of goodness is freshness, that it is good because it is fresh. Now this is certainly wrong, there is nothing particularly desirable about freshness *per se*. Works of art aren't eggs. Rather the contrary. It is simply an unfortunate necessity due to the nature of language and technique that the only way the element which does constitute goodness, the only way in which its presence can be detected externally, is by freshness. Freshness convinces you, you feel at once at that the artist was in an actual physical state.

You feel that for a minute. Real communication is so very rare, for plain speech is unconvincing. It is in this rare fact of communication that you get the root of aesthetic pleasure.

I shall maintain that wherever you get an extraordinary interest in a thing, a great zest in its contemplation which carries on the contemplator to accurate description in the sense of the word accurate I have just analysed, there you have sufficient justification for poetry. It must be an intense zest which heightens a thing out of the level of prose. I am using contemplation here just in the same way that Plato used it, only applied to a different subject; it is a detached interest. 'The object of aesthetic contemplation is something framed apart by itself and regarded without memory or expectation, simply as being itself, as end not means, as individual not universal.'

To take a concrete example. I am taking an extreme case. If you are walking behind a woman in the street, you notice the curious way in which the skirt rebounds from her heels. If that peculiar kind of motion becomes of such interest to you that you will search about until you can get the exact epithet which hits it off, there you have a properly aesthetic emotion. But it is the zest with which you look at the thing which decides you to make the effort. In this sense the feeling that was in Herrick's mind when he wrote 'the tempestuous petticoat' was exactly the same as that which in bigger and vaguer matters makes the best romantic verse. It doesn't matter an atom that the emotion produced is not of dignified vagueness, but on the contrary amusing; the point is that exactly the same activity is at work as in the highest verse. That is the avoidance of conventional language in order to get the exact curve of the thing.

I have still to show that in the verse which is to come, fancy will be the necessary weapon of the classical school. The positive quality I have talked about can be manifested in ballad verse by extreme directness and simplicity such as you get in 'On Fair Kirkconnel Lea'. But the particular verse we are going to get will be cheerful, dry and sophisticated, and here the necessary weapon of the positive quality must be fancy.

Subject doesn't matter; the quality in it is the same as you get in the more romantic people.

It isn't the scale or kind of emotion produced that decides, but this one fact : Is there any real zest in it ? Did the poet have an actually realized visual object before him in which he delighted ? It doesn't matter if it were a lady's shoe of the starry heavens.

Fancy is not mere decoration added on to plain speech. Plain speech is essentially inaccurate. It is only by new metaphors, that is, by fancy, that it can be made precise.

When the analogy has not enough connection with the thing described to be quite parallel with it, where it overlays the thing it described and there is a certain excess, there you have the play of fancy - that I grant is inferior to imagination.

But where the analogy is every bit of it necessary for accurate description in the sense of the word accurate I have previously described, and your only objection to this kind of fancy is that it is not serious in the effect it produces, then I think the objection to be entirely invalid. If it is sincere in the accurate sense, when the whole of the analogy is necessary to get out the exact curve of the feeling or thing you want to express - there you seem to me to have the highest verse, even though the subject be trivial and the emotions of the infinite far away.

It is very difficult to use any terminology at all for this kind of thing. For whatever word you use is at once sentimentalized. Take Coleridge's word 'vital'. It is used loosely by all kinds of people who talk about art, to mean something vaguely and mysteriously significant. In fact, vital and mechanical is to them exactly the same antithesis as between good and bad.

Nothing of the kind; Coleridge uses it in a perfectly definite and what I call dry sense. It is just this: A mechanical complexity is the sum of its parts. Put them side by side and you get the whole. Now vital or organic merely a convenient metaphor for a

complexity of a different kind, that in which the parts cannot be said to be elements as each one is modified by the other's presence, and each one to a certain extent is the whole. The leg of a chair by itself is still a leg. My leg by itself wouldn't be.

Now the characteristic of the intellect is that it can only represent complexities of the mechanical kind. It can only make diagrams, and diagrams are essentially things whose parts are separate one from another. The intellect always analyses - when there is a synthesis it is baffled. That is why the artist's work seems mysterious. The intellect can't represent it. This is a necessary consequence of the particular nature of the intellect and the purposes for which it is formed. It doesn't mean that your synthesis is ineffable, simply that it can't be definitely stated.

Now this is all worked out in Bergson, the central feature of his whole philosophy. It is all based on the clear conception of these vital complexities which he calls 'intensive'; as opposed to the other kind which he calls 'extensive', and the recognition of the fact that the intellect can only deal with the extensive multiplicity. To deal with the intensive you must use intuition.

Now, as I said before, Ruskin was perfectly aware of all this, but he had no such metaphysical background which would enable him to state definitely what he meant. The result is that he has to flounder about in a series of metaphors. A powerfully imaginative mind seizes and combines at the same instant all the important ideas of its poem or picture, and while it works with one of them, it is at the same instant working with and modifying all in their relation to it and never losing sight of their bearings on each other - as the motion of a snake's body goes through all parts at once and its volition acts at the same instant in coils which go contrary ways.

A romantic movement must have an end of the very nature of the thing. It may be deplored, but it can't be helped - wonder must cease to be wonder.

I guard myself here from all the consequences of the analogy, but it expresses at any rate the inevitableness of the process. A literature of wonder must have an end as inevitably as a strange land loses its strangeness when one lives in it. Think of the lost ecstasy of the Elizabethans. 'Oh my America, my new found land' [John Donne, 'Elegy XIX : Going to Bed'], think of what it meant to them and of what it means to us. Wonder can only be the attitude of a man passing from one stage to another, it can never be a permanently fixed thing.

Notes and References

1. [The distinction between Imagination and Fancy was popularized by Coleridge, who devotes a chapter to it in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817).]

2. [A right-wing political group found in France in 1898 at the time of the Dreyfus affair, and advocating the restoration of monarchy and a privileged position for the Roman Catholic Church. Its chief spokesman was Charles Maurras.]

3. [The fifth-century theologian Pelagius asserted the essential goodness of human nature and the freedom of the will.]

4. [Bosola's song in *The Duchess of Malfi*, IV. 2. The words are actually 'End your groan and come away'.]

5. [John Ruskin, the Victorian art and social critic, published *Modern Painters* in 1843-60.]

6. [A phrase in the poem ' A sweet disorder in the dress' by the seventeenth-century poet Robert Herrick.]

II
JOHN DRYDEN
T. S. ELIOT

If the prospect of delight be wanting (which alone justifies the perusal of poetry) we may let the reputation of Dryden sleep in the manuals of literature. To those who are genuinely insensible of his genius (and these are probably the majority of living readers of poetry) we can only oppose illustrations of the following proposition : that their insensibility does not merely signify indifference to satire and wit, but lack of perception of qualities not confined to satire and wit and present in the work of other poets whom these persons feel that they understand. To those whose taste in poetry is formed entirely upon the English poetry of the nineteenth century – to the majority – it is difficult to explain or excuse Dryden : the twentieth century is still the nineteenth, although it may in time acquire its own character. (The nineteenth century had, like every other, limited tastes and peculiar fashions ; and, like every other, it was unaware of its own limitations. Its tastes and fashions had no place for Dryden ; yet Dryden is one of the tests of a catholic appreciation of poetry.

He is a successor of Jonson, and therefore the descendant of Marlowe ; he is the ancestor of nearly all that is best in the poetry of the eighteenth century. Once we have mastered Dryden – and by mastery is meant a full and essential enjoyment, not the enjoyment of a private whimsical fashion – we can extract whatever enjoyment and edification there is in his contemporaries – Oldham, Denham, or the less remunerative Waller ; and still more his successors – not only Pope, but Phillips, Churchill, Gray, Johnson, Cowper, Goldsmith. His inspiration is prolonged in Crabbe and Byron ; it even extends, as Mr. Van Doren cleverly points out, to Poe. Even the poets responsible for the revolt were well acquainted with him : Wordsworth knew his work, and Keats invoked his aid. We cannot fully enjoy or rightly estimate a hundred years of English poetry unless we fully enjoy Dryden ; and enjoy Dryden means to pass beyond the limitations of the nineteenth century into a new freedom.

> " All, all of a piece throughout !
> Thy Chase had a Beast in View ;
> Thy Wars brought nothing about;
> Thy Lovers were all untrue.
> 'Tis well an Old Age is out,
> And time to begin a New.
> * * * *
> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn :
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream."

The first of these passages is by Dryden, the second by Shelley ; the second is found in the *Oxford Book of English Verse,* the first is not ; yet we might defy anyone to show that the second is superior on intrinsically poetic merit. It is easy to see why the second should appeal more readily to the nineteenth, and what is left of the nineteenth under the name of the twentieth, century. It is not so easy to see propriety in an image which divests a snake of "winter weeds" ; and this is a sort of blemish which would have been noticed more quickly by a contemporary of Dryden than by a contemporary of Shelley.

These reflections are occasioned by an admirable book on Dryden which has appeared at this very turn of time, when taste is becoming perhaps more fluid and ready for a new mould.[1] It is a book which every practitioner of English verse should study. The consideration is so thorough, the matter so compact, the appreciation so just, temperate, and enthusiastic, and supplied with such copious and well- Chosen

extracts from the poetry, the suggestion of astutely placed facts leads our thought so far, that there only remain to mention, as defects which do not detract from its value, two omissions : the prose is not dealt with, and the plays are somewhat slighted. What is especially impressive is the exhibition of the very wide range of Dryden's work, shown by the quotations of every species. Everyone knows *Mac-Flecknoe*, and parts of *Absalom and Achitophel* ; in consequence, Dryden has sunk by the persons he has elevated to distinction – Shadwell and Settle, Shaftesbury and Buckingham. Dryden was much more than a satirist ; to dispose of him as a satirist is to place an obstacle in the way of our understanding. At all events, we must satisfy ourselves of our definition of the term satire ; we must not allow our familiarity with the word to blind us to differences and refinements ; we must not assume that satire is a fixed type, and fixed to the prosaic, suited only to prose, we must acknowledge that satire is not the same thing in the hands of two different writers of genius. The connotations of " satire " and of " wit," in short, may be only prejudices of nineteenth – century taste. Perhaps, we think, after reading Mr. Van Doren's book, a juster view of Dryden may be given by beginning with some other portion of his work than his celebrated satires ; but even here there is much more present, and much more that is poetry, than is usually supposed.

The piece of Dryden's which is the most fun, which is the most sustained display of surprise after surprise of wit from line to line, is *MacFlecknoe*. Dryden's method here is something very near to parody ; he applies vocabulary, images, and ceremony which arouse epic associations of grandeur, to make an enemy helplessly ridiculous. But the effect, though disastrous for the enemy, is very different from that of the humour which merely belittles, such as the satire of Mark Twain. Dryden continually enhances : he makes his object great, is a way contrary to expectation ; and the total effect is due to the transformation of the ridiculous into poetry. As an example may be taken a fine passage plagiarized from Cowley, from lines which Dryden must have marked well, for he quotes them directly in one of his prefaces. Here is Cowley ;-

> "Where their vast courts the mother-waters keep,
> And undisturbed by moons in silence sleep...
> Beneath the dens where unfledged tempests lie,
> And infant winds their tender voices try."

In *MacFlecknoe* this becomes :

> "Where their vast courts the mother-strumpets keep,
> And undisturbed by watch, in silence sleep.
> Near these, a nursery erects its head,
> Where queens are formed, and future heroes bred ;
> Where unfledged actors learn to laugh and cry,
> Where infant punks their tender voices try,
> And little Maximins the gods defy."

The passage from Cowley is by no means despicable verse. But it is a commonplace description of commonly poetic objects ; it has not the element of *surprise* so essential to poetry, and this Dryden provides. A clever versifier might have written Cowley's lines ; only a poet could have made what Dryden made of them. It is impossible to dismiss his verses as " prosaic" ; turn them into prose and they are transmuted, the fragrance is gone. The reproach of the prosaic, levelled at Dryden, rests upon a confusion between the emotions considered to be poetic – which is a matter allowing considerable latitude of fashion – and the result of personal emotion in poetry ; and, also, there is the emotion *depicted* by the poet in some kinds of poetry, of which the *Testaments* of Villon is an example. Again there is the intellect, the originality and independence and clarity of what we vaguely call the poet's "point of view." Our valuation of poetry, in short, depends upon several considerations, upon the permanent and upon the mutable and transitory. When we try to isolate the essentially poetic, we bring our pursuit in the end to something insignificant ; our

standards vary with every poet whom we consider. All we can hope to do, in the attempt to introduce some order into our preferences, is to clarify our reasons for finding pleasure in the poetry that we like.

With regard to Dryden, therefore, we can say this much. Our taste in English poetry has been largely founded upon a partial perception of the value of Shakespeare and Milton, a perception which dwells upon sublimity of theme and action. Shakespeare had a great deal more ; he had nearly everything to satisfy our various desires for poetry. The point is that the depreciation or neglect of Dryden is not due to the fact that his work is not poetry, but to a prejudice that the material, the feelings, out of which he built is not poetic. Thus Matthew Arnold observes, in mentioning Dryden and Pope together, that "their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits, genuine poetry is conceived in the soul.") Arnold was, perhaps, not altogether the detached critic when he wrote this line ; he may have been stirred to a defence of his own poetry, conceived and composed in the soul of a mid-century Oxford graduate. Pater remarks that Dryden :-

" Loved to emphasise the distinction between poetry and prose, the protest against their confusion coming with somewhat diminished effect from one whose poetry was so prosaic."

But Dryden was right, and the sentence of Pater is cheap journalism. Hazlitt, who had perhaps the most uninteresting mind of all our distinguished critics, says :-

" Dryden and Pope are the great masters of the artificial style of poetry in our language, as the poets of whom I have already treated – Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton – were of the natural. "

In one sentence Hazlitt has committed at least four crimes against taste. It is bad enough to lump Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton together under the denomination of " natural ' ; it is bad to commit Shakespeare, to one style only: it is bad to join Dryden and Pope together ; but the last absurdity is the contrast of Milton, our greatest master of the *artificial* style, with Dryden, whose *style* (vocabulary, syntax and order of thought) is in a high degree natural. And what all these objections come to, we repeat, is a repugnance for the material out of which Dryden's poetry is built.

It would be truer to say, indeed, even in the form of the unpersuasive paradox, that Dryden is distinguished principally by his *poetic* ability. (We prize him, as we do Mallarme, for what he made of his material. Our estimate is only in part the appreciation of ingenuity : in the end the result *is* poetry. Much of Dryden's unique merit consists in his ability to make the small into the great, the prosaic into the poetic, the trivial into the magnificent. In this he differs not only from Milton, who required a canvas of the largest size, but from Pope, who required one of the smallest. (If you compare any satiric " character " of Pope with one of Dryden, you will see that the method and intention are widely divergent. When Pope alters, he diminishes : he is a master of miniature. The singular skill of his portrait of Addison, for example, in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, depends upon the justice and reserve, the apparent determination not to exaggerate. The genius of Pope is not for caricature. But the effect of the portraits of Dryden is to transform the object into something greater, as were transformed the verse of Cowley quoted on page 7[1].

> " A fiery soul, which working out its way,
> Fretted the pigmy body to decay :
> And o'er informed the tenement of clay."

These lines are not merely a magnificent tribute. They create the object which they contemplate. Dryden is, in fact, much nearer to the master of comic creation than to

Pope. As in Jonson, the effect is far from laughter ; the comic is the material, the result is poetry. The Civic Guards of Rhodes :-

"The Country rings around with loud alarms,
And raw in fields the rude militia swarms ;
Mouths without hands; maintained at vast expense,
In peace a charge, in war a weak defence ;
Stout once a month they march, a blust'ring band,
And ever, but in times of need, at hand ;
This was the morn, when issuing on the guard,
Drawn up in rank and file they stood prepared
Of seeming arms to make a short essay,
Then hasten to be drunk, the business of the day."

Sometimes the wit appears as a delicate flavour to the magnificence, as in *Alexander's Feast* :-

" Sooth'd with the sound the king grew vain ;
Fought all his battles o'er again ;
And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he
Slew the slain."

The great advantage of Dryden over Milton is that while the former is always in control of his ascent, and can rise or fall at will (and how masterfully, like his own Timotheus, he directs the transitions !), the latter has elected a perch from which he cannot afford to fall, and from which he is in danger of slipping.

" food alike those pure
Intelligential substances require
As doth your Rational ; and both contain
Within them every lower faculty
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
And corporeal to incorporeal turn."

Dryden might have made poetry out of that ; his translation from Lucretius is poetry. But we have an ingenious example, on which to test our contrast of Dryden and Milton : it is Dryden's " Opera," called *The State of Innocence and Fall of Man,* of which Nathaniel Lee neatly says in his preface :-

"Milton did the wealthy mine disclose,
and rudely cast what you could well dispose :
He roughly drew, on an old-fashioned ground,
A chaos, for no perfect world were found,
Till through the heap, your mighty genius shined,"

In the author's preface Dryden acknowledges his debt generously enough :-

"The original being undoubtedly, one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems, which either this age or nation has produced."

The poem begins auspiciously :-

"*Lucifer.* Is this the seat our conqueror has given ?
And this the climate we must change for Heaven ?
These regions and this realm my wars have got ;
This mournful empire is the loser's lot :
In liquid burnings, or on dry to dwell,
Is al the sad variety of Hell."

It is an early work; It is on the whole a feeble work ; it is not deserving of sustained comparison with *Paradise Lost.* But " all the sad variety of Hell " ! Dryden is already stirring ; he has assimilated what he could from Milton ; and he has shown himself capable of producing as splendid verse.

The capacity for assimilation, and the consequent extent of range, are conspicuous qualities of Dryden. He advanced and exhibited his variety by constant translation ; and his translations of Horace, of Ovid, of Lucretius, are admirable. His gravest defects are supposed to be displayed in his dramas, but if there were more read they might be more praised. From the point of view of either the Elizabethan of the French drama they are obviously inferior ; but the charge of inferiority loses part of its force if we admit that Dryden was not quite trying to compete with either, but was pursuing a direction of his own. He created no character ; and although his arrangements of plot manifest exceptional ingenuity, it is the pure magnificence of diction, of poetic diction, that keeps his plays alive :-

" How I loved
Witness ye days and nights, and all ye hours,
That danced away with down upon your feet,
As all your business were to count my passion.
One day passed by, and nothing saw but love ;
Another came, and still 'twas only love :
The suns were wearied out with looking on,
And I untired with loving.
I saw you every day and all the day ;
And every day was still but as the first :
So eager was I still to see you more .....

While within your arms I lay,
The world fell mould'ring from my hands each hour.

Such language is pure Dryden : it sounds, in Mr. Van Doren's phrase, "like a gong." *All for Love*, from which the lines are taken, is Dryden's best play, and this is perhaps the highest reach. In general, he is best in his plays when dealing with situations which do not demand great emotional concentration ; when his situation is more trivial, and he can practise his art of making the small great. The back-talk between the Emperor and his Empress Nourmahal, in *Aurungzebe*, is admirable purple comedy ;-

" *Emperor.* Such virtue is the plague of human life:
A virtuous woman, but a cursed wife.
In vain of pompous chastity y'are proud :
Virtue's adultery of the tongue, when loud.
I, with less pain, a prostitute could bear,
Than the shrill sound of virtue, virtue hear.
In unchaste wives-
There's yet a kind of recompensing ease :
Vice keeps 'em humble, gives ' em care to please :
But against clamourous virtue, what defence ?
It stops our mouths, and gives your noise pre-
tence .....

What can be sweeter than our native home ?
Thither for ease, and soft repose, we come;
Home is the sacred refuge of our life :
Secure from all approaches but a wife.
If thence we fly, the cause admits no doubt :
None but an inmate foe could force us out.

Clamours, our privacies uneasy make :
Birds leave their nests disturbed, and beasts their
haunts forsake "

But drama is a mixed form ; pure magnificence will not carry it through. The poet who attempts to achieve a play by the single force of the word provokes comparison, however strictly he confine himself to his capacity, with poets of other gifts. Corneille and Racine do not attain their triumphs by magnificence of this sort ; they have concentration also, and, in the midst of their phrases, an undisturbed attention to the human soul as they knew it.

Nor is Dryden unchallenged in his supreme ability to make the ridiculous, or the trivial, great.

"Avez - vous observe que maints cercueils de vieilles Sont presque aussi petits que celui d'un enfant ?"

Those lines are the work of a man whose verse is as magnificent as Dryden's, and who could see profounder possibilities in wit, and in violently joined images, than ever were in Dryden's mind. For Dryden, with all his intellect, had a commonplace mind. His powers were, we believe, wider, but no greater, than Milton's; he was confined by boundaries as impassable, though less strait. He bears a curious antithetical resemblance to Swinburne. Swinburne was also a master of words, but Swinburne's words are all suggestions and no denotation ; if they suggest nothing, it is because they suggest too much. Dryden's words, on the other hand, are precise, they state immensely, but their suggestiveness is often nothing.

" That short dark passage to a future state ;
That melancholy riddle of a breath,
That something, or that nothing, after death,"

is a riddle, but not melancholy enough, in Dryden's splendid verse. The question, which has certainly been waiting, ,may justly be asked : whether, without this which Dryden lacks, verse can be poetry ? What is man to decide what poetry is ? Dryden's use of language is not, like that of Swinburne, weakening and demoralising. Let us take as a final test his elegy upon Oldham. Which deserves not to be mutilated :-

" Farewell, too little and too lately known,
Whom I began to think and call my own;
For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mould with mine.
One common note on either lyre did strike,
And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.
To the same goal did both our studies drive ;
The last set out the soonest did arrive.
Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,
Whilst his young friend performed and won the race.
O early ripe ! to thy abundant store
What could advancing age have added more ?
It might (what nature never gives the young)
Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue.
But satire needs not those, and wit will shine
Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.
A noble error, and but seldom made,
When poets are by too much force betrayed.
Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their
prime,
Still showed a quickness ; and maturing time
But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of
rhyme.

Once more, hail, and farewell ; farewell, thou
young,
But ah ! too short, Marcellus of our tongue !
Thy brows with ivy and with laurels bound ;
But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around."

From the perfection of such an elegy we cannot detract ; the lack of suggestiveness is compensated by the satisfying completeness of the statement. Dryden lacked what his master Jonson possessed, a large and unique view of life ; he lacked insight, he lacked profundity. But where Dryden fails to satisfy, the nineteenth century does not satisfy us either ; and where that century has condemned him, it is itself condemned. In the next revolution of taste it is possible that poets may turn to the study of Dryden. He remains one of those who have set standards for English verse which it is desperate to ignore.

III
POPE[1]
LYTTON STRACHEY

Among the considerations that might make us rejoice or regret that we did not live in the eighteenth century, there is one that to my mind outbalances all the rest – if we had, we might have known Pope. At any rate, we have escaped that. We may lament that flowered waistcoats are forbidden us, that we shall never ride in a sedan-chair, and that we shall never see good Queen Anne taking tea at Hampton Court : but we can at least congratulate ourselves that we run no danger of waking up one morning to find ourselves exposed, both now and for ever, to the ridicule of the polite world – that we are hanging by the neck, and kicking our legs, on the elegant gibbet that has been put up for us by the little monster of Twit'nam. And, on the other hand, as it is, we are in the happy position of being able, quite imperturbably, to enjoy the fun. There is nothing so shamelessly selfish as posterity. To us, after two centuries the agonies suffered by the victims of Pope's naughtiness are a matter of indifference ; the fate of Pope's own soul leaves us cold. We sit at our ease, reading those *Satires* and *Epistles*, in which the verses, when they were written, resembled nothing so much as spoonfuls of boiling oil, ladled out by a fiendish monkey at an upstairs window upon such of the passers – by whom the wretch had a grudge against – and we are delighted. We would not have it otherwise : whatever is, is right.

In this there is nothing surprising ; but what does seem strange is that Pope's contemporaries should have borne with him as they did. His attacks were by no means limited to Grub Street. He fell upon great lords and great ladies, duchesses and statesmen, noble patrons and beautiful women of fashion, with an equal ferocity ; and such persons, in those days, were very well able to defend themselves. In France, the fate suffered by Voltaire, at that very time, and on far less provocation, is enough to convince us that such a portent as Pope would never have been tolerated on the other side of the Channel. The monkey would have been whipped into silence and good manners in double quick time. But in England it was different. Here, though " the Great," as they were called, were all – powerful, they preferred not to use their power against a libellous rhymer, who was physically incapable of protecting himself, and who, as a Roman Catholic, lay particularly open to legal pressure. The warfare between Pope and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu illustrates the state of affairs. The origin of their quarrel is uncertain. According to the lady, it was caused by her bursting into fits of laughter upon a declaration of passion from the poet. Another and perhaps more probable story traces the origin of the discord to a pair of sheets, borrowed by Lady Mary from old Mrs. Pope, the poet's mother, and returned by her ladyship, after a fortnight, unwashed. But whatever may have been the hidden cause of the quarrel, its results were obvious enough. Pope, in one of his *Imitations of Horace,* made a reference to "Sappho," whom all the world knew to be Lady Mary, in a couplet of extraordinary scurrility. Always a master of the art of compression, he asserted, in a single line of ten syllables, that his enemy, beside being a slanderous virago, was a debauched woman afflicted with a disgraceful malady. If, after this, Lady Mary had sent her friends or her footmen to inflict a personal chastisement upon the poet, or if she had used her influence with the government to have him brought to his senses, nobody could have been very much surprised. But she did nothing of the sort. Instead, she consulted with Lord Hervey, whom Pope had also attacked and the two together decided to pay back their tormentor in his own coin. Accordingly they decocted and published a lampoon, in which they did their best to emulate both the style and the substance of the poet. "None," they declared,

> "thy crabbed numbers can endure,
> Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure,"

It shows, they said,

> "the Uniformity of Fate,
> That one so odious should be born to hate."

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And if
"Unwhipt, unblanketed, unkick'd, unslain,
That wretched little carcase you retain,
The reason is, not that the world wants eyes,
But thou'rt so mean, they see and they despise."

After sixty lines of furious abuse, they wound up with a shrug of the shoulders, which was far from convincing.

"You strike unwounding, we unhurt can laugh,"
they asseverated. But for the unhurt this was certainly very odd laughter. It was also quite ineffective. Pope's first reply was a prose pamphlet, in which there is at least one amusing passage - " It is true, my Lord, I am short, not well shaped, generally ill-dressed, if not sometimes dirty, Your Lord-ship and Ladyship are still in bloom, your figures such as rival the Apollo of Belvedere and the Venus of Medicis, and your faces so finished that neither sickness nor passion can deprive them of colour." But, of course, he reserved his most poisonous shafts for his poetry. Henceforth, his readers might be sure that in any especially unsavoury couplet the name of Sappho would be found immortally embedded ; while, as for Lord Hervey, he met his final doom in the Character of Sporus – the most virulent piece of invective in the English language.

Lady Mary and Lord Hervey, clever as they were, had been so senseless as to try to fight Pope on his own ground, and, naturally enough, their failure was dismal. But why had they committed this act of folly ? Their own explanation was the exact reverse of the truth. Far from despising the poet, they profoundly admired him. Hypnotised by his greatness, they were unable to prevent themselves from paying him the supreme compliment of an inept and suicidal imitation. And in this they were typical of the society in which they lived. That society was perhaps the most civilized that our history has known. Never, at any rate, before or since, has literature been so respected in England. Prior wrote well, and he became an ambassador, Addison wrote well, and he was made a Secretary of State. The Duke of Wharton gave Young 2000 ponds for having written a poem on the Universal Passion. Alderman Barber's great ambition was to be mentioned favourably by Pope. He let it be understood that he would be willing to part with 4000 ponds if the poet would gratify him ; a single couplet was all he asked for ; but the Alderman begged in vain. On the other hand, Pope accepted 1000 ponds from the old Duchess of Marlborough in return for the suppression of an attack upon the late Duke. Pope cancelled the lines ; but soon afterwards printed an envenomed character of the Duchess. And even the terrific Sarah herself – such was the overwhelming prestige of the potentate of letters – was powerless in face of this affront.

For the first time in our history, a writer, who was a writer and nothing more – Shakespeare was an actor and a theatrical manager – had achieved financial independence. Pope effected this by his translation of Homer, which brought him 9000 ponds – a sum equivalent to about 30,000 ponds to-day. The immense success of this work was a sign of the times. Homer's reputation was enormous : was he not the father of poetry ? The literary snobbery of the age was profoundly impressed by that. Yes, it was snobbery, no doubt : but surely it was a noble snobbery which out Homer so *very* high in the table of precedence - probable immediately after the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet, there were difficulties. It was not only hard to read Homer, it was positively dangerous. Too close an acquaintance might reveal that the mythical figure sweeping along so grandly in front of the Archbishop of York was something of a blackguard – an alarming barbarian, with shocking tastes, small knowledge of the rules, and altogether far from correct. Pope solved these difficulties in a masterly manner. He supplied exactly what was wanted. He gave the eighteenth century a Homer after its own heart – a Homer who was the father – not quite of

poetry, indeed, but of something much more satisfactory – of what the eighteenth century believed poetry to be ; and, very properly, it gave him a fortune in return. The eighteenth century has acquired a reputation for scepticism ; but this is a mistake. In truth there has never been a less sceptical age. Its beliefs were rigid, intense, and imperturbable. In literature, as in every other department of life, an unquestioning orthodoxy reigned. It was this extraordinary self - sufficiency that gave the age its force ; but the same quality caused the completeness of is downfall. When the reaction came, the absolute certainty of the past epoch seemed to invest it with the maximum degree of odium and absurdity. The romantics were men who had lost their faith ; and they rose against the old dispensation with all the zeal of rebels and heretics. Inevitable, their fury fell with peculiar vehemence upon Pope. The great idol was overturned amid shouts of execration and scornful laughter. The writer who, for three generations, had divided with Milton the supreme honour of English poetry, was pronounced to be shallow, pompous, monotonous, meretricious, and not a poet at all.

Now that we have perhaps emerged from romanticism, it is time to consider the master of the eighteenth century with a more impartial eye. This is not altogether an easy task. Though we may be no longer in the least romantic, are we not still – I hesitate to suggest it – are we not still slightly Victorian ? Do we not continue to cast glances of furtive admiration towards the pontiffs of that remarkable era, whose figures, in the edge of our horizon, are still visible, so lofty, and so large ? We can discount the special pleadings of Wordsworth ; but the voice of Matthew Arnold, for instance, still sounds with something like authority upon our ears. Pope, said Matthew Arnold, is not a classic of our poetry, he is a classic of our prose. He was without an "adequate poetic criticism, of life " ; his criticism of life lacked "high seriousness" ; it had neither largeness, freedom, insight, nor benignity. Matthew Arnold was a poet. But his conception of poetry reminds us that he was also an inspector of schools. That the essence of poetry is "high seriousness" is one of those noble platitudes which commend themselves immediately as both obvious and comfortable. But, in reality, obviousness and comfort have very little to do with poetry. It is not the nature of poetry to be what anyone expects ; on the contrary, it is its nature to be surprising, to be disturbing, to be impossible. Poetry and high seriousness ! Of course, to Dr, Arnold's son, they seemed to be inevitably linked together ; and certainly had the world been created by Dr. Arnold they actually would have been. But – perhaps fortunately – it was not. If we look at the facts, where do we find poetry ? In the wild fantasies of Aristophanes, in the sordid lusts of Baudelaire, in the gentle trivialities of La Fontaine.

" Dreadful was the din
Of hissing through the hall, thick swarming now
With complicated monsters, head and tail,
Scorpion, and asp, and amphisbaena dire,
Cerastes horn'd, hydrus, and ellops drear,
And dipsas – "

That is not high seriousness ; it is a catalogue of curious names ; and it is poetry. There is poetry to be found lurking in the metaphysical system of Epicurus, and in the body of a flea. And so need we be surprised if it invests a game of cards, or a gentleman sneezing at Hampton Court ? –

"Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;
The gnomes direct, to every atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust
Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows,
And the high dome re-echoes to his nose."

Pope, we are told, was not only without "high seriousness" : he lacked no less an "adequate poetic criticism of life." What does this mean ? The phrase is ambiguous : it signifies at once too much and too little. If we are to understand – as the context seems to imply – that, in Matthew Arnold's opinion, no poetic criticism of life can be adequate unless it possesses largeness, freedom, and benignity, we must certainly agree that Pope's poetic criticism of life was far from adequate ; for his way of writing was neither large nor free, and there was nothing benignant about him. But the words will bear another interpretation ; and in this sense it may turn out that Pope's poetic criticism of life was adequate to an extraordinary degree.

Let us examine for a moment the technical instrument which Pope used – I mean the heroic couplet.

When he was a young man, the poet. Walsh gave Pope a piece of advice. "We have had great poets," he said, "but never one great poet that was correct. I recommend you to make your leading aim – correctness." Pope took the advice, and became the most correct of poets. This was his chief title to glory in the eighteenth century ; it was equally the stick that he was most frequently and rapturously beaten with, in the nineteenth. Macaulay, in his essay on Byron, devotes several pages of his best forensic style to an exposure and denunciation of the absurd futility of the "correctness" of the school of Pope. (There is in reality, he declared, only one kind of correctness in literature – that which " has its foundation in truth and in the principles of human nature." But Pope's so–called correctness was something very different. It consisted simply in a strict obedience to a perfectly arbitrary set of prosodic rules. His couplet was a purely artificial structure – the product of mere convention ; and, so far from there being any possible poetic merit in the kind of correctness which it involved, this "correctness" was in fact only another name for dullness and absurdity." A short time ago, the distinguished poet, M. Paul Valery, demolished Macaulay's argument – no doubt quite unconsciously – in an essay full of brilliant subtlety and charming wit. He showed conclusively the essentially poetic value of purely arbitrary conventions. But, for our purposes, so drastic a conclusion is unnecessary. For Macaulay was mistaken, not only in his theory, but in his facts. The truth is that the English classical couplet – unlike the French – had nothing conventional about it. On the contrary, it was the inevitable, the logical, the natural outcome of the development of English verse.

The fundamental element in the structure of poetry is rhythmical repetition. In England, the favourite unit of this repetition very early became the ten – syllabled iambic line. Now it is clear that the treatment of this line may be developed in two entirely different directions. The first of these developments is blank verse. Milton's definition of blank verse is well known, and it cannot be bettered : it consists, he says, "in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another." Its essence, in other words, is the combination formed by rhythmical variety playing over an underlying norm ; and it is easy to trace the evolution of this wonderful measure from the primitive rigidity of Surrey to the incredible virtuosity of Shakespeare's later plays, where blank verse reaches its furthest point of development – where rhythmical variety is found in unparalleled profusion, while the underlying regularity is just, still, miraculously preserved. After Shakespeare, the combination broke down ; the element of variety became so excessive that the underlying norm disappeared, with the result that the blank verse of the latest Elizabethans is virtually indistinguishable from prose.

But suppose the ten – syllabled iambic were treated in precisely the contrary manner. Suppose, instead of developing the element of variety to its maximum, the whole rhythmical emphasis were put upon the element of regularity. What would be the result ? This was the problem that presented itself to the poets of the seventeenth century, when it appeared to them that the possibilities of blank verse were played out. (In reality they were not played out, as Milton proved ; but Milton was an isolated and unique phenomenon.) Clearly, the most effective method of

emphasising regularity is the use of rhyme ; and the most regular form of rhyme is the couplet. Already, in the splendid couplets of Marlowe and in the violent couplets of Donne, we can find a foretaste of what the future had in store for the measure. Shakespeare, indeed, as if to show that there were no limits either to his comprehension or to his capacity, threw off a few lines which might have been written by Pope, and stuck them into the middle of *Othello.*[2] But it was not until the collapse of blank verse, about 1630, that the essential characteristics which lay concealed in the couplet began to be exploited. It was Waller who first fully apprehended the implications of regularity ; and it is to this fact that his immense reputation during the succeeding hundred years was due. Waller disengaged the heroic couplet from the beautiful vagueness of Elizabethanism. He perceived what logically followed from a rhyme. He saw that regularity implied balance, that balance implied antithesis ; he saw that balance also implied simplicity, that simplicity implied clarity and that clarity implied exactitude. The result was a poetical instrument contrary in every particular to blank verse – a form which, instead of being varied, unsymmetrical, fluid, complex, profound and indefinite, was regular, balanced, antithetical, simple, clear, and exact. But, though Waller was its creator, the heroic couplet remained, with him, in an embryonic state, Its evolution was slow ; even Dryden did not quite bring it to perfection. That great genius, with all his strength and all his brilliance, lacked one quality without which no mastery of the couplet could be complete – the elegance of perfect finish. This was possessed by Pope. The most correct of poets – Pope was indeed that ; it is his true title to glory. But the phrase does not mean that he obeyed more slavishly than anybody else a set of arbitrary rules. No, it means something entirely different : it means that the system of versification of which the principle is regularity reached in Pope's hands the final plenitude of its nature – its ultimate significance – its supreme consummation.

That Pope's verse is artificial there can be no doubt. But then there is only one kind of verse that is not artificial, and that is, bad verse. Yet it is true that there is a sense in which Pope's couplet is more artificial than, let us say, the later blank verse of Shakespeare – it has less resemblance to nature. It is regular and neat ; but nature is "divers et ondoyant" ; and so is blank verse. Nature and blank verse are complicated ; and Pope's couplet is simplicity itself. But what a profound art underlies that simplicity ! Pope's great achievement in English literature was the triumph of simplifications. In one of his earliest works, the *Pastorals*, there is simplicity and nothing else ; Pope had understood that if he could once attain to a perfect simplicity, all the rest would follow in good time :-

"O deign to visit our forsaken seats,
The mossy fountains, and the green retreats !
Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade ;
Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade ;
Where'er you tread, the blushing flow'rs shall rise,
And all things flourish where you turn your eyes."

The lines flow on with the most transparent limpidity : -

"But see, the shepherds shun the noon – day heat,
The lowing herds to murm'ring brooks retreat,
To closer shades the panting flocks remove ;
Ye Gods ! and is there no relief for love ?"

Everything is obvious. The diction is a mass of *clichés* ; the epithets are the most commonplace possible ; the herds low, the brooks murmur, the flocks pant and remove, the retreats are green, and the flowers blush. The rhythm is that of a rocking horse ; and the sentiment is mere sugar. But what a relief ! What a relief to have escaped for once from *le mot proper*, from subtle elaboration of diction and metre, from complicated states of mind, and all the profound obscurities of Shakespeare and

Mr. T. S. Eliot ! How delightful to have no trouble at all – to understand so very very easily every single thing that is said !

This is Pope at his most youthful. (As he matured, his verse matured with him. Eventually, his couplets, while retaining to the full their early ease, polish, and lucidity, became charged with an extraordinary weight. He was able to be massive, as no other wielder of the measure has ever been :-

"Lo ! thy dread empire, Chaos ! is restored ;
Light dies before thy uncreating word ;
Thy hand, great Anarch ! lets the curtain fall,
And universal Darkness buries All."

Here the slow solemnity of the effect is produced by a most learned accumulation of accents and quantities ; in some of the lines all the syllables save two are either long or stressed. At other times, he uses a precisely opposite method ; in line after line he maintains, almost completely, the regular alternation of accented and unaccented syllables ; and conveys a wonderful impression of solidity and force :-

"Proceed, great days ! till learning fly the shore,
Till Birch shall blush with noble blood no more,
Till Thames see Eton's sons for ever play,
Till Westminster's whole year be holiday,
Till Isis' Elders reel, their pupils' sport,
And Alma Mater lie dissolved in Port !"

Perhaps the most characteristic of all the elements in the couplet is antithesis. Ordinary regularity demands that the sense should end with every line – that was a prime necessity ; but a more scrupulous symmetry would require something more a division of the line itself into two halves, whose meanings should correspond. And yet a further refinement was possible : each half might be again divided, and the corresponding divisions in the two halves might be so arranged as to balance each other. The force of neatness could no further go ; and thus the most completely evolved type of the heroic line is one composed of four main words arranged in pairs. so as to form a double antithesis.

"Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike"

is an example of such a line, and Pope's poems are full of them. With astonishing ingenuity he builds up these exquisite structures, in which the parts are so cunningly placed that they seem to interlock spontaneously ; and, while they are all formed on a similar model, are yet so subtly adjusted that they produce a fresh pleasure as each one appears. But that is not all. Pope was pre-eminently a satirist. He was naturally drawn to the contemplation of human beings, their conduct in society, their characters, their motives, their destinies ; and the feelings which these contemplations habitually aroused in him were those of scorn and hatred. Civilisation illumined by animosity – such was his theme ; such was the passionate and complicated material from which he wove his patterns of balanced precision and polished clarity. Antithesis penetrates below the structure ; it permeates the whole conception of his work. Fundamental opposites clash, and are reconciled. The profundities of persons, the futilities of existence, the rage and spite of genius – these things are mixed together, and presented to our eyes in the shape of a Chinese box. The essence of all art is the accomplishment of the impossible. This cannot be done, we say : and it *is* done. What has happened ? A magician has waved his wand. It is impossible that Pope should convey to us his withering sense of the wretchedness and emptiness of the fate of old women in society, in five lines, each containing four words. arranged in pairs, so as to form a double antithesis. But the magician waves his wand, and there it is :-

"See how the world its veterans rewards !
A youth of frolics, an old age of cards ;
Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without lovers, old without a friend,
A fop their passion, and their prize a sot ;
Alive ridiculous, and dead forgot !"

And now, perhaps, we have discovered what may truly be said to have been Pope's "poetic criticism of life." His poetic criticism of life was, simply and solely, the heroic couplet.

Pope was pre-eminently a satirist : and so it is only natural that his enemies should take him to task for not being something else. He had no benignity : he had no feeling for sensuous beauty ; he took no interest in nature ; he was pompous – did he not wear a wig ? Possible ; but if one is to judge poets by what they are without, where is one to end ? One might point out that Wordsworth had no sense of humour, that Shelley did not understand human beings, that Keats could not read Greek, and that Matthew Arnold did not wear a wig. And, if one looks more closely, one perceives that there were a good many things that Pope could do very well – when he wanted to. Sensuous beauty, for instance :-

"Die of a rose in aromatic pain."

If that is not sensuously beautiful, what is ? Then, we are told, he did not "compose with his eye on the object." But once Pope looked at a spider, and this was what he composed :-

"The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine !
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line."

Could Wordsworth have done better ? It is true that he did not often expatiate upon the scenery ; but, when he chose, he could call up a vision of nature which is unforgettable :-

" Lo ! where Maeotis sleeps, and hardly flows
The freezing Tanais thro' a waste of snows."

We see, and we shiver. It cannot be denied that Pope wore a wig ; it must even be confessed that there are traces, in his earlier work especially, of that inexpressive ornament in the rococo style, which was the bane of his age ; but the true Pope was not there. The true Pope threw his wig into the corner of the room, and used all the plainest words in the dictionary. He used them carefully, no doubt, very carefully, but he used them – one – syllabled, Saxon words, by no means pretty – they cover his pages ; and some of his pages are among the coarsest in English literature. There are passages in the *Dunciad* which might agitate Mr. James Joyce. Far from being a scrupulous worshipper of the noble style, Pope was a realist – in thought and in expression. He could describe a sordid interior as well as any French novelist :-

"In the worst inn's worst rooms, with mat half-hung,
The floors of plaster, and the walls of dung,
On once a flock – bed, but repair'd with straw,
With tape-tied curtains, never meant to draw,
The George and Garter dangling from that bed
Where tawdry yellow strove with dirty red,
Great Villiers lies ....."

But these are only the outworks of the citadel. The heart of the man was not put into descriptions of physical things ; it was put into descriptions of people whom he disliked. It is in those elaborate Characters, in which, through a score of lines or so,

the verse rises in wave upon wave of malice, to fall at last with a crash on the devoted head of the victim – in the somber magnificence of the denunciation of the great dead Duke, in the murderous insolence of the attack on the great living Duchess in the hooting mockery of Bufo, in the devastating analysis of Addison – it is here that Pope's art comes to its climax. With what a relish, with what a thrill, we behold once more the impossible feat – the couplet, that bed of Procrustes, fitted exactly and eternally with the sinuous egoism of Addison's spirit, or the putrescent nothingness of Lord Hervey's. In the Character of Sporus, says the great critic and lexicographer, in memory of whom I have had the honour of addressing you to-day, Pope "seems to be actually screaming with malignant fury." It is true.

"Let Sporus tremble ! – What ? that thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk ?
Satire or sense, alas ! can Sporus feel ?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel ?
-Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings ;
Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys :
So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
In mumbling of the game they dare not bite,
Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
As shallows streams run dimpling all the way.
Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks,
Or at the ear of Eve, familiar toad,
Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad
In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,
Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies,
His wit all see – saw, between that and this,
Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
And he himself one vile antithesis.
Amphibious things ! that acting either part,
The trifling head, or the corrupted heart,
Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,
Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord.
Eve,s tempter thus the Rabbins have expressed,
A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest ;
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none can trust,
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust."

It is true : Pope *seems* to be actually screaming ; but let us not mistake. It is only an appearance ; actually, Pope is not screaming at all; for these are strange impossible screams, unknown to the world of fact – screams endowed with immortality. What has happened then ? Pope has waved his wand. He has turned his screams into poetry, with the enchantment of the heroic couplet.

Notes and References

1. The Leslie Stephen Lecture for 1925.

2. " She that in wisdom never was so frail
To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail ;
She that could think, and ne'er disclose her mind ;
See suitors following, and not look behind ;
She was a wight, if ever such wight were,
To suckle fools and chronicle small beer."

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IV
WILLIAM BLAKE AND HIS ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE DIVINE COMEDY
W.B. YEATS

I. HIS OPINIONS UPON ART

WILLIAM BLAKE was the first writer of modern times to preach the indissoluble marriage of all great art with symbol. There had been allegorists and teachers of allegory in plenty, but the symbolic imagination, or, as Blake preferred to call it', 'vision', is not allegory, being 'a representation of what actually exists really and unchangeably'. A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame; while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing, or familiar principle, and belongs to fancy and not to imagination: the one is a revelation, the other an amusement. It is happily no part of my purpose to expound in detail the relations he believed to exist between symbol and mind, for in doing so I should come upon not a few doctrines which, though they have not been difficult to many simple persons, ascetics wrapped in skins, women who had cast away all common knowledge, peasants dreaming by their sheepfolds upon the hills, are full of obscurity to the man of modern culture; but it is necessary to just touch upon these relations, because in them was the fountain of much of the practice and of all the precept of his artistic life.

If a man would enter into 'Noah's rainbow', he has written, and 'make a friend' of one of 'the images of wonder' which dwell there, and which always entreat him 'to leave mortal thing', 'then would he arise from the grave and meet the Lord in the air'; and by this rainbow, this sign of a covenant granted to him who is with Shem and Japhet, 'painting, poetry and music', 'the three powers in man of conversing with Paradise which the flood', 'of time and space' 'did not sweep away' 'Blake represented the shapes of beauty haunting our moments of inspiration: shapes held by most for the frailest of ephemera, but by him for a people older than the world, citizens of eternity , appearing and reappearing in the minds of artists and of poets, creating all we touch and see by casting distorted images of themselves upon 'the vegetable glass of nature'; and because beings, none the less symbols, blossoms, as it were, growing from invisible immortal roots, hands, as it were, pointing the way into some divine labyrinth. If 'the world of imagination' was 'the world of eternity', as this doctrine implied, it was of less importance to know men and nature than to distinguish the beings and substances of imagination from those of a more perishable kind, created by the fantasy, in uninspired moments, out of memory and whim; and this could best be done by purifying one's mind, as with a flame, in study of the works of the great masters, who were great because they had been granted by divine favour a vision of the unfallen world from which others are kept apart by the flaming sword that turns every way; and by flying from the painters who studied 'the vegetable glass' for its ownsake, and not to discover there the shadows of imperishable beings and substances, and who entered into their own minds, not to make the unfallen world a test of all they heard and saw and felt with the senses, but to cover the naked spirit with 'the rotten rags of memory' of older sensations. The struggle of the first part of his life had been to distinguish between these two schools, and to cleave always to the Florentine, and so to escape the fascination of those who seemed to him. to offer the sleep of nature to a spirit weary with the labours of inspiration; but it was only after his return to London from Felpham in 1804 that he finally escaped from 'temptations and perturbations' which sought to destroy 'the imaginative power' at 'the hands of Venetian and Flemish Demons'. 'The spirit of Titian' and one must always remember that he had only seen poor engravings, and what his disciple, Palmer, has called 'picture-dealers' Titians—was particularly active in raising doubts concerning the possibility of executing without a model; and when once he had raised the doubt it became easy for him to snatch away the vision time after time'; and Blake's imagination 'weakened' and 'darkened' until a 'memory of nature and of pictures of various schools possessed his mind, instead of appropriate execution ,

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flowing from the vision itself. But now he wrote, 'O glory, and O delight! I have entirely reduced that spectrous fiend to his station' -he had overcome the merely reasoning and sensual portion of the mind- 'whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labours for the last passed twenty years of my life ...I speak with perfect confidence and certainty of the fact which has passed upon me. Nebuchadnezzar had seven times passed over him, I have had twenty; thank God I was not altogether a beast as he was ...Suddenly, on the day after visiting the Truchsessian Gallery of pictures'—this was a gallery containing pictures by Albert Dürer and by the great Florentines —'I was again enlightened with the light I enjoyed in my youth, and which has for exactly twenty years been closed from me, as by a door and by window-shutters. ...Excuse my enthusiasm, or rather madness'; for I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or graver into my hand, even as I used to be in my youth'.

This letter may have been the expression of a moment's enthusiasm, but was more probably rooted in one of those intuitions of coming technical power which every creator feels, and learns to rely upon; for all his greatest work was done, and the principles of his art were formulated, after this date. Except a word here and there, his writings hitherto had not dealt with the principles of art except remotely and by implication; but now he wrote much upon them, and not in obscure symbolic verse, but in emphatic prose, and explicit if not very poetical rhyme. He explained spiritual art, and praised the painters of Florence and their influence and cursed all that has come of Venice and Holland in his *Descriptive Catalogue,* in the *Address to the Public,* in the notes on Sir Joshua Reynolds, in *The Book of Moonlight*—of which some not very dignified rhymes alone remain—in beautiful detached passages of his *MS. Book.* The limitation of his view was from the very intensity of his vision; he was a too literal realist of imagination, as others are of nature; and because he believed that the figures seen by the mind's eye, when exalted by inspiration, were 'external existences', symbols of divine essences, he hated every grace of style that might obscure their lineaments. To wrap them about in reflected lights was to do this, and to dwell over-fondly upon any softness of hair or flesh was to dwell upon that which was least permanent and least characteristic, for 'The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: that the more distinct, sharp and wiry the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism and bungling'. Inspiration was to see the permanent and characteristic in all forms, and if you had it not, you must needs imitate with a languid mind the things you saw or remembered, and so sink into the sleep of nature where all is soft and melting. 'Great inventors in all ages knew this. Protogenes and Apelles knew each other by this line. Raphael and Michelangelo and Albert Dürer are known by this and this alone. ...How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline ? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding outline and its infinite inflections and movements ? What is it that builds a house and plants a garden, but the definite and determinate? What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wiry line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions ? Leave out this line and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the Almighty must be drawn out upon it before man or beast can exist. 'He even insisted that' colouring does not depend upon where the colours are put, but upon where the lights and darks are put, and all depends on form or outline'—meaning, I suppose, that a colour gets its brilliance or its depth from being in light or in shadow. He does not mean by outline the bounding line dividing a form from its background, as one of his commentators has thought, but the line that divides it from surrounding space, and unless you have an overmastering sense of this you cannot draw true beauty at all, but only 'the beauty that is appended to folly', a beauty of mere voluptuous softness, 'a lamentable accident of the mortal and perishing life', for 'the beauty proper for sublime art is lineaments, or forms and features that are capable of being the receptacles of intellect', and 'the face or limbs that alter least from infancy to old age are the face and limbs of greatest beauty and perfection'. His praise of a severe art had been beyond price had his age rested a moment to listen, in the midst of its enthusiasm for Correggio and the later Renaissance, for Bartolozzi

and for Stothard. What matter if in his visionary realism, in his enthusiasm for what, after all, is perhaps the greatest art, he refused to admit that he who wraps the vision in lights and shadows, in irridescent or glowing colour, until form be half lost in pattern, may, as did Titian in his *Bacchus and Ariadne*, create a talisman as powerfully charged with intellectual virtue as though it were a jewel-studded door of the city seen on Patmos?

To cover the imperishable lineaments of beauty with shadows and reflected lights was to fall into the power of his 'Vala', the indolent fascination of Nature, the woman divinity who is so often described in the 'Prophetic Books' as 'sweet pestilence', and whose children weave webs to take the souls of men; but there was a yet more lamentable chance, for Nature has also a 'masculine portion' or 'spectre' which kills instead of taking prisoner, and is continually at war with inspiration. To 'generalise' forms and shadows, to 'smooth out' spaces and lines in obedience to 'laws of composition' and of painting; founded not upon imagination, which always thirsts for variety and delights in freedom, but upon reasoning from sensation, which is always seeking to reduce everything to a lifeless and slavish uniformity; as the popular art of Blake's day had done, and as he understood Sir Joshua Reynolds to advise, was to fall into 'Entuthon Benithon', or 'the Lake of Udan Adan', or some other of those regions where the imagination and the flesh are alike dead, that he names by so many resonant fantastical names. 'General knowledge is remote knowledge,' he wrote; 'it is in particulars that wisdom consists, and happiness too. Both in art and life general masses are as much art as a pasteboard man is human. Every man has eyes, nose and mouth; this every idiot knows. But he who enters into and discriminates most minutely the manners and intentions, the characters in all their branches, is the alone wise or sensible man, and on this discrimination all art is founded. ...As poetry admits not a letter that is insignificant, so painting admits not a grain of sand or a blade of grass in significant, much less an insignificant blot or blur.'

Against another desire of his time, derivative also from what he has called' corporeal reason', the desire for 'a tepid moderation', for a lifeless 'sanity in both art and life', he had protested years before with a paradoxical violence. 'The roadway of excess leads to the palace of wisdom' and we must only 'bring out weight and measure in time of dearth'. This protest, carried, in the notes on Sir Joshua Reynolds, to the point of dwelling with pleasure on the thought that 'The *Lives of the Painters* say that Raphael' died of dissipation', because dissipation is better than emotional penury, seemed as important to his old age as to his youth. He taught it to his disciples, and one finds it in its purely artistic shape in a diary written by Samuel Palmer, in 1824: 'Excess is the essential vivifying spirit, vital spark, embalming spice of the finest art. There are many mediums in the *means*—none, oh, not a jot, not a shadow of a jot, in the *end* of great art. In a picture whose merit is to be excessively brilliant, it can't be too brilliant, but individual tints may be too brilliant. ...We must not begin with medium, but think always on excess and only use medium to make excess more abundantly excessive.'

These three primary commands, to seek a determinate out line, to avoid a generalised treatment, and to desire always abundance and exuberance, were insisted upon with vehement anger, and their opponents called again and again 'demons' and 'villains', 'hired' by the wealthy and the idle; but in private, Palmer has told us, he could find 'sources of delight throughout the whole range of art', and was ever ready to praise excellence in any school, finding, doubtless, among friends, no need for the emphasis of exaggeration. There is a beautiful passage in *Jerusalem* in which the merely mortal part of the mind, 'the spectre', created 'pyramids of pride', and 'pillars in the deepest hell to reach the heavenly arches', and seeks to discover wisdom in 'the spaces between the stars', not 'in the stars', where it is, but the immortal part makes all his labours vain, and turns his pyramids to, 'grains of sand', his 'pillars' to 'dust on the fly's wing', and makes of 'his starry heavens a moth of gold and silver mocking his anxious grasp'. So when man's desire to rest from spiritual labour, and his thirst to fill his art with mere sensation and memory, seem upon the point of triumph, some

miracle transforms them to a new inspiration; and here and there among the pictures born of sensation and memory is the murmuring of a new ritual, the glimmering of new talismans and symbols.

It was during and after the writing of these opinions that Blake did the various series of pictures which have brought him the bulk of his fame. He had already completed the illustrations to Young's *Night Thoughts*—in which the great sprawling figures, a little wearisome even with the luminous colours of the original water—colour, became nearly intolerable in plain black and white—and almost all the illustrations to the 'Prophetic Books', which have an energy like that of the elements, but are rather rapid sketches taken while some phantasmic procession swept over him, than elaborate compositions, and in whose shadowy adventures one finds not merely, as did Dr. Garth Wilkinson, 'the hells of the ancient people, the Anakim, the Nephalim, and the Rephaim... gigantic petrifications from which the fires of lust and intense selfish passion have long dissipated what was animal and vital'; not merely the shadows cast by the powers who had closed the light from him as 'with a door and windowshutters' , but the shadows of those who gave them battle. He did now, however, the many designs to Milton, of which I have only seen those to *Paradise Regained*; the reproductions of those to *Comus*, published, I think, by Mr. Quaritch; and the three or four to *Paradise Lost*, engraved by Bell Scott—a series of designs which one good judge considers his greatest work; the illustrations to Blair's *Grave*, whose gravity and passion struggled with the mechanical softness and trivial smoothness of Schiavonetti's engraving; the illustrations to Thornton's *Virgil*, whose influence is manifest in the work of the little group of landscape-painters who gathered about him in his old age and delighted to call him master. The member of the group whom I have already so often quoted has alone praised worthily these illustrations to the first Eclogue: 'There is in all such a misty and dreamy glimmer as penetrates and kindles the inmost soul and gives complete and unreserved delight, unlike the gaudy daylight of this world. They are like all this wonderful artist's work, the drawing aside of the fleshly curtain, and the glimpse which all the most holy, studious saints and sages have enjoyed, of the rest which remains to the people of God.' Now, too, he did the great series, the crowning work of his life, the illustrations to *The Book of Job* and the illustrations to the *Divine Comedy*. Hitherto he had protested against the mechanical 'dots and lozenges' and 'blots and blurs' of Woollett and Strange, 'but had himself used' both 'dot and lozenge', 'blot and blur', though always in subordination 'to a firm and determinate outline'; but in Marc Antonio, certain of whose engravings he was shown by Linnell, he found a style full of delicate lines, a style where all was living and energetic, strong and subtle. And almost his last words, a letter written upon his death-bed, attack the 'dots and lozenges' with, even more than usually quaint symbolism, and praise expressive lines. 'I know too well that the majority of Englishmen are fond of the infinite...a line is a line in its minutest subdivisions', straight or crooked. It is itself, not intermeasurable by anything else... but since the French Revolution'—since the reign of reason began, that is—Englishmen are all intermeasurable by one another; certainly a happy state of agreement, in which I for one do not agree. 'The Dante series occupied the last years of his life; even when too weak to get out of bed he worked on, propped up with the great drawing book before him. He sketched a hundred designs, but left nearly all incomplete, some greatly so, and partly engraved seven plates, of which the 'Francesca and Paolo' is the most finished. It is not, I think, inferior to any but the finest in *Job*, if indeed to them, and shows in its perfection Blake's mastery over elemental things, the swirl in which the lost spirits are hurried, 'a watery flame' he would have called it, the haunted waters and the huddling shapes. In the illustrations of Purgatory there is a serene beauty, and one finds his Dante and Virgil climbing among the rough rocks under a cloudy sun, and in their sleep upon the smooth steps towards the summit, a placid, marmoreal, tender, starry rapture.

All in this great series are in some measure powerful and moving, and not, as it is customary to say of the work of Blake, because a flaming imagination pierces

through a cloudy and indecisive technique, but because they have the only excellence possible in any art, a mastery over artistic expression. The technique of Blake was imperfect, incomplete, as is the technique of wellnigh all artists who have striven to bring fires from remote summits; but where his imagination is perfect and complete, his technique has a like perfection, a like completeness. He strove to embody more subtle raptures, more elaborate intuitions than any before him; his imagination and technique are more broken and strained under a great burden than the imagination and technique of any other master. 'I am,' wrote Blake, 'like others, just equal in invention and execution.' And again, 'No man can improve an original invention; nor can an original invention exist without execution, organised, delineated and articulated either by God or man...I have heard people say, "Give me the ideas; it is no matter what words you put them into"; and others say, "Give me the design; it is no matter for the execution".... Ideas cannot be given but in their minutely appropriate words, nor can a design be made without its minutely appropriate execution.' Living in a time when technique and imagination are continually perfect and complete, because they no longer strive to bring fire from heaven, we forget how imperfect and incomplete they were in even the greatest masters, in Botticelli, in Orcagna, and in Giotto.

The errors in the handiwork of exalted spirits are as the more fantastical errors in their lives; as Coleridge's opium cloud; as Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's candidature for the throne of Greece; as Blake's anger against causes and purposes he but half understood; as that veritable madness an Eastern scripture thinks permissible among the saints; for he who half lives in eternity endures a rending of the structures of the mind, a crucifixion of the intellectual body. [1896]

1 Woollett and Strange had established names when Blake began to draw, and must have seemed to Blake in certain moods the types of all triumphant iniquity. Woollett used to fire a cannon from the roof of his house whenever he finished an important plate.

V

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHELLEY'S POETRY

W.B. YEATS

I. His Ruling ideas

When I was a boy in Dublin I was one of a group who rented a room in a mean street to discuss philosophy. My fellow-students got more and more interested in certain modern schools of mystical belief, and I never found any-body to share my one unshakable belief. I thought that whatever of philosophy has been made poetry is alone permanent, and that one should begin to arrange it in some regular order, rejecting nothing as the make believe of the poets. I thought, so far as I can recollect my thoughts after so many years, that if a powerful and benevolent spirit has shaped the destiny of this world, we can better discover that destiny from the words that have gathered up the heart's desire of the world, than from historical records, or from speculation, wherein the heart withers. Since then I have observed dreams and visions very carefully, and am now certain that the imagination has some way of lighting on the truth that the reason has not, and that its commandments, delivered when the body is still and the reason silent, are the most binding we can ever know. I have re-read *Prometheus Unbound,* which I had hoped my fellow-students would have studied as a sacred book, and it seems to me to have an even more certain place than I had thought among the sacred books of the world. I remember going to a learned scholar to ask about its deep meanings, which I felt more than understood, and his telling me that it was Godwin's *Political Justice* put into rhyme, and that Shelley was a crude revolutionist, and believed that the overturning of kings and priests would regenerate mankind. I quoted the lines which tell how the halcyons ceased to prey on fish, and how poisonous leaves became good for food, to show that he foresaw more than any political regeneration, but was too timid to push the argument. I still believe that one cannot help believing him, as this scholar I know believes him, a vague thinker, who mixed occasional great poetry with a fantastic rhetoric, unless one compares such passages, and above all such passages as describe the liberty he praised, till one has discovered the system of belief that lay behind them. It should seem natural to find his thought full of subtlety, for Mrs. Shelley has told how he hesitated whether he should be a metaphysician or a poet, and has spoken of his 'huntings after the obscure' with regret, and said of that *Prometheus Unbound,* which so many for three generations have thought P*olitical Justice* put into rhyme, 'It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of Mind and Nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.' From these scattered fragments and observations, and from many passages read in their light, one soon comes to understand that his liberty was so much more than the liberty of *Political Justice* that it was one with Intellectual Beauty, and that the regeneration he foresaw was so much more than the regeneration many political dreamers have foreseen, that it could not come in its perfection till the Hours bore 'Time to his tomb in eternity'. In *A Defence of Poetry,* he will have it that the poet and the lawgiver hold their station by the right of the same faculty, the one uttering in words and the other in the forms of society his vision of the divine order, the Intellectual Beauty. 'Poets' according to the circumstances of the age and nation, in which they appeared, were called in the earliest epoch of the world legislators or prophets, and a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things are to be ordained, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flowers and the fruit of latest time. 'Language, colour, form, and religious and civil habits of action are all the instruments and materials of poetry'. Poetry is 'the creation of

actions according to the unchangeable process of human nature as existing in the mind of the creator, which is itself the image of all other minds'. 'Poets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and merchants....It is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is the most delightful, but it is alleged that of reason is the more useful. ...Whilst the mechanist abridges and the political economist combines labour, let them be sure that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want. ...The rich have become richer, the poor have become poorer, ...such are the effects which must ever flow from an unmitigated exercise of the calculating faculty.' The speaker of these things might almost be Blake, who held that the Reason not only created Ugliness, but all other evils. The books of all wisdom are hidden in the cave of the Witch of Atlas, who is one of his personifications of beauty, and when she moves over the enchanted river that is an image of all life, the priests cast aside their deceits, and the king crowns an ape to mock his own sovereignty, and the soldiers gather about the anvils to beat their swords to ploughshares, and lovers cast away their timidity, and friends are united; while the power which, in *Laon and Cythna,* awakens the mind of the reformer to contend, and itself contends, against the tyrannies of the world, is first seen as the star of love or beauty. And at the end of the *Ode to Naples,* he cries out to, 'the spirit of beauty' to overturn the tyrannies of the world, or to fill them with its, 'harmonising ardours'. He calls the spirit of beauty liberty, because despotism, and perhaps, as 'the man of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys', all authority, pluck virtue from her path towards beauty , and because it leads us by that love whose service is perfect freedom. It leads all things by love, for he cries again and again that love is the perception of beauty in thought and things, and it orders all things by love, for it is love that impels the soul to its expressions in thought and in action, by making us seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves. 'We are born into the world, and there is something within us which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness.' We have 'a soul within our soul that describes a circle around its proper paradise which pain and sorrow and evil dare not overleap', and we labour to see this soul in many mirrors, that we may possess it the more abundantly. He would hardly seek the progress of the world by any less gentle labour, and would hardly have us resist evil itself. He bids the reformers in the *Philosophical Review of Reform* receive 'the onset of the cavalry', if it be sent to disperse their meetings, 'with folded arms', and 'not because active resistance is not justifiable, but because temperance and courage would produce greater advantages than the most decisive victory'; and he gives them like advice in *The Masque of Anarchy,* for liberty the poem cries, 'is love', and can make the rich man kiss its feet, and, like those who followed Christ, give away his goods and follow it throughout the world.

He does not believe that the reformation of society can bring this beauty, this divine order, among men without the regeneration of the hearts of men. Even in *Queen Mab,* which was written before he had found his deepest thought, or rather perhaps before he had found words to utter it, for I do not think men change much in their deepest thought, he is less anxious to change men's beliefs, as I think, than to cry out against that serpent more subtle than any beast of the field, 'the cause and the effect of tyranny'. He affirms again and again that the virtuous, those who have 'pure desire and universal love', are happy in the midst of tyranny, and he foresees a day when the 'Spirit of Nature', the Spirit of Beauty of his later poems, who has her 'throne of power unappealable' in every human heart, shall have made men so virtuous that 'kingly glare will lose its power to dazzle', and 'silently pass by', and, as it seems, commerce, 'the venal interchange of all that human art or nature yield; which wealth should purchase not', come as silently to an end.

He was always, indeed in chief, a witness for that 'power unappealable'. Maddalo, in *Julian and Maddalo,* says that the soul is powerless, and can only, like a 'dreary bell hung in a heaven-illumined tower, toll our thoughts and our desires to meet below

round the rent heart and pray'; but Julian, who is Shelley himself, replies, as the makers of all religions have replied:

> Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
> But in our mind? And if we were not weak,
> Should we be less in deed than in desire?

while *Mont Blanc* is an intricate analogy to affirm that the soul has its sources in 'the secret strength .of things which governs thought, and to the infinite dome of heaven is as a law'. He even thought that men might be immortal were they sinless, and his Cythna bids the sailors be without remorse, for all that live are stained as they are. It is thus, she says, that time marks men and their thoughts for the tomb. And the 'Red Comet', the image of evil in *Laon and Cythna,* when it began its war with the star of beauty, brought not only 'Fear, Hatred, Fraud and Tyranny', but 'Death, Decay, Earthquake, and Blight and Madness pale'.

When the Red Comet is conquered, when Jupiter is over= thrown by Demogorgon, when the prophecy of Queen Mab is fulfilled, visible Nature will put on perfection again. Shelley declares, in one of the notes to *Queen Mab,* that 'there is no great extravagance in presuming... that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species', and thinks it 'certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilised man'. In *Prometheus Unbound* he sees, as in the ecstasy of a saint, the ships moving among the seas of the world without fear of danger—

> by the light
> Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
> And music soft,

and poison dying out of the green things, and cruelty out of all living things, and even the toads and efts becoming beautiful, and at last Time being borne 'to his tomb in eternity.

This beauty, this divine order, whereof all things shall become a part in a kind of resurrection of the body, is already visible to the dead and to souls in ecstasy, for ecstasy is a kind of death. The dying Lionel hears the song of the nightingale, and cries:

> Heardst thou not sweet words among
> That heaven-resounding minstrelsy ?
> Heardst thou not, that those who die
> Awake in a world of ecstasy?
> That love, when limbs are interwoven,
> And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
> And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
> And music, when one beloved is singing,
> Is death? Let us drain right joyously
> The cup which the sweet bird fills for me.

And in the most famous passage in all his poetry he sings of Death as of a mistress. 'Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of Eternity.' 'Die, , if thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek'; and he sees his own soon-coming death in a rapture of prophecy, for 'the fire for which all thirst' beams upon him, , 'consuming the last clouds of cold mortality'. When he is dead he will still influence the living, for though Adonais has fled 'to the burning fountain whence he came', and 'is a portion of the Eternal which must glow through time and change, unquenchably the same', and has 'awakened from the dream of !life', he has not gone from the 'young Dawn', or the caverns and the forests, or the 'faint flowers and

fountains'. He has been 'made one with Nature', and his voice is 'heard in all her music', and his presence is felt wherever 'that Power may move which has withdrawn his being to its own', and he bears 'his part' when it is compelling mortal things to their appointed forms, and he overshadows men's minds at their supreme moments, for—

> when lofty thought
> Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
> And love and life contend in it for what
> Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there,
> And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

'Of his speculations as to what will befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die,' Mrs. Shelley has written, 'a mystic ideality tinged these speculations in Shelley's mind; certain stanzas in the poem of *The Sensitive Plant* express, in some degree, the almost inexpressible idea, not that we die into another state, when this state is no longer, from some reason, unapparent as well as apparent, accordant with our being— but that those who rise above the ordinary nature of man, fade from before our imperfect organs; they remain in their 'love, beauty, and delight', in a world congenial to them, and we, clogged by 'error; ignorance, and strife', see them not till we are fitted by purification and improvement to their higher state.' Not merely happy souls, but all beautiful places and movements and gestures and events, when we think they have ceased to be, have become portions of the Eternal.

> In this life
> Of error, ignorance and strive,
> Where nothing is, but all things seem,
> And we the shadows of the dream,
> It is a modest creed, and yet
> Pleasant, if one considers it,
> To own that death itself must be,
> Like all the rest, a mockery.
> That garden sweet, that lady fair,
> And all sweet shapes and odours there,
> In truth have never past away:
> 'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed, not they.
> For love, and beauty, and delight
> There is no death nor change; their might
> Exceeds our organs, which endure
> No light, being themselves obscure.

He seems in his speculations to have lit on that memory of Nature the visionaries claim for the foundation of their knowledge; but I do not know whether he thought, as they do, that all things good and evil remain for ever, 'thinking the thought and doing the deed', though not, it may be, self-conscious; or only thought that 'love and beauty and delight' remain for ever. The passage where Queen Mab awakes 'all knowledge of the past', and the good and evil 'events of old and wondrous times', was no more doubtless than a part of the machinery of the poem, but all the machineries of poetry are parts of the convictions of antiquity, and readily become again convictions in minds that brood over them with visionary intensity.

Intellectual Beauty has not only the happy dead to do her will, but ministering spirits who correspond to the Devas of the East, and the Elemental Spirits of mediaeval Europe, and the Sidhe of ancient Ireland and whose too constant presence, and perhaps Shelley's ignorance of their more traditional forms, give some of his poetry an air of rootless fantasy. They change continually in his poetry, as they do in the visions of the mystics everywhere and of the common people in Ireland, and the forms of these changes display, in an especial sense, the flowing forms of his mind when freed from all impulse not out of itself or out of supersensual power. These are 'gleams of a remoter world which visit us in sleep', spiritual essences whose shadows

are the delights of all the senses, sounds 'folded in cells of crystal silence': 'visions swift, and sweet, and quaint', which lie waiting their moment 'each in its thin sheath, like a chrysalis', 'odours' 'among' ever-blooming Eden-trees', 'liquors' that can give 'happy sleep', or can make tears all wonder and delight; 'the golden genii who spoke to the poets of Greece in dreams'; 'the phantoms' which become the forms of the arts when the mind, arising bright from the embrace of beauty, 'casts on them the gathered rays which are reality', 'the guardians' who move in 'the atmosphere of human thought'; as 'the birds within the wind, or the fish within the wave', or man's thought itself through all things; and who join the throng of the happy Hours when Time is passing away—

> As the flying-fish leap
> From the Indian deep,
> And mix with sea-birds half asleep.

It is these powers which lead Asia and Panthea, as they would lead all the affections of humanity, by words written upon leaves, by faint songs, by eddies of echoes that draw 'all spirits on that secret way', by the 'dying odours' of flowers and by 'the sunlight of the spherèd dew', beyond the gates of birth and death to awake Demogorgon, eternity, that 'the painted veil called life' may be 'torn aside'.

There are also ministers of ugliness and all evil, like those that came to Prometheus:

> As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
> To gather for her festal crown of flowers
> The aerial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
> So from our victim's destined agony
> The shade which is our form invests us round;
> Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

Or like those whose shapes the poet sees in *The Triumph of Life*, coming from the procession that follows the car of life, as 'hope' changes to 'desire', shadows 'numerous as the dead leaves blow in autumn evening from a poplar-tree': and resembling those they come from, until, if I understand an obscure phrase aright, they are 'wrapt' round 'all the busy phantoms that were there as the sun shapes the clouds'. Some to sit 'chattering like restless apes', and some like 'old anatomies' 'hatching their bare broods under the shade of demon wings', laughing 'to reassume the delegated power' they had given to the tyrants of the earth, and some 'like small gnats and flies 'to throng' about the brow of lawyers, statesmen, priest and theorist', and some 'like discoloured flakes of snow' to fall 'on fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair', to be 'melted by the youthful glow which they extinguished' and many to 'fling shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves', shadows that are shaped into new forms by that 'creative ray' in which all move like motes.

These ministers of beauty and ugliness were certainly more than metaphors or picturesque phrases to one who believed the 'thoughts which are called real or external objects' differed but in regularity of recurrence from 'hallucinations, dreams, and the ideas of madness', and lessened this difference by telling how he had dreamed 'three several times, between intervals of two or more years, the same precise dream', and who had seen images with the mind's eye that left his nerves shaken for days together. Shadows that were—

> as when there hovers
> A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
> Of the tropic sun, bringing, ere evening,
> Strange night upon some Indian isle.

could not but have had more than a metaphorical and

picturesque being to one who had spoken in terror with an image of himself, and who had fainted at the apparition of a woman with eyes in her breasts, and who had tried to burn down a wood, if we can trust Mrs. Williams' account, because he believed a devil, who had first tried to kill him, had sought refuge there.

It seems to me, indeed, that Shelley had reawakened in himself the age of faith, though there were times when he would doubt, as even the saints have doubted, and that he was a revolutionist, because he had heard the commandment, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if do them'. I have re-read his *Prometheus Unbound* for the first time for many years, in the woods of Drim-na-Rod, among the Echtge hills, and sometimes I have looked towards Slieve na' nOg where the country people say the last battle of the world shall be fought till the third day, when a priest shall lift a chalice, and the thousand years of peace begin. And I think this mysterious song utters a faith as simple and as ancient as the faith of those country people, in a form suited to a new age, that will understand with Blake that the Holy Spirit is 'an intellectual fountain' and that the kinds and degrees of beauty are the images of its authority.

II. HIS RULING SYMBOLS

At a comparatively early time Shelley made his imprisoned Cythna become wise in all human wisdom through the contemplation of her own mind, and write out this wisdom upon the sands in 'signs' that were 'clear elemental shapes, whose smallest change made 'a subtler language within language' , and were 'the key of truths which once were dimly taught in old Crotona' His early romances and much throughout his poetry show how strong a fascination the traditions of magic and of the magical philosophy had cast over his mind, and one can hardly suppose that he had not brooded over their doctrine of symbols or signatures, though I do not find anything to show that he gave it any deep study. One find in his poetry, besides innumerable images that have not the definiteness of symbols, many images that are certainly symbols, and as the years went by he began to use these with a more and more deliberately symbolic purpose. I imagine that when he wrote his earlier poems he allowed the subconscious life to lay its hands so firmly upon the rudder of his imagination that he was little conscious of the abstract meaning of the images that rose in what seemed the idleness of his mind. Anyone who has any experience of any mystical state of the soul knows who there float up in the mind profound symbols,[1] whose meaning, if indeed they do not delude one into the dream that they are meaningless, one does not perhaps understand for years. Nor I think has anyone, who has known that experience with any constancy, failed to find some day, in some old book or on some old monument, a strange or intricate image that had floated up before him, and to grow perhaps dizzy with the sudden conviction that our little memories are but a part of some great Memory that renews the world and men's thoughts age after age, and that our thoughts are not, as we suppose, the deep, but a little foam upon the deep. Shelley understood this, as is proved by what he says of the eternity of beautiful things and of the influence of the dead, but whether he understood that the great Memory is also a dwelling=house of symbols, of images that are living souls, I cannot tell. He had certainly experience of all but the most profound of the mystical states, and had known that union with created things which assuredly must precede the soul's union with the uncreated spirit. He says, in his fragment of an essay 'On Life', mistaking a unique experience for the common experience of all: 'Let us recollect our sensations as children... we less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt from ourselves. They seemed as it were to constitute one mass. There are some persons who in this respect are always children. Those who are subject to the state called reverie, feel as if their nature were resolved into the surrounding universe or as if the surrounding universe were resolved into their being', and he must have expected to receive thoughts and images from beyond his own mind, just in so far as that mind transcended its preoccupation with particular

[1] *Marianne's Dream* was certainly copied from a real dream of somebody's, but like images come to the mystic in his waking state.

time and place, for he believed inspiration a kind of death; and he could hardly have helped perceiving that an image that has transcended particular time and place becomes a symbol, passes beyond death, as it were, and becomes a living soul.

When Shelley went to the Continent with Godwin's daughter in 1814 they sailed down certain great rivers in an open boat, and when he summed up in his preface to *Laon and Cythna* the things that helped to make him a poet, he spoke of these voyages: 'I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains.'

He may have seen some cave that was the bed of a rivulet by some river-side, or have followed some mountain stream to its source in a cave, for from his return to England rivers and streams and wells, flowing through caves or rising in them, came into every poem of his that was of any length, and always with the precision of symbols. Alastor passed in his boat along a river in a cave; and when for the last time he felt the presence of the spirit he loved and followed, it was when he watched his image in a silent well; and when he died it was where a river fell into 'an abysmal chasm' ; and the Witch of Atlas in her gladness, as he in his sadness, passed in her boat along a river in a cave, and it was where it bubbled out of a cave that she was born; and when Rousseau, the typical poet of *The Triumph of Life*, awoke to the vision that was life, it was where a rivulet bubbled out of a cave; and the poet of *Epipsychidion* met the evil beauty 'by a well, under blue nightshade bowers'; and Cythna bore her child imprisoned in a great cave beside 'a fountain round and vast, in which the wave, imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually'; and her lover Laon was brought to his prison in a high column through a cave where there was 'a putrid pool'; and when he went to see the conquered city he dismounted beside a polluted fountain in the market-place, foreshadowing thereby that spirit who at the end of *Prometheus Unbound* gazes at a re=generated city from 'within a fountain in the public square'; and when Laon and Cythna are dead they awake beside a fountain and drift into Paradise along a river; and at the end of things Prometheus and Asia are to live amid a happy world in a cave where a fountain 'leaps with an awakening sound' ; and it was by a fountain, the meeting-place of certain unhappy lovers, that Rosalind and Helen told their unhappiness to one another; and it was under a willow by a fountain that the enchantress and her lover began their unhappy love ; while his lesser poems and his prose fragments use caves and rivers and wells and fountains continually as metaphors. It may be that his subconscious life seized upon some passing scene, and moulded it into an ancient symbol without help from anything but that great Memory but so good a Platonist as Shelley could hardly have thought of any cave as a symbol. without thinking of Plato's cave that was the world; and so good a scholar may well have had Porphyry on 'the cave of the Nymphs' in his mind. When I compare Porphyry's description of the cave where the Phacacian boat left Odysseus, with Shelley's description of the cave of the Witch of Atlas, to name but one of many, I find it hard think otherwise. I quote Taylor's translation, only putting Mr. Lang's prose for Taylor's bad verse. 'What does Homer obscurely signify by the cave in Ithaca which he describes in the following verses? 'Now at the harbour's head is a long-leaved olive-tree, and hard by is a pleasant cave and shadowy, sacred to the nymphs, that are called Naiads. And therein are mixing-bowls and jars of stone, and there moreover do bees hide. And there are great looms of stone, whereon the nymphs weave raiment of purple stain, a marvel to behold; and there are waters welling evermore. Two gates there are to the cave, the one set towards the North wind, whereby men may go down, but the portals towards the South pertain rather to the gods, whereby men may not enter: it is the way of the immortals'. He goes on to argue that the cave was a temple before Homer wrote, and that 'the ancients did not establish temples without fabulous symbols', and then begins to interpret Homer's description in all its detail. The ancients, he says, 'consecrated a cave to the world' and held 'the flowing waters' and the 'obscurity of the cavern' 'apt symbols of what the world contains', and he calls to witness Zoroaster's cave with fountains: and often caves are, he says, symbols of 'all invisible power; because as caves are obscure and

dark, so the essence of all these powers is occult', and quotes a lost hymn to Apollo to prove that nymphs living in caves fed men 'from intellectual fountains' ; and he contends that fountains and rivers symbolise generation, and that the word nymph 'is commonly applied to all souls descending into generation', and that the two gates of Homer's cave are the gate of generation and the gate of ascent though death to the gods, the gate of cold and moisture, and the gate of heat and fire. Cold, he says, causes life in the world, and heat causes life among the gods, and the constellation of the Cup is set in the heavens near the sign Cancer, because it is there that the souls descending from the Milky Way receive their draught of the intoxicating cold drink of generation. 'The mixing-bowls and jars of stone' are consecrated to the Naiads, and are also, as it seems, symbolical of Bacchus, and are of stone because of the rocky beds of the rivers. And 'the looms of stone' are the symbols of the 'souls that descend into generation'. 'For the formation of the flesh is on or about the bones, which in the bodies of animals resemble stones,' and also because 'the body is a garment' not only about the soul, but about all essences that become visible, for 'the heavens are called by the ancients a veil, in consequence of being as it were the vestments of the celestial gods'. The bees hive in the mixing=bowls and jars of stone, for so Porphyry understands the passage, because honey was the symbol adopted by the ancients, for 'pleasure arising from generation', The ancients he says, called souls not only Naiads but bees, 'as the efficient cause of sweetness'; but not all souls 'proceeding into generation' are called bees, 'but those who will live in it justly and who after having performed such things as are acceptable to the gods will again return (to their kindred stars). For this insect loves to return to the place from whence it came and is eminently just and sober.' I find all these details in the cave of the Witch of Atlas, the most elaborately described of Shelley's caves, except the two gates, and these have a far-off echo in her summer journeys on her cavern river and in her winter sleep in 'an inextinguishable well of crimson fire'. We have for the mixing-bowls, an jars of stone full of honey, those delights of the senses, 'sounds of air' 'folded in cells of crystal silence', 'liquors clear arid sweet' 'in crystal vials', and for the bees, visions 'each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis', and for 'the looms of stone' and 'raiment of purple stain' the Witch's spinning and embroidering; and the Witch herself is a Naiad, and was born from one of the Atlantides; who lay in a 'chamber of grey rock' until she was changed by the sun's embrace into a cloud.

When one turns to Shelley for an explanation of the cave and fountain one finds how close his thought was to Porphyry's. He looked upon thought as a condition of life in generation and believed that the reality beyond was something other than thought. He wrote in his fragment On Life: 'That the basis of all things cannot be, as the popular philosophy alleges, mind, is sufficiently evident. Mind, as far as we have any experience of its properties, and beyond that \experience how vain is argument, cannot create, it can only perceive'; and in another passage he defines mind as existence. Water is his great symbol of existence, and he continually meditates over its mysterious source. In his prose he tells how 'thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river, whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outward. ...The caverns of the mind are obscure and shadowy; or pervaded with a lustre, beautiful and bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals. 'When the Witch has passed in her boat from the caverned river, that is doubtless her own destiny, she passes along the Nile 'by Moeris and the Mareotid lakes', and sees all human life shadowed upon its waters in shadows that 'never are erased but tremble ever'; and in 'many a dark and subterranean street under the Nile'- new caverns—and along the bank of the Nile; and as she bends over the unhappy, she compares unhappiness to the strife that 'stirs the liquid surface of man's life' ; and because she can see the reality of things she is described as journeying 'in the calm depths' of 'the wide lake' we journey over unpiloted. Alastor calls the river that he follows an image of his mind, and thinks that it will be as hard to say where his thought will be when he is dead as where its waters will be in ocean or cloud in a little while. In Mont Blanc, a poem so overladen with descriptions in parentheses that one loses sight of its logic, Shelley compares ,the following through our mind of 'the universe of things', which are, he has explained elsewhere, but thoughts; to the

flowing of the Arve through the ravine, and compares the unknown sources of our thoughts, in some 'remoter world' whose 'gleams' 'visit the soul in sleep', to Arve sources among the glaciers on the mountain heights. Cythna in the passage where she speaks of making signs 'a subtler language within language' on the sand by the 'fountain' of sea water in the cave where she is imprisoned, speaks of the 'cave' of her mind which gave its secrets to her, and of 'one mind, the type of all' which is a 'moveless wave reflecting all moving things that are'; and then passing more completely, under the power of the symbol, she speaks of growing wise through contemplation of the images that rise out of the fountain at the call of her will. Again and again one finds some passing allusion to the cave of man's mind, or to the caves of his youth, or to the cave of mysteries we enter at death, for to Shelley as to Porphyry it is more than an image of life in the world. It may mean any enclosed life, as when it is the dwelling-place of Asia and Prometheus or when it is still the 'cave of poetry', and it may have all meanings at once, or it may have as little meaning as some ancient religious symbol enwoven from the habit of centuries with the patterns of a carpet or a tapestry.

As Shelley sailed along those great rivers and saw or imagined the cave that associated itself with rivers in his mind, he saw half-ruined towers upon the hilltops, and once at any rate a tower is used to symbolise a meaning that is the contrary to the meaning symbolised by caves. Cythna's lover is brought through the cave where there is a polluted fountain to a high tower, for being man's far-seeing mind, when the world has cast him out he must to the 'towers of thought's crowned powers'; nor is it possible for Shelley to have forgotten this first imprisonment when he made men imprison Lionel in a tower for a like offence; and because I know how hard it is to forget a symbolical meaning, once one has found it, I believe Shelley had more than a romantic scene in his mind when he made Prince Athanase follow his mysterious studies in a lighted tower above the sea, and when he made the old hermit watch over Laon in his sickness in a half-ruined tower, wherein the sea, here doubtless, as to Cythna, 'the one mind', threw 'spangled sands' and 'rarest sea shells' The tower, important in Maeterlinck, as in Shelley, is, like the sea, and rivers, and caves with fountains, a very ancient symbol, and would perhaps, as years went by, have grown more important in his poetry. The contrast between it and the cave in *Laon and Cythna* suggests a contrast between the mind looking outward upon men and things and the mind looking inward upon itself, which may or may not have been in Shelley's mind, but certainly helps, with one knows not how many other dim meanings, to give the poem mystery and shadow. It is only by ancient symbols, by symbols that have numberless meanings besides the one or two the writer lays an emphasis upon, or the half-score he knows of, that any highly subjective art can escape from the barrenness and shallowness of a too conscious arrangement, into the abundance and depth of Nature. The poet of essences and pure ideas must seek in the half-lights that glimmer from symbol to symbol as if to the ends of the earth, all that the epic and dramatic poet finds of mystery and shadow in the accidental circumstances of life.

The most important, the most precise of all Shelley's symbols, the one he uses with the fullest knowledge of its meaning, is the Morning and Evening Star. It rises and sets for ever over the towers and rivers, and is the throne of his genius. Personified as a woman it leads Rousseau, the typical poet of *The Triumph of Life*, under the power of the de- stroying hunger of life, under the power of the sun that we shall find presently as a symbol of life, and it is the Morning Star that wars against the principle of evil in *Laon and Cythna*, at first as a star with a red comet, here a symbol of all evil as it is of disorder in *Epipsychidion*, and then as a serpent with an eagle—symbols in Blake too and in the Alchemists; and it is the Morning Star that appears as a winged youth to a woman, who typifies humanity amid its sorrows, in the first canto of *Laon and Cythna;* and it is invoked by the wailing women of *Hellas*, who call it 'lamp of the free' and 'became of love' and would go where it hides flying from the deepening night among those 'kingless continents sinless as Eden', and 'mountains and islands' 'prankt on the sapphire sea' that are but the opposing

hemispheres to the senses, but, as I think, the ideal world, the world of the dead, to the imagination; and in the *Ode to Liberty*, Liberty is bid lead wisdom out of the inmost cave of man's mind as the Morning Star leads the sun out of the waves. We know too that had *Prince Athanase* been finished it would have described the finding of Pandemos, the Star's lower genius, and the growing weary of her, and the coming of its true genius Urania at the coming of death, as the day finds the Star at evening. There is hardly indeed a poem of any length in which one does not find it as a symbol of love, or liberty, or wisdom, or beauty, or of some other expression of that Intellectual Beauty which was to Shelley's mind the central power of the world; and to its faint and fleeting light he offers up all desires, that are as—

> The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow,
> The devotion to something afar
> From the sphere of our sorrow.

When its genius comes to Rousseau, shedding dew with one hand, and treading out the stars with her feet, for she is also the genius of the dawn, she brings him a cup full of oblivion and love. He drinks and his mind becomes like sand 'on desert Labrador' marked by the feet of deer and a wolf. And then the new vision, life, the cold light of day moves before him, and the first vision becomes an invisible presence. The same image was in his mind too when he wrote:

> Hesperus flies from awakening night
> And pants in its beauty; and speed with light,
> Fast fleeting, soft and bright.

Though I do not think that Shelley needed to go to Torphyry's account of the cold intoxicating cup, given to the souls in the constellation of the Cup near the constellation Cancer, for so obvious a symbol as the cup, or that he could not have found the wolf and the deer and the continual flight of his Star in his own mind, his poetry becomes the richer, the more emotional, and loses something of its appearance of idle fantasy when I remember that these are ancient symbols, and still come to visionaries in their dreams. Because the wolf is but a more violent symbol of longing and desire than the hound, his wolf and deer remind me of the hound and deer that Oisin saw in the Gaelic poem chasing one another on the water before he saw the young man following the woman with the golden apple; and of a Galway tale that tells how Niamh, whose name means brightness or beauty, came to Oisin as a deer; and of a vision that a friend of mine saw when gazing at a dark-blue curtain. I was with a number of Hermetists, and one of them said to another, 'Do you see something in the curtain?' The other gazed at the curtain for a while and saw presently a man led through a wood by a black hound, and then the hound lay dead at a place the seer knew was called, without knowing why, 'the Meeting of the Suns', and the man followed a red hound, and then the red hound was pierced by a spear. A white fawn watched the man out of the wood, but he did not look at it, for a white hound came and he followed it trembling, but the seer knew that he would follow the fawn at last, and that it would lead him among the gods. The most learned of the Hermetists said, 'I cannot tell the meaning of the hounds or where the Meeting of the Suns is, but I think the fawn is the Morning and Evening Star'. I have little doubt that when the man saw the white fawn he was coming out of the darkness and passion of the world into some day of partial regeneration, and that it was the Morning Star and would be the Evening Star at its second coming. I have little doubt that it was but the story of Prince Athanase and what may have been the story of Rousseau in *The Triumph of Life*, thrown outward once again from that great Memory, which is still the mother of the Muses, though men no longer believe in it.

It may have been this memory, or it may have been some impulse of his nature too subtle for his mind to follow, that made Keats, with his love of embodied things, of precision of form and colouring, of emotions made sleepy by the flesh, see

Intellectual Beauty in the Moon; and Blake, who lived in that energy he called eternal delight, see it in the Sun, where his personification of poetic genius labours at a furnace. I think there was certainly some reason why these men took so deep, a pleasure in lights that Shelley thought of with weariness and trouble. The Moon is the most changeable of symbols, and not merely because it is the symbol of change. As mistress of the waters she governs the life of instinct and the generation of things, for, as Porphyry says, even 'the apparition of images' in the 'imagination' is through 'an excess of moisture'; and, as a cold and changeable fire set in the bare heavens, she governs alike chastity and the joyless idle drifting hither and thither a generated things. She may give God a body and have Gabriel to bear her messages, or she may come to men of their happy moments as she came to Endymion, or she may deny life and shoot her arrows; but because she only becomes beautiful in giving herself, and is no flying ideal, she is not loved by the children of desire.

Shelley could not help but see her with unfriendly eyes. He is believed to have described Mary Shelley at a time when she had come to seem cold in his eyes, in that passage of Epipsychidion which tells how a woman like the Moon led him to her cave and made 'frost' creep over the sea of his mind, and so bewitched Life and Death with 'her silver voice' that they ran from him crying, 'Away, he is not of our crew'. When he describes the Moon as part of some beautiful scene he can call her beautiful, but when he personifies, when his word come under the influence of that great Memory or of some mysterious tide in the depth of our being, he grows unfriendly or nor truly friendly or at the most pitiful. The Moon's lips 'are pale and waning', it is 'the cold Moon', or 'the frozen and inconstant Moon', or it is 'forgotten' and 'waning', or it 'wanders' and is 'weary', or it is 'pale and grey', or it is 'pale for weariness', and 'wandering companionless' and 'ever changing', and finding 'no object worth' its 'constancy', or it is like a 'dying lady' who 'totters' 'out of her chamber led by the insane and feeble wanderings of her fading brain', and even when it is no more than a star, it casts an evil influence that makes the lips of lovers 'lurid' or pale. It only becomes a thing of delight when Time is being borne to his tomb in eternity, for then the spirit of the Earth, man's procreant mind, fills it with his own joyousness. He describes the spirit of the Earth and of the Moon, moving above the rivulet of their lives, in a passage which reads like a half-understood vision. Man has become 'one harmonious soul of many a soul' and call all things flow to 'all and 'familiar acts are beautiful through love', and an 'animation of delight' at this change flows from spirit to spirit till the snow 'is loosened' from the Moon' s c lifeless, mountains'.

Some old magical writer, I forget who, says if you wish to be melancholy hold in your left hand an image of the Moon made out of silver, and if you wish to be happy hold in your right hand an image of the Sun made out of gold.[2] The, Sun is the symbol of sensitive life, and of belief and joy and pride and energy, of indeed the whole life of the will, and of that beauty which neither lures from far off, nor becomes beautiful in giving itself, but makes all glad because it is beauty. Taylor quotes Proclus as calling it 'the Demiurgos of everything sensible'. It was therefore natural that Blake, who was always praising energy, and all exalted overflowing of oneself, and who thought art an impassioned labour to keep men from doubt and despondency, and woman's love an evil, when it would trammel man's will, should see the poetic genius not in a woman star but in the Sun, and should rejoice throughout his poetry in 'the Sun in his strength'. Shelley, however, except when he uses it to describe the peculiar beauty of Emilia Viviani, who was like 'an incarnation of the Sun when light is changed to love', saw it with less friendly eyes. He seems to have seen it with perfect happiness only when veiled in mist, or glimmering upon water, or when faint enough to do no more than veil the brightness of his own Star; , and in *The Triumph of Life*, the one poem in which it is part of the avowed symbolism, its power is the being and the source of all tyrannies. When the woman personifying the Morning Star has faded from before his eyes, Rousseau sees a 'new

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[2] Wilde told me that he had read this somewhere. He had suggested it to Burne-Jones as a subject for a picture. 1924.

vision' in 'a cold bright car' with a rainbow hovering over her, and as she comes the shadow passes from 'leaf and stone' and the souls she has enslaved seem 'in that light, like atomies to dance within a sunbeam', or they dance among the flowers that grow up newly in 'the grassy vesture of the desert', unmindful of the misery that is to come upon them. These are 'the great, the unforgotten', all who have worn 'mitres and helms and crowns, or wreaths of light', and yet have not known themselves. Even 'great Plato' is there, because he knew joy and sorrow, because life that could not subdue him by gold or pain, by 'age, or sloth, or slavery', subdued him by love. All who have ever lived are there except Christ and Socrates and the 'sacred few' who put away all life could give, being doubtless followers throughout their lives of the forms borne by the flying ideal, or who, 'as soon as they had touched the world with living flame, fled back like eagles to their native noon'.

In ancient times, it seems to me that Blake, who for all his 'protest was glad to be alive, and ever spoke of his gladness, would have worshipped in some chapel of the Sun, but that Shelley, who hated life because he sought' more in life than any understood', would have wandered, lost in a ceaseless reverie, in some chapel of the Star of infinite desire.

I think too that as he knelt before an altar where a thin flame burnt in a lamp made of green agate, a single vision would have come to him again and again, a vision of a boat drifting down a broad river between high hills where there were caves and towers, and following the light of one Star; and that voices would have told him how is there is for every man some one scene, some one adventure, some one picture that is the image of his secret life, for wisdom first speaks in images, and that this one image, if he would but brood over it his life long, would lead his soul, disentangled from unmeaning circumstance and the ebb and flow of the world, into that far household where the undying gods await all whose souls have become simple as flame, whose bodies have become quiet as an agate lamp.

But he was born in a day when the old wisdom had vanished and was content merely to write verses, and often with little thought of more than verses.

VI
SHELLEY'S VIEW OF POETRY
A.C. BRADLEY

The ideas of Wordsworth and of Coleridge about poetry have often been discussed and are familiar. Those of Shelley are much less so, and in his eloquent exposition of them there is a radiance which almost conceals them from many readers. I wish, at the cost of all the radiance, to try to see them and show them rather more distinctly. Even if they had little value for the theory of poetry, they would still have much as material for it, since they allow us to look into a poet's experience in conceiving and composing. And, in addition, they throw light on some of the chief characteristics of Shelley's own poetry.

His poems in their turn form one of the sources from which his ideas on the subject may be gathered. We have also some remarks in his letters and in prose pieces dealing with other topics. We have the prefaces to those of his works which he himself published. And, lastly, there is the *Defence of Poetry*. This essay was written in reply to an attack made on contemporary verse by Shelley's friend Peacock, - not a favourable specimen of Peacock's writing. The *Defence*, we can see, was hurriedly composed, and it remains a fragment, being only the first of three projected parts It contains a good deal of historical matter, highly interesting, but too extensive to be made use of here. Being polemical, it no doubt exaggerates such of Shelley's views as collided with those of his antagonist. But, besides being the only full expression of these views, it is the most mature, for it was written within eighteen months of his death. It appears to owe very little either to Wordsworth's Prefaces or to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria;* but there are a few reminiscences of Sidney's *Apology*, which Shelley had read just before he wrote his own *Defence* ; and it shows, like much of his mature poetry, how deeply he was influenced by the more imaginative dialogues of Plato.

And one familiar with the manner in which Shelley in his verse habitually represents the world could guess at his general view of poetry. The world to him is a melancholy place, a "dim vast vale of tears, " illuminated in flashes by the light of a hidden but glorious power. Nor is this power, as that favourite metaphor would imply, wholly outside the world. It works within it as a soul contending with obstruction and striving to penetrate and transform the whole mass. And though the fulness of its glory is concealed, its nature is known in outline. It is the realised perfection of everything good and beautiful on earth ; or, in other words, all such goodness and beauty is its partial manifestation. "All," I say : for the splendour of nature, the love of lovers, every affection and virtue, any good action or just law, the wisdom of philosophy, the creations of art, the truths deformed by superstitious religion, - all are equally operations or appearances of the hidden power. (It is of the first importance for the understanding of Shelley to realise how strong in him is the sense and conviction of this unity in life : it is one of his Platonic traits. The intellectual Beauty of his *Hymn* is absolutely the same thing as the Liberty of his *Ode*, the "Great Spirit" of Love that he invokes to bring freedom to Naples, the One which in *Adonais* he contrasts with the Many, the Spirit of Nature of *Queen Mab*, and the Vision of *Alastor* and *Epipsychidion*. The skylark of the famous stanzas is free from our sorrows, not because it is below them, but because, as an embodiment of that perfection, it knows the rapture of love without its satiety, and understands death as we cannot. The voice of the mountain, if a whole nation could hear it with the poet's ear, would "repeal large codes of fraud and woe" ; it is the same voice as the reformer's and the martyr's. And in the far – off day when the "plastic stress' of this power has mastered the last resistance and is all in all, outward nature, which now suffers with man, will be redeemed with him, and man, in becoming politically free, will become also the perfect lover, Evidently, then, poetry as the world now is, must be one of the voices of this power, or one tone of its voice. To use the language so dear to Shelley, it is the revelation of those eternal ideas which lie behind the many–

coloured, ever-shifting veil that we call reality or life. Or rather, it is one such revelation among many.

When we turn to the *Defence of Poetry* we meet substantially the same view. There is indeed a certain change ; for Shelley is now philosophising and writing prose, and he wishes not to sing from the mid-sky, but, for a while at least, to argue with his friend on the earth. Hence at first we hear nothing of that perfect power at the heart of things, and poetry is considered as a creation rather than a revelation. But for Shelley, we soon discover, this would be a false antithesis. The poet creates, but this creation is no mere fancy of his ; it represents " those forms which are common to universal nature and existence," and " a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." We notice, further, that the more voluntary and conscious work of invention and execution is regarded as quite subordinate in the creative process. In that process the mind, obedient to an influence which it does not understand and cannot control, is driven to produce images of perfection which rather form themselves in it than are formed by it. The greatest stress is laid on this influence or inspiration ; and in the end we learn that the origin of the whole process lies in certain exceptional moments when visitations of thought and feeling, elevating and delightful beyond all expression, but always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, reach the soul ; that these are, as it were, the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own ; and that the province of the poet is to arrest these apparitions, to veil them in language, to colour every other form he touches with their evanescent hues, and so to " redeem from decay the visitations of the divinity in man."

Even more decided is the emphasis laid on the unity of all the forms in which the "divinity" or ideal power thus attests its presence. Indeed, throughout a large part of the essay, that "Poetry" which Shelley is defending is something very much wider than poetry in the usual sense. The enemy he has to meet is the contention that poetry and its influence steadily decline as civilization advances, and that they are giving place, and ought to give place, to reasoning and the pursuit of utility. His answer is that, on the contrary, imagination has been, is, and always will be, the prime source of everything that has intrinsic value in life. Reasoning, he declares, cannot create, it can only operate upon the products of imagination. Further, he holds that the predominance of mere reasoning and mere utility has become in great part an evil ; for while it has accumulated masses of material goods and moral truths, we distribute the goods iniquitously and fail to apply the truths, because, for want of imagination, we have not sympathy in our hearts and do not feel what we know. The "Poetry" which he defends, therefore, is the whole creative imagination with all its products. And these include not merely literature in verse, but, first, whatever prose writing is allied to that literature ; and next, all the other fine arts ; and finally, all actions, inventions, institutions, and even ideas and moral dispositions, which imagination brings into being in its effort to satisfy the longing for perfection. Painters and musicians are poets. Plato and Bacon, even Herodotus and Livy, were poets, though there is much in their works which is not poetry. So were the men who invented the arts of life, constructed laws for tribes or cities, disclosed, as sages or founders of religion, the excellence of justice and love. And every one, Shelley would say, who, perceiving the beauty of an imagined virtue or deed, translates the image into a fact, is so far a poet. For all these things come from imagination.

Shelley's exposition of this, which is probably the most original part of his theory, is not very clear ; but, if I understand his meaning, that which he takes to happen in all these cases might be thus described. The imagination – that is to say, the soul imagining – has before it, or feels within it, something which answering perfectly to its nature, fills it with delight and with a desire to realise what delights it. This something, for the sake of brevity, we may call an idea, so long as we remember that it need not be distinctly imagined and that it is always accompanied by emotion. The reason why such ideas delight the imagining soul is that they are, in fact, images or forebodings of its own perfection – of itself become perfect – in one aspect or another. These aspects are as various as the elements and forms of its own inner life

and outward existence ; and so the idea may be that of the perfect harmony of will and feeling (a virtue), or of the perfect union of soul with soul (love), or of the perfect order of certain social relations or forces (a law or institution), or of the perfect adjustment of intellectual elements (a truth) ; and so on. The formation and expression of any such idea is thus the work of Poetry in the widest sense ; while at the same time (as we must add, to complete Shelley's thought) any such idea is a gleam or apparition of the perfect Intellectual Beauty.

I choose this particular title of the hidden power or divinity in order to point out (what the reader is left to observe for himself) that the imaginative idea is always regarded by Shelley as beautiful. It is, for example,. desirable for itself and not merely as a means to a further result ; and it has the formal characters of beauty. For, as will have been noticed in the instances given, it is always the image of an order, or harmony, of unity in variety, of the elements concerned. Shelley sometimes even speaks of their "rhythm." For example, he uses this word in reference to an action ; and I quote the passage because, though it occurs at some distance from the exposition of his main view, it illustrates it well. He is saying that the true poetry of Rome, unlike that of Greece, did not fully express itself in poems. "The true poetry of Rome lived in its institutions: for whatever of beautiful, true and majestic they contained could have sprung only from the faculty which creates the order in which they consist. The life of Camillus ; the death of Regulus ; the expectation of the senators, in their god–like state, of the victorious Gauls ; the refusal of the Republic to make peace with Hannibal after the battle of Cannae" – these he describes as " a rhythm and order in the shows of life," an order not arranged with a view to utility or outward result, but due to the imagination, which, "beholding the beauty of this order, created it out of itself according to its own idea."

2

If this, then is the nature of Poetry in the widest sence, how does the poet, in the special sense, differ from other unusually creative souls ? Not essentially in the inspiration and general substance of his poetry, but in the kind of expression he gives to them. In so far as he is a poet, his medium of expression, of course, is not virtue, or action, or law ; poetry is one of the arts. And, again, it differs from the rest, because its particular vehicle is language. We have now to see, therefore, what Shelley has to say of the form of poetry, and especially of poetic language.

First, he claims for language the highest place among the vehicles of artistic expression, on the ground that it is the most direct and also the most plastic. It is itself produced by imagination instead of being simply encountered by it, and it has no relation except to imagination ; whereas any more material medium has a nature of its own, and relations to other things in the material world, and this nature and these relations intervene between the artist's conception and his expression of it in the medium. It is to the superiority of its vehicle that Shelley attributes the greater fame which poetry has always enjoyed as compared with other arts. He forgets (if I may interpose a word of criticism) that the media of the other arts have, on their side, certain advantages over language, and that these perhaps counterbalance the inferiority which he notices. He would also have found it difficult to show that language, on its physical side, is any more a product of imagination than stone or pigments. And his idea that the medium in the other arts is an obstacle intervening between conception and expression is, to say the least, one–sided. A sculptor, painter, or musician, would probably reply that it is only the qualities of his medium that enable him to express at all ; that what he expresses is inseparable from the vehicle of expression ; and that he has no conceptions which are not from the beginning sculpturesque, pictorial, or musical. It is true, no doubt, that his medium is an obstacle as well as a medium ; but this is also true of language.

But to resume. Language, Shelley goes on to say, receives in poetry a peculiar form As it represents in its meaning a perfection which is always an order, harmony, or

rhythm, so it itself, as so much sound, *is* an order, harmony, or rhythm, It is measured language, which is not the proper vehicle for the mere recital of facts or for mere reasoning. For Shelley, however, this measured language is not of necessity metrical. The order or measure may remain at the stage which it reaches in beautiful prose, like that of Plato, the melody of whose language, Shelley declares, is the most intense it is possible to conceive, It may again advance to metre ; and he admits that metrical form is convenient, popular, and preferable, especially in poetry containing much action. But he will not have any new great poet tied down to it. It is not essential, while measure is absolutely so. For it is no mere accident of poetry that its language is measured, not does a delight in this measure mean little. As sensitiveness to the order of the relations of sounds is always connected with sensitiveness to the order of the relations of thoughts, so also the harmony of the words is scarcely less indispensable than their meaning to the communication of the influence of poetry. "Hence," says Shelley, "the vanity of translation : it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal; principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet." Strong words to come from the translator of the *Hymn to Mercury* and of Agathon's speech in the *Symposium* ![1] And is not all that Shelley says of the difference between measured and unrhythmical language applicable, at least in some degree, to the difference between metrical and merely measured language ? Could he really have supposed that metre is no more than a "convenience," which contributes nothing of any account to the influence of poetry ? But I will not criticise. Let me rather point out how surprising, at first sight, and how significant,, is Shelley's insistence on the importance of measure or rhythm. No one could assert more absolutely than he the identity of the general substance of poetry with that of moral life and action, of the other arts, and of the higher kinds of philosophy. And yet it would be difficult to go beyond the emphasis of his statement that the formal element (as he understood it) is indispensable to the effect of poetry.

Shelley, however, nowhere considers this element more at length. He has no discussions, like those of Wordsworth and Coleridge, on diction. He never says, with Keats, that he looks on fine phrases like a lover. We hear of his deep – drawn sigh of satisfaction as he finished reading a passage of Homer, but not of his shouting his delight, as he ramped through the meadows of Spenser, at some marvellous flower. When in his letters he refers to any poem he is reading, he scarcely ever mentions particular lines of expressions ; and we have no evidence that, like Coleridge and Keats, he was a curious student of metrical effects or the relations of vowel – sounds. I doubt if all this is wholly accidental. Poetry was to him so essentially as effusion of aspiration, love and worship, that we can imagine his feeling it almost an impiety to break up its unity even for purposes of study, and to give a separate attention to its means of utterance. And what he does say on the subject confirms this impression. In the first place, as we have seen, he lays great stress on inspiration ; and his statements, if exaggerated and misleading, must still reflect in some degree his own experience. No poem, he asserts, however inspired it may be, is more than a feeble shadow of the original conception ; for when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline. And so in a letter he speaks of the detail of execution destroying all wild and beautiful visions. Still, inspiration, if diminished by composition, is not wholly dispelled ; and he appeals to the greatest poets of his day whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study. Such toil he would restrict to those parts which connect the inspired passages, and he speaks with contempt of the fifty – six various readings of the first line of the *Orlando Furioso*. He seems to exaggerate on this matter because in the *Defence* his foe is cold reason and calculation. Elsewhere he writes more truly of the original conception as being obscure as well as intense :[2] from which it would seem to follow that the feeble shadow, if darker, is at least more distinct than the original. He forgets, too, what is certainly the fact, that the poet in reshaping and correcting is able to revive in some degree the fire of the first impulse. And we know from himself that his greatest works cost him a severe labour not confined to the execution, while

his manuscripts show plenty of various readings, if never so many as fifty-six in one line.

Still, what he says is highly characteristic of his own practice in composition, He allowed the rush of his ideas to have its way, without pausing to complete a troublesome line or to find a word that did not come ; and the next day (if ever) he filled up the gaps and smoothed the ragged edges. And the result answers to his theory. Keats was right in telling him that he might be more of an artist. His language, indeed, unlike Wordsworth's or Byron's, is, in his mature work, always that of a poet ; we never hear his mere speaking voice ; but he is frequently diffuse and obscure, and even in fine passages his constructions are sometimes trailing and amorphous. The glowing metal rushes into the mould so vehemently that it overleaps the bounds and fails to find its way into all the little crevices. But no poetry is more manifestly inspired, and even when it is plainly imperfect it is sometimes so inspired that it is impossible to wish it changed. It has the rapture of the mystic, and that is too rare to lose. Tennyson quaintly said of the hymn *Life of Life* : "He seems to go up into the air and burst." It is true : and, if we are to speak of poems as fireworks, I would not compare *Life of Life* with a great set piece of Homer or Shakespeare that illumines the whole shy ; but, all the same, there is no more thrilling sight than the heavenward rush of a rocket, and it bursts at a height no other fire can reach.

In addition to his praise of inspiration Shelley has some scattered remarks on another point which show the same spirit. He could not bear in poetic language any approach to artifice, or any sign that the writer had a theory or system of style. He thought Keats's earlier poems faulty in this respect, and there is perhaps a reference to Wordsworth in the following sentence from the Preface to the *Revolt of Islam* : "Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving, - to disgust him according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity."[3] His own poetic style certainly corresponds with his intention. It cannot give the kind of pleasure afforded by what may be called without disparagement a learned and artful style, such as Virgil's or Milton's ; but, like the best writing of Shakespeare and Goethe, it is, with all its individuality, almost entirely free from mannerism and the other vices of self–consciousness, and appears to flow so directly from the thought that one is ashamed to admire it for itself. This is equally so whether the appropriate style is impassioned and highly figurative, of simple and even plain. It is indeed in the latter case that Shelley wins his greatest, because most difficult, triumph. In the dialogue part of *Eulian and Maddalo* he has succeeded remarkably in keeping the style quite close to that of familiar though serious conversation, while making it nevertheless unmistakably poetic. And the *Cenci* is an example of a success less complete only because the problem was even harder. The ideal of the style of tragic drama in the nineteenth or twentieth century should surely be, not to reproduce with modifications the style of Shakespeare, but to do what Shakespeare did – to idealise, without deserting, the language of contemporary speech. Shelley in the *Cenci* seems to me to have come nearest to this ideal.

3

So much for general exposition. If now we consider more closely what Shelley says of the substance of poetry, a question at once arises. He may seem to think of poetry solely as the direct expression of perfection in some form, and accordingly to imagine its effect as simply joy or delighted aspiration. Much of his own poetry, too, is such an expression ; and we understand when we find him saying that Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character, and unveiled in Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses "the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism, and persevering devotion

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to an object." But poetry, it is obvious, is not wholly, perhaps not even mainly, of this kind. What is to be said, on Shelley's theory, of his own melancholy lyrics, those "sweetest songs" that "tell of saddest truth"? What of satire, of the epic of conflict and war, or of tragic exhibitions of violent and destructive passion? Does not his theory reflect the weakness of his own practice, his tendency to portray a thin and abstract ideal instead of interpreting the concrete detail of nature and life ; and ought we not to oppose to it a theory which would consider poetry simply as a representation of fact ?

To this last question I should answer No. Shelley's theory, rightly understood, will take in, I think, everything really poetic. And to a considerable extent he himself shows the way to meet these doubts. He did not mean that the *immediate* subject of poetry must be perfection in some form. The poet, he says, can colour with the hues of the ideal everything he touches. If so, he may write of absolutely anything so long as he *can* so colour it, and nothing would be excluded from his provide except those things (if any such exist) in which no positive relation to the ideal, however indirect, can be shown or intimated. Thus, to take the instance of Shelley's melancholy lyrics, clearly the lament which arises from loss of the ideal, and mourns the evanescence of its visitations or the desolation of its absence, is indirectly an expression *of* the ideal ; and so on his theory is the simplest song of unhappy love or the simplest dirge. Further, he himself observes that, though the joy of poetry is often unalloyed, yet the pleasure of the "highest portions of our being is frequently connected with the pain of the inferior," that "the pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself," and that not sorrow only, but "terror, anguish, despair itself, are often the chosen expressions of an approximation to the highest good." That, then, which appeals poetically to such painful emotions will again be an indirect portrayal of the ideal ; and it is clear, I think, that this was how Shelley in the *Defence* regarded heroic and tragic poetry, whether narrative or dramatic, with its manifestly imperfect characters and its exhibition of conflict and wild passion. He had, it is true, another and an unsatisfactory way of explaining the presence of these things in poetry ; and I will refer to this in a moment. But he tells us that the Athenian tragedies represent the highest idealisms (his name for ideals) of passion and of power (not merely of virtue) ; and that in them we behold ourselves, "under a thin disguise of circumstance, stripped of all but that ideal perfection and energy which every one feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become." He writes of Milton's Satan in somewhat the same strain. The Shakespearean tragedy from which he most often quotes is one in which evil holds the stage, *Macbeth*, and he was inclined to think *King Lear*, which certainly is no direct portrait of perfection, the greatest drama in the world. Lastly, in the Preface to his own *Cenci* he truly says that, while the story is fearful and monstrous, "the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes," if duly brought out, "mitigates the pain of the contemplation of moral deformity" : so that he regards Count Cenci himself as a *poetic* character, and therefore as in *some* sense an expression of the ideal. He does not further explain his meaning. Perhaps it was that the perfection which poetry is to exhibit includes, together with those qualities which win our immediate and entire approval or sympathy, others which are capable of becoming the instruments of evil. For these, the energy, power and passion of the soul, though they may be perverted, are in themselves elements of perfection ; and so, even in their perversion or their combination with moral deformity, they retain their value, they are not simply ugly or horrible, but appeal through emotions predominantly painful to the same love of the ideal which is directly satisfied by pictures of goodness and beauty. Now to these various considerations we shall wish to add others ; but if we bear these in mind, I believe we shall find Shelley's theory wide enough, and must hold that the substance of poetry is never mere fact, but is always ideal, though its method of representation is sometimes more direct, sometimes more indirect.

Nevertheless, he does not seem to have made his view quite clear to himself, or to hold to it consistently. We are left with the impression, not merely that he personally preferred the direct method (as he was, of course, entitled to do) , but that his use of

it shows a certain weakness, and also that even in theory he unconsciously tends to regard it as the primary and proper method, and to admit only by a reluctant after – thought the representation of imperfection. Let me point out some signs of this. He considered his own *Cenci* as a poem inferior in kind to his other main works, even as a sort of accommodation to the public. With all his modesty he knew what to think of the neglected *Prometheus* and *Adonais*, but there is no sign that he, any more than the world, was aware that the character of Cenci was a creation without a parallel in our poetry since the seventeenth century. His enthusiasm for some second–rate and third–rate Italian paintings, and his failure to understand Michael Angelo, seem to show the same tendency. He could not enjoy comedy : it seemed to him simply cruel : he did not perceive that to show the absurdity of the imperfect is to glorify the perfect. And, as I mentioned just now, he wavers in his view of the representation of heroic and tragic imperfection. We find in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* the strange notion that Prometheus is a more poetic character than Milton's Satan because he is free from Satan's imperfections, which are said to interfere with the interest. And in the *Defence* a similar error appears. Achilles, Hector, Ulysses, though they exhibit ideal virtues, are, he admits, imperfect. Why, then, did Homer make them so ? Because, he seems to reply, Homer's contemporaries regarded their vices (e. g. revengefulness and deceitfulness) as virtues. Homer accordingly had to conceal in the costume of these vices the unspotted beauty that he himself imagined ; and, like Homer, "few poets of the highest class have chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour." Now, this idea, to say nothing of its grotesque improbability in reference to Homer, and its probable baselessness in reference to most other poets, is quite inconsistent with that truer view of heroic and tragic character which was explained just now. It is an example of Shelley's tendency to abstract idealism or spurious Platonism. He is haunted by the fancy that if he could only get at the One, the eternal Idea, in complete aloofness from the Many, from life with all its change, decay, struggle sorrow, and evil, he would have reached the true object of poetry : as if the whole finite world were a mere mistake of illusion, the sheer opposite of the infinite One, and in no way or degree its manifestation. Life, he says –

> "Life, like a dome of many – coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity ;"

but the other side, the fact that the many colours *are* the white light broken, he tends to forget, by no means always, but in one, and that not the least inspired, of his moods. This is the source of that thinness and shallowness of which his view of the world and of history is justly accused, a view in which all imperfect being is apt to figure as absolutely gratuitous, and everything and everybody as pure white or pitch black. Hence also his ideals of good, whether as a character or as a mode of life, resting as they do on abstraction from the mass of real existence, tend to lack body and individuality ; and indeed, if the existence of the many is a mere calamity, clearly the next best thing to their disappearance is that they should all be exactly alike and have as little character as possible. But we must remember that Shelley's strength and weakness are closely allied, and it may be that the very abstractness of his ideal was a condition of that quivering intensity of aspiration towards it in which his poetry is unequalled. We must not go for this to Homer and Shakespeare and Goethe ; and if we go for it to Dante, we shall find, indeed, a mind far vaster than Shelley's but also that dualism of which we complain in him, and the description of a heaven which, equally with Shelley's, regenerated earth, is no place for mere mortality. In any case, as we have seen, the weakness in his poetical practice, though it occasionally appears also as a defect in his poetical theory, forms no necessary part of it.

4

I pass to his views on a last point. If the business of poetry is somehow to express ideal perfection, it may seem to follow that the poet should embody in his poems his beliefs about this perfection and the way to approach it, and should thus have a moral

purpose and aim to be a teacher. And in regard to Shelley this conclusion seems the more natural because his own poetry allows us to see clearly some of his beliefs about morality and moral progress. Yet alike in his Prefaces and in the *Defence* he takes up most decidedly the position that the poet ought neither to affect a moral aim nor to express his own conceptions of right and wrong. "Didactic poetry," he declares, "is my abhorrence : nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse."[4] "There was little danger," he tells us in the *Defence*, "that Homer or any of the eternal poets" should make a mistake in this matter ; but "those in whom the poetical faculty, though great, is less intense, as Euripides, Lucan, Tasso, Spenser, have frequently affected a moral aim, and the effect of their poetry is diminished in exact proportion to the degree in which they compel us to advert to this purpose." These statements may appeal to us, but are they consistent with Shelley's main views of poetry ? To answer this question we must observe what exactly it is that he means to condemn.

Shelley was one of the few persons who can literally be said to *love* their kind. He held most strongly, too, that poetry does benefit men, and benefits them morally. The moral purpose, then, to which he objects cannot well be a poet's general purpose of doing moral as well as other good through his poetry - such a purpose, I mean, as he may cherish when he contemplates his life and his life's work. And, indeed, it seems obvious that nobody with any humanity or any sense can object to that, except through some intellectual confusion. Nor, secondly, does Shelley mean, I think, to condemn even the writing of a particular poem with a view to a particular moral or practical effect ; certainly, at least, if this was his meaning he was condemning some of his own poetry. Nor, thirdly, can he be referring to the portrayal of moral ideals ; for that he regarded as one of the main functions of poetry and in the very place where he says that didactic poetry is his abhorrence he also says, by way of contrast, that he has tried to familiarize the minds of his readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence. It appears, therefore, that what he is really attacking is the attempt to give, in the strict sense, moral *instruction*, to communicate doctrines, to offer argumentative statements of opinion on right and wrong, and more especially, I think, on controversial questions of the day. An example would be Wordsworth's discourse on education at the end of the *Excursion*, a discourse of which Shelley, we know, had a very low opinion. In short, his enemy is not the purpose of producing a moral effect, it is the appeal made for this purpose to the reasoning intellect. He says to the poet : By all means aim at bettering men ; you are a man, and are bound to do so ; but you are also a poet, and therefore your proper way of doing so is not by reasoning and preaching. His idea is of a piece with his general championship of imagination, and it is quite consistent with his main view of poetry.[5]

What, then, are the *grounds* of this position ? They are not clearly set out, but we can trace several, and they are all solid. Reasoning on moral subjects, moral philosophy, was by no means "tedious" to Shelley; it seldom is to real poets. He loved it, and (outside his *Defence*) he rated its value very high.[6] But he thought it tedious and out of place in poetry, because it can be equally well expressed, in "un-measured" language -- much better expressed, one may venture to add. You invent an art in order to effect by it a particular purpose which nothing else can effect, as well. How foolish, then, to use this art for a purpose better served by something else ! I know no answer to this argument, and its application is far wider than that given to it by Shelley. Secondly, Shelley remarks that a poet's own conceptions on moral subjects are usually those of his place and time, while the matter of his poem ought to be eternal, or, as we say, of permanent and universal interest. This, again, seems true, and has a wide application ; and it holds good even when the poet, like Shelley himself, is in rebellion against orthodox moral opinion ; for his heterodox opinions will equally show the marks of his place and time, and constitute a perishable element in his work. Doubtless no poetry can be without a perishable element ; but that poetry has least of it which interprets life least through the medium of systematic and doctrinal ideas. The veil which time and place have hung between Homer or Shakespeare and the general reader of to- day in almost transparent, while even a

poetry so intense as that of Dante and Milton is impeded in its passage to him by systems which may be unfamiliar, and, if familiar, may be distasteful.

Lastly – and this is Shelley's central argument – as poetry itself is directly due to imaginative inspiration and not to reasoning, so its true moral effect is produced through imagination and not through doctrine. Imagination is, for Shelley, "the great instrument of moral good." The "secret of morals is love." It is not "for want of admirable doctrines that men hate and despise and censure and deceive and subjugate one another" : it is for want of love. And love is "a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action or person not our own." " A man," therefore, "to be greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively." And poetry ministers to moral good. The effect , by acting on its cause, imagination. It strengthens imagination as exercise strengthens a limb, and so it indirectly promotes morality. It also fills the imagination with beautiful impersonations of all that we should wish to be. But moral reasoning does not act upon the cause, it only analyses the effect ; and the poet has no right to be content to analyse what he ought indirectly to create. Here, again, in his eagerness, Shelley cuts his antitheses too clean, but the defect is easily made good, and the main argument is sound.

Limits of time will compel me to be guilty of the same fault in adding a consideration which is in the spirit of Shelley's. The chief moral effect claimed for poetry by Shelley is exerted, primarily, by imagination on the emotions ; but there is another influence, exerted primarily through imagination on the understanding. Poetry is largely an interpretation of life ; and, considering what life is, that must mean a moral interpretation. This, to have poetic value, must satisfy imagination ; but we value it also because it gives us knowledge, a wider comprehension, a new insight into ourselves and the world.[6] Now, it may be held – and this view answers to a very general feeling among lovers of poetry now – that the most deep and original moral interpretation is not likely to be that which most shows a moral purpose or is most governed by reflective beliefs and opinions, and that as a rule we learn most from those who do not try to teach us, and whose opinions may even remain unknown to use : so that there is this weighty objection to the appearance of such purpose and opinions, that it tends to defeat its own intention. And the reason that I wish to suggest is this, that always we get most from the *genius* in a man of genius and not from the rest of him. Now, although poets often have unusual powers of reflective thought, the specific genius of a poet does not lie there, but in imagination. Therefore his deepest and most original interpretation is likely to come by the way of imagination. And the specific way of imagination is not to clothe in imagery consciously held ideas ; it is to produce half – consciously a matter from which. when produced, the reader may, if he chooses, extract ideas. Poetry (I must exaggerate to be clear), psychologically considered, is not the *expression* of ideas or of a view of life ; it is their discovery of creation, or rather both discovery and creation in one. The interpretation contained in *Hamlet* or *King Lear* was not brought readymade to the old stories. What was brought to them was the huge substance of Shakespeare's imagination, in which all his experience and thought was latent ; and this, dwelling and working on the stories with nothing but a dramatic purpose, and kindling into heat and motion, gradually discovered or created in them a meaning and a mass of truth about life, which was brought to birth by the process of composition, but never, preceded it in the shape of ideas, and probably never, even after it took that shape to the poet's mind. And *this* is the interpretation which we find inexhaustibly instructive, because Shakespeare's *genius* is in it. On the other hand, however much from curiosity and personal feeling towards him we may wish to know his opinions and beliefs about morals or religion or his own poems or Queen Elizabeth, we have not really any reason to suppose that their value would prove extraordinary. And so, to apply this generally, the opinions, reasonings and beliefs at poets are seldom of the same quality as their purely imaginative product. Occasionally, as with Goethe, they are not far off it ; but sometimes they are intense without being profound, and more eccentric than original ; and often they are very sane and sound, but not very different

from those of wise men without genius. And therefore poetry is not the place for them. For we want in poetry a moral interpretation, but not the interpretation we have already. As a rule the genuine artist's quarrel with "morality" in art is not really with morality, it is with a stereotyped or narrow morality ; and when he refuses in his art to consider things from what he calls the moral point of view, his reasons are usually wrong, but his instinct is right.

Poetry itself confirms on the whole this contention, though doubtless in these last centuries a great poet's work will usually reveal more of conscious reflection that once it did. Homer and Shakespeare show no moral aim and no system of opinion. Milton was far from justifying the ways of God to men by the argumentation he put into divine and angelic lips ; his truer moral insight is in the creations of his genius ; for instance, in the character of Satan or the picture of the glorious humanity of Adam and Eve. Goethe himself could never have told the world what he was going to express in the First Part of *Faust* : the poem told *him*, and it is one of the world's greatest. He knew too well what he was going to express in the Second Part, and with all its wisdom and beauty it is scarcely a great poem. Wordsworth's original message was delivered, not when he was a Godwinian semiatheist, nor when he had subsided upon orthodoxy, but when his imagination, with a few hints from Coleridge, was creating a kind of natural religion ; and this religion itself is more profoundly expressed in his descriptions of his experience than in his attempts to formulate it. The moral virtue of Tenny – son is in poems like *Ulysses* and parts of *In Memoriam*, where sorrow and the consciousness of a deathless affection or an unquenchable desire for experience forced an utterance ; but when in the *Idylls* he tried to found a great poem on explicit ideas about the soul and the ravages wrought in it by lawless passion, he succeeded but partially, because these ideas, however sound, were no product of his genius. And so the moral virtue of Shelley's poetry lay, not in his Doctrines about the past and future of man, but in an intuition, which was the substance of his soul, of the unique value of love. In the end, for him, the truest name of that perfection called Intellectual Beauty, Liberty, Spirit of Nature, is Love. Whatever in the world has any worth is an expression of Love. Love sometimes talks. Love talking musically is Poetry.

Notes and References

Statements equally emphatic on this subject may be found in a passage quoted by Mrs. Shelley in a footnote to Shelley's letter to John Gisborne, Nov. 16, 1819 (Letter XXX. in Mrs. Shelley's edition). Cf. also Letter XXXIII. To Leigh Hunt, Nov. 1819.

I cannot find the passage or passages to which I referred in making this statement, and therefore. I do not vouch for its accuracy. Cf. from the fragment *Fiordispina*,

> " The ardours of a vision which obscure
> The very idol of its portraiture."

Cf. from the Preface to the *Cenci* : "I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that, in order to move men to true sympathy, we must use the familiar language of men ... But it must be the real language of men in general, and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong."

Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*.

I do not discuss the adequacy of Shelley's position, or assert that he held it quite clearly or consistently. In support of my interpretation of it I may refer to the Preface to the *Cenci*. There he repudiated the idea of making the dramatic exhibition of the story "subservient to what is vulgarly called a

moral purpose," and, as the context shows, he identifies such a treatment of the story with the "enforcement" of a "dogma."

This passage has a further interest. The dogma which Shelley would not enforce in his tragedy was that "no person can truly be dishonoured by the act of another, and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love" ; and accordingly he held that "if Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better." How inexcusable then is the not uncommon criticism on the *Cenci* that he represents Beatrice as a perfect character and justifies her murder of "the injurer."

Shelly's position in the *Defence*, it may be added, is in total disagreement with his youthful doctrine and practice. In 1811 he wrote to Miss Hitchener, "My opinion is that all poetical beauty ought to be subordinate to the inculcated moral," and a large part of *Queen Mab* is frankly didactic. Even there, however, he reserved most of the formal instruction for the Notes, perceiving that "a poem very didactic is .... very stupid."

6. " I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science," he says in a letter to Peacock, Jan. 1819.

7. And, I may add, the more it does this, so long as it does it imaginatively, the more does it satisfy imagination, and the greater is its *poetic* value.

VII
LINES WRITTEN IN THE BAY OF LERICI
P.B. SHELLEY

Bright wandered fair coquette of Heaven
To whom alone it has been given
To change and be adored for ever:...
Envy not this dim world, for never
But once within its shadow grew
One fair as [thou], but far more true.
She left me at the silent time
When the moon had ceased to climb
The azure dome of Heaven's steep,
And like an albatross asleep,
Balanced on her wings of light,
Hovered in the purple night,
Ere she sought her Ocean nest
In the chambers of the west.-
She left me, and I staid alone
Thinking over every tone,
Which thou now silent to the ear
The enchanted heart could hear
Like notes which die when born, but still
Haunt the echoes of the hill:
And feeling ever-O too much-
The soft vibrations of her touch
As if her gentle hand even now
Lightly trembled on my brow;
And thus although she absent were
Memory gave me all of her
That even fancy dares to claim.-
Her presence had made weak and tame
All passions, and I lived alone,
In the time which is our own;
The past and future were forgot
As they had been, and would be, not.-
But soon, the guardian angel gone,
The demon reassumed his throne
In my faint heart....I dare not speak
My thoughts; but thus disturbed and weak
I sate and watched the vessels glide
Along the ocean bright and wide,
Klike spirit-winged chariots sent
O'er some serenest element
To ministrations strange and far;
As if to some Elysian star
They sailed for drink to medicine
Such sweet and bitter pain as mine.
And the scent of sleeping flowers
And the coolness of the hours
Of dew, and the sweet warmth of day
Was scattered o'er the twinkling bay;
And the fisher with his lamp
And spear, about the low rocks damp
Crept, and struck the fish who came
To worship the delusive flame:

Too happy, they whose pleasure sought
Extinguishes all senses and thought
Of the regret that pleasure [leaves]
Destroying life alone not peace.

VIII
SELECTED LETTERS OF KEATS*

I. To JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS[3]

Saturday 22 Nov. 1817

Saturday

My Dear Reynolds,

There are two things which tease me here — one of them Crips,[4] and the other that I cannot go with Tom into Devonshire—however I hope to do my duty to myself in a week or so; and then I'll try what I can do for my neighbour —now is not this virtuous? on returning to town — I'll damn all idleness — indeed, in superabundance of employment, I must not be content to run here and there on little two penny errands — but turn rake hell, i e go a masking[5] or Bailey will think me just as great a promise keeper as *he* thinks you—for myself I do not, — and do not remember above one complaint against you for matter O' that — Bailey writes so abominable a hand, to give his letter a fair reading requires a little time: so I had not seen, when I saw you last, his invitation to Oxford at Christmas — I'll go with you. You know how poorly Rice was — I do not think it was all corporeal bodily pain was not used to keep him silent. I'll tell you what; he was hurt at what your sisters said about his joking with your mother, he was, soothly to sain — It will all blow over. God knows, my dear Reynolds, I should not talk any sorrow to you — you must have enough vexations — so I won't any more—If I ever start a rueful subject in a letter to you — blow me! Why don't you — Now I was agoing to ask a very silly question neither you nor any body else could answer, under a folio, or at least a pamphlet — you shall judge — Why don't you, as I do, look unconcerned at what may be called more particularly Heart vexations? They never surprize me — lord! a man should have the fine point of his soul taken off to become fit for this world — I like this place very much. There is hill & dale and a little river I went up Box hill this evening after the moon—you a' seen the moon—came down—and wrote some lines. Whenever I am separated from you, and not engaged in a continued poem—every letter shall bring you a lyric—but I am too anxious for you to enjoy the whole, to send you a particle. One of the three books I have with me is Shakespear's Poems: I neer found so many beauties in the Sonnets—they seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally—in the intensity of working out conceits. Is this to be borne? Hark ye!

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And Summer's green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard.[6]

He has left nothing to say about nothing or any thing: for look at snails, you know what he says about snails, you know where he talks about " cockled snails "[7]—well, in one of these sonnets, he says the chap slips into—no! I lie! this is in the Venus and Adonis: the simile brought it to my mind.

*Selection and notes by Walter Jackson Bate:

[3] 1. Reynolds, a young clerk, slightly older than Keats, had been writing poetry for some years. Keats met him through Leigh Hunt.
[4] Crips: Charles Cripps; see n. 17. below.
[5] go a masking: wear a mask, as rakes of the time often did when they roamed the town at night.
[6] *Sonnets*, XII.
[7] *Love's Labor's Lost*, IV.iii.338.

Audi—As the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks back into his shelly cave with pain
And there all smothered up in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to put forth again:
So at his bloody view her eyes are fled,
Into the deep dark cabins of her head.[8]

He overwhelms a genuine lover of Poesy with all manner of abuse, talking about—
"a poet's rage
And stretched metre of an antique song".[9]

Which by the by will be a capital motto for my Poem[10], won't it?—He speaks too of "Time's antique pen"— and "April's first born flowers "— and "deaths eternal cold".— By the Whim King! I'll give you a stanza, because it is not material in connection and when I wrote it I wanted you to — give your vote, pro or con.—

Crystalline Brother of the belt of Heaven,
Aquarius! to whom King Jove hath given
Two liquid pulse-streams! - stead of feathered
wings—
Two fan-like fountains—thine illuminings
For Dian play:
Dissolve the frozen purity of air;
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare,
Show cold through watery pinions: make more
bright
The Star-Queen's Crescent on her marriage night:
Haste Haste away!—[11]

Now I hope I shall not fall off in the winding up, as the woman said to the —— [12] — I mean up and down. I see there is an advertizement in the Chronicle to poets he is so overloaded with poems on the late Princess![13]— I suppose you do not lack — send me — a few lend me thy hand to laugh a little — send me a little pullet sperm, a few finch eggs [14]—and remember me to each of our card playing club—When you die you will all be turned into dice, and be put in pawn with the Devil — for cards they crumple up [15] like any king — I mean John in the stage play what pertains Prince Arthur.

I rest
Your affectionate friend
John Keats

Give my love to both houses [16] — hinc atque illinc.[17]

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[8] Lines 1033—38.
[9] This and the following three quotations are from the *Sonnets*, XVII, XIX, XXI, XIII.
[10] Poem: *Endymion*, the title page of which bore this quotation.
[11] *Endymion*, IV. 581-90.
[12] Word illegible.
[13] the. ..Princess: Princess Charlotte, only daughter of the Prince Regent (later George IV) had just died. As in the eighteenth century, deaths in the royal family were mourned publicly in mediocre verse.
[14] The preceding three phrases are from Shakespeare's *I Henry" IV*, II.iv.2; *Merry Wives of Windsor*, III.V.32; and *Troilus and Cressida*, V.i.41. The letters of Keats abound with Shakespearean allusions of this sort.
[15] crumple up: *King John*, V.vii.31.
[16] to. ..houses: *Romeo and Juliet*, III.i.94, 111.
[17] hinc ...illinc: hence and thence.

II. To BENJAMIN BAILEY [18]

Saturday 22 Nov. 1817

My dear Bailey,

I will get over the first part of this (*un*said) [19] letter as soon as possible for it relates to the affair of poor Crips—To a man of your nature such a letter as Haydon's must have been extremely cutting—What occasions the greater part of the world's quarrels? simply this, two minds meet and do not understand each other time enough to prevent any shock or surprise at the conduct of either party — As soon as I had known Haydon three days I had got enough of his character not to have been surprised at such a letter as he has hurt you with. Nor when I knew it was it a principle with me to drop his acquaintance although with you it would have been an imperious feeling. I wish you knew all that I think about Genius and the Heart —and yet I think you are thoroughly acquainted with my innermost breast in that respect, or you could not have known me even thus long and still hold me worthy to be your dear friend. In passing however I must say of one thing that has pressed upon me lately and encreased my humility and capability of submission and that is this truth —Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal chemicals operating on the mass of neutral intellect— but they have not any individuality, any determined character—I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self Men of Power—

But I am running my head into a subject which I am certain I could not do justice to under five years study and 3 vols octavo — and moreover long to be talking about the Imgination — so my dear Bailey do not think of this unpleasant affair if possible — do not — I defy any harm to come of it — I defy. I'll shall write to Crips this week and request him to tell me all his goings on from time to time by letter wherever I may be — it will all go on well so don't because you have suddenly discover'd a coldness in Haydon suffer yourself to be teased. Do not my dear fellow. O I wish I was as certain of the end of all your troubles as that of your momentary start about the authenticity of the Imagination. I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. In a word, you may know my favorite speculation by my first book and the little song I sent in my last—which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these matters. The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dreams [20]—he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning [21]—and yet it must be. Can it be that Even the greatest philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerious objections. However it may be, O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts! It is "a Vision in the form of youth" a shadow of reality to come—and this consideration has further convinced me for it has come as auxiliary to another favorite speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves here after by having what we called happiness on earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated. And yet such a fate can only befall those who delight in sensation rather than hunger as you do after Truth, Adam's dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflection is the same as

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[18] Bailey was an undergraduate at Oxford, preparing to enter the Church, when Keats first met him. Keats wrote Book III of *Endymion* while visiting him at Oxford.

[19] unsaid: Keats is playing on the legal phrase " said letter"; the " said letter" would be Haydon's to Bailey, the " unsaid " Keats's. Benjamin Robert Haydon (17861846), the historical painter, had for a year been friendly with Keats. See " To Haydon," I. 7n., above. The background of the present incident is not clear. Cripps, a young artist, had attracted Haydon's attention. Haydon implied he would help to train Cripps, and then demanded an apprentice fee which Keats tried to raise.

[20] Adam's dream: *Paradise Lost,* VIII. 460—90.

[21] Consequitive reasoning: abstract analysis, and consecutive. Step by step logic.

human life and its spiritual repetition. But as I was saying the simple imaginative mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness—to compare great things with small—have you never by being surprised with an old melody—in a delicious place—by a delicious voice, felt over again your very speculations and surmises at the time it first operated on your soul—do you not remember forming to yourself the singer's face more beautiful than it was possible and yet with the evevation of the moment you did not thing so—even then you were mounted on the wings of Imagination so high—that the prototype must be here after—that delicious face you will see. What a time! I am continually running away from the subject—sure this cannot be exactly the case with a complex mind—one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits—who would exist partly on sensation partly on thought—to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic mind [22] —such an one I consider your's and therefore it is necessary to your eternal happiness that you not only drink this old wind of Heaven, which I shall call the redigestion of our most ethereal musings on earth: but also increase in knowledge and know all things. I am glad to hear you are in a fair way for Easter— you will soon get through your unpleasant reading and then!—but the world is full of troubles and I have not much reason to think myself pesterd with many—I think Jane or Marianne has a better opinion of me than I deserve—for really and

> I do not thing my brothers illness connected mine—you know more of the real cause than

they do nor have I any chance of being rack'd as you have been—You perhaps at one time thought there was such a thing as worldly happiness to be arrived at, at certain periods of time marked out—you have of necessity from your disposition been thus led away— I scarcely remember counting upon my happiness— I look not for it if it be not in the present hour— nothing startles me beyond the moment. The setting sun will always set me to right—or if a sparrow come before my window I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel. The first thing that strikes me on hearing a misfortune having befalled another is this, "Well it cannot be helped—he will have the pleasure of trying the resources of his spirit"— and I beg now my clear Bailey that hereafter should you observe any thing cold in me not to put it to the account of heartlessness but abstraction—for I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a passion or affection during a whole week—and so long this sometimes continues I begin to suspect myself and the genuineness of my feelings at other times—thinking them a few barren tragedy=tears—My brother Tom is much improved—he is going to Devonshire—whither I shall follow him—at present I am just arrived at Dorking to change the scene—change the air and give me a spur to wind up my Poem, of which there are wanting 500 lines. I should have been here a day sooner but the Reynoldses persuaded me to stop in town to meet your friend Christie. There were Rice and Martin—we talked about ghosts. I will have some talk with Taylor and let you know—when please God I come down at Christmas. I will find that Examiner if possible. My best regards to Gleig. My brothers to you and Mrs. Bentley's.

Your affectionate friend

John Keats—

III. To GEORGE and THOMAS KEATS
Sunday 21 Dec. 1817

Hampstead Sunday

My dear Brothers,

I must crave your pardon for not having written ere this... [23] I saw Kean [24] return to the public in 'Richard III', and finely he did it, and, at the request of Reynolds, I went

[22] **Years. ..mind:** Keats is echoing Wordsworth, " Intimations of Immortality," l 187, above.
[23] A passage was here omitted in the only copy of the letter that has survived.

to criticize his Luke in Riches. The critique is in to-day's 'Champion', which I send you, with the Examiner, in which you will find very proper lamentation on the obsolotion of Christmas gambols and pastimes: [25] but it was mixed up with so much egotism of that drivelling nature that pleasure is entirely lost. Hone, the publisher's trial, you must find very amusing: and, as Englishmen, very encouraging—his *Not Guilty* is a thing, which not to have been, would have dulled still more Liberty's emblazoning—Lord Ellenborough has been paid in his own coin—Wooler and Hone [26] have done us an essential service— I have had two very pleasant evenings with Dilke, [27] yesterday and to-day, and am at this moment just come from him, and feel in the humour to go on with this, began in the morning, and from which he came to fetch me. I spent Friday evening with Wells, [28] and went next morning to see Death on the Pale Horse. [29] it is a wonderful picture, when Wests age is considered; But there is nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss, no face swelling into reality—The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. [30] Examine 'King Lear,' and you will find this exemplified throughout; but in this picture we have unpleasantness without any momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness—The picture is larger than 'Christ rejected.'

I dined with Haydon and Sunday after you left, and had a very pleasant day, I dined too (for I have been out too much lately) with Horace Smith, and met his two brothers, with Hill and Kingston, and one Du Bois.[31] They only served to convince me, how superior humour is to wit in respect to enjoyment—These men say things which make one start, without making one feel: they are all alike; their manners are alike; they all know fashionables; they have a mannerism in their very eating and drinking, in their mere handling a decanter—They talked of Kean and his low company—would I were with that company instead of yours, said I to myself! I know such like acquaintance will never do for me, and yet I am going to Reynolds on Wednesday. Brown and Dilke walked with me and back from the Christmas pantomime. I had not a dispute but a disquisition, with Dilke on various subjects; several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*,[32] that is, when a man is

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[24] Kean: Edmund Kean (1787-1833), the noted tragic actor. Keat's review of his performance appeared in the Champion, Dec. 23,1817.

[25] lamentation. ..pastimes: The reference is to an essay of Leigh Hunt on this subject in *Examiner,* Dec. 21 and 28, 1817.

[26] Wooler ...Hone: publishers. William Hone had been tried for libel.

[27] Dilke: Charles Dilke *(1789-1864),* later known as an editor and scholar.

[28] Wells: Charles Wells (1800-79), author of *Stories after Nature.*

[29] Death. .. Horse: Benjamin West (1738-1820). His Christ Rejected, referred to later in the paragraph, was criticized in the same terms by Hazlitt, whose critical opinions Keats closely followed.

[30] The. ..Truth: If the imaginative grasp of an object is sufficiently intense, it takes so strong a hold of the mind that whatever qualities are irrelevant to its central character (the "disagreeables") evaporate. Its truth (or character) then "swells into reality" for us so vividly that the dynamic awareness of it is also "beautiful." In other words, reality taking form and meaning is "beauty" if it is vitally enough known and felt. Cf. "Ode on a Grecian Urn," ll. ***40—50***, above.

[31] Smith ...**Do Bola**: writers who contributed to magazines of the time.

[32] We may interpret these difficult remarks, from here to the end of the paragraph, as follows: Our life is filled with change, uncertainties, mysteries; no one complete system of rigid categories will explain it fully. We can grasp and understand the elusive flux of life only by being imaginatively open-minded, sympathetic, receptive—by extending every possible feeler that we may have potentially in us. But we can achieve this active awareness only by *negating* our own *egos.* We must not only rise above our own vanity and prejudices, but resist the temptation to make up our minds on everything, and to have always ready a neat answer. If we discard a momentary insight, for example, because we cannot fit it into a static category or systematic framework, we are selfishly asserting our own "identity." A great poet is less concerned with himself, and has his eyes on what is w thout. With him "the sense of

capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason—Coleridge, for instance would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

Shelley's poem [33] is out, and there are words about its being objected to as much as "Queen Mab" was. Poor Shelley, I think he has his quota of good qualities, in sooth la!! Write soon to your most sincere friend and affectionate brother.

John

IV. *From* To JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS
Tuesday 3 *Feb.* 1818

It may be said that we ought to read our contemporaries—that Wordsworth & c. should have their due from us. But, for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain philosophy engendered in the whims of an egotist—Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brook and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself.[34] Many a man can travel to the very bourne of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his half-seeing. Sancho will invent a journey heavenward as well as any body. We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us—and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself, but with its subject–How beautiful are the retired flowers! how would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, "admire me I am a violet!—dote upon me I am a primrose!" Modern poets differ from the Elizabethans in this. Each of the moderns like an Elector of Hanover governs his petty state, and knows how many straws are swept daily from the causeways in all his dominions and has a continual itching that all the housewives should have their coppers well scoured: the antients were emperors of vast provinces, they had only heard of the remote ones and scarcely cared to visit them. I will cut al this—I will have no more of Wordsworth or Hunt in particular—Why should we be of the tribe of Manasseh, when we can wander with Esau? why should we kick against the pricks, when we can walk on roses? Why should we be owls, when we can be eagles? Why be teased with "nice eyed wagtails",[35] when we have in sight "the Cherub Contemplation"?[36]—Why with Wordsworht's Mathew with a bough of wilding in his hand" [37] when we can have Jacques "under an oak &c."[38]—The secret of the bough of wilding will run through your head faster than I can write it—Old Matthew spoke to him some years ago on some nothing and because he happens in an evening walk to imagine the figure of the old man—he must stamp down in black and white, and it is henceforth sacred-I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur and Hunt's merit, but I mean to say we need not be teazed with grandeur and merit when we can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. Let us have the old poets, and Robin Hood. Your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the 4th Book of Childe Harold[39] and the whole of

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Beauty"—the capacity to relish concrete reality in its full, if elusive, meaning— "over comes every other consideration." In fact, it goes beyond and "obliterates" the act of "consideration"—of deliberating, analyzing, and piecing together experience in a logical structure. For related remarks, see the letter to Woodhouse, Oct. 27. 1818, below.

[33] Shelley's poem: "Laon and Cythna."

[34] Keats, in his contrast of Wordsworth with the Eliabethan, is following Halitt. for whom much of the poetry of the Romantic movement, especially that of Wordsworth, was subjective self-expression.

[35] Leigh Hunt, *The Nymphs*, II 170

[36] Milton, "Il Penseroso," I. 54, in Vol.I.

[37] "The Two April Mornings," II. 59-60, above.

[38] *As You Like It*, Iii. 31.

[39] Byron's *Childe Harold*, which was to be published on April 28.

anybody's life and opinions. In return for your dish of filberts, I have gathered a few catkins,[40] I hope they'll look pretty.

V To JOHN TAYLORY[41]
Friday 27 Feb. 1818

Hampstead 27 Feby—

My dear Taylor,

Your alteration strikes me as being a great improvement-the page looks much better. And now I will attend to the punctuations you speak of—the comma should be at *soberly*, and in the other passage the comma should follow *quiet*. I am extremely indebted to you for this attention and also for your after admonitions—It is a sorry thing for me that any one should have to overcome prejudices in reading my verses—that affects me more than any hypercriticism on any particular passage. In *Endymion* I have most likely but moved into the go-cart from the leading strings. In poetry I have a few axioms and you will see how far I am from their centre. 1st. I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity—it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts , and appear almost a remembrance 2nd. Its touches of Beauty should never be half way thereby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the sun come natural too him—shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the luxury of twilight—but it is easier to think what poetry should be than to write it—and this leads me on to another axiom. That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. However it may be with me I cannot help looking into new countries with 'O for a Muse of fire to as cend![42] If Endymion serves me as a pioneer perhaps I ought to be content. I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths, and I have I am sure many friends, who, if I fail, will attribute any change in my life and temper to humbleness rather than to pride—to a cowering under the wings of great poets rather than to a bitterness that I am not appreciated. I am anxious to get *Endymion* printed that I may forget it and proceed. I have coppied the 3rd Book and have begun the 4th. On running my eye over the proofs—I saw one mistake I will notice it presently and also any others if there be any. There should be no comma in "the raft branch down sweeping from a tall ash top". I have besides made one or two alterations and also altered the 13 line page 32 to make sense of it as you will see. I will take care the printer shall not trip up my heels. There should be no dash after Dryope in this line "Dryope's lone lulling of her Child." Remember me to Percy Street.

Your sincere and oblig[d] friend
John Keats—

P.S. You shall have a short *Preface* in good time—

VI. From To JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS
Sunday 3 May 1818

. . .I will return to Wordsworth—whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur—whether he is an eagle in his nest, or on the wing—And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at—Well—I compare human life to a large mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut

[40] Fitherts...ratkins: Filberts are haehunts, cutkins their blossom.
[41] Taylor: of the firm of Taylor and Hessey, publishers of Keat's *Endymion*.
[42] Prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

upon me. The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think—We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of this thinking principle within us—we no sooner get into the second chamber, which I shall call the chamber of maiden-thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of iis that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness and oppression—whereby this chamber of maiden thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages—We see not the ballance of good and devil. *We* are in a mist. We are now in that state—We feel the "burden of the mystery", To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey' and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark passages Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them—he is a Genius and superior to us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries, and shed a light in them—Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton—though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of mind—From the Paradise Lost and the other works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves to say, that his philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years, In his time Englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition—and men had got hold of certain points and resting places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much opposed by the mass of Europe not to be thought etherial and authentically divine—who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and chastity in Comus, just at the time of the dismissal of cod-pieces and a hundred other disgraces? Who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost, when just free from the inquisition and burning in Smithfield? The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of Heaven, and its own remaining dogmas and superstitions, then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting places and seeming sure points of reasoning—from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel, appears to have been content with these by his writings—He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done—Yet Milton as a philosopher, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth—What is then to be inferr'd? O many things—It proves there is really a grand march of intellect—, It proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest minds to the service of the time being whether it be in human knowledge or religion—I have often pitied à tutor who has to hear "Nom: Musa"[43]—so often dinn'd into his ears— I hope you may not have the same pain in this scribbling—I may have read these things before, but I never had even a thus dim perception of them; and moreover I like to say my lesson to one who will endure my tediousness for my own sake—After all there is certinly something real in the world—Moore's present to Hazlitt [44] is real—I like that Moore, and am glad I saw him at the theatre just before I left town. Tom has spit a leetle blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper—but I know—the truth is there is something real in the world. Your third chmber of life shall be a lucky and a gentle one—stored with the wine of love—and the bread of friendship. When you see George if he should not have received a letter from me tell him he will find one at home most likely—tell Bailey I Hope soon to see him-Rmember me to all. The leaves have been out here, for mony a day—I have written to George for the first stanzas of my Isabel[45]— I shall have them soon and will copy the whole out for you.

Your affectionate friend
John Keats

[43] "Nom: Musa": the first lesson in Latin grammar: "Nominative: Musa," etc.
[44] Probably a copy of one of Thomas Moore's books.
[45] Isabel: Keats's poem, *Isabella.*

VII. To RICHARD WOODHOUSE[46]
Tuesday 27 Oct. 1818

My dear Woodhouse,

Your letter gave me a great satisfaction; more on account of its friendliness, than any relish of that matter in it which is accounted so acceptable in the "genus irritabile". The best answer I can give you is in a clerk-like manner to make some observations on two principle points, which seem to point like indices into the midst of the whole pro and con, about genius, and views and achievements and ambition and coetera. 1st As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existance; because he has no identity—he is continually in for[47]—and filling some other body—The un, the moon, the sea and men and women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures. If then he has no self, and if I am a poet, where is the wonder that I should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the characters of Saturn and Ops? It is a wretched thing to confess; but is a very fact that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature—how can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with people if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself; but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men: it would be the same in a nursery of children:I know not whether I make myself wholly understood; I hope enough so to let you see that no dependence is to be places on what I said that day.

In the second place I will speak of my views, and of the life I purpose to myself. I am ambitious of doing the world some good.: if I should be spared that may be the work of maturer years—in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of poems to come brings the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hop^ is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs—that the solitary indifference I feel for applause even from the finest spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will—I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful even if my nights labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself; but from some character in whose soul I now live. I am sure however that this next sentence is from myself. I feel your anxiety, good opinion and friendliness in the highest degree, and am

Your's most sincerely
John Keats

VIII. *From* To GEORGE and GEORGIANA KEATS
Sunday14 Feb.Monday 3 May 1819

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[46] Woodhouse, a few years older than Keats, was a young lawyer with an intelligent approach to literature. He collected valuable information about Keats and his work, and perhaps understood the character of his mind better than any of Keats's other friends.
[47] in for; probably "in forming."

...Very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others—in the greater part of the benefactors to humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness—some melodramatic scenery has fascinated them—From the manner in which I feel Haslam's misfortune I perceive how far I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness [48]—Yet this feeling ought to be carried to its highest pitch as there is no fear of its ever injuring society—which it would do I fear pushed to an extremity—For in wild nature the hawk would loose his breakfast of robins and the robin his of worms—the lion must starve as well as the swallow. The greater part of men make their way with the same instinctiveness, the same unwandering eye from their purposes, the same animal eagerness as the hawk. The hawk wants a mate, so does the man—look at them both they set about it and procure one in the same manner. They want both a nest and they both set about one in the same manner—they get their food in the same manner—The noble animal man for his amusement smokes his—pipe the hawk balances about the clouds—that is the only difference of their leisures. This it is that makes the amusement of life—to a speculative Mind. I go among the fields and catch a glimpse of a stoat or a fieldmouse peeping out of the withered grass—the creature hath a purpose and its eyes are bright with it. I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a man hurrying along to what? the creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. But then, as Wordsworth says "we have all one human heart"[49]—there is an electric fire in human nature tending to purify —so that among these human creatures there is continually some birth of new heroism. The pity is that we must wonder at it: as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish. I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two—Socrates and Jesus —their histories evince it. What I heard a little time ago, Taylor observe with respect to Socrates may be said of Jesus—That he was so great a man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his Mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by men interested in the pious frauds of religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour. Even here[50] though I myself am pursueing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal you can think of —I am however young writing at random—straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness—without knowing the bearing of any one assertion of any one opinion. Yet may I not in this be free from sin? May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful, though instinctive attitude my mind may fall into, as I am entertained with the alertness of a stoat or the anxiety of a deer? Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest man shows a grace in his quarrel—By a superior being our reasonings may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be find—This is the very thing in which consists poetry; and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is deepened, and his nature is increasingly "fortified" and perfected into a "soul."

not so fine a thing as a truth—Give me this credit—Do you not think I strive—to know myself. Give me this credit—and you will not think that on my own account I repeat Milton's lines

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[48] disinterestedness: freedom from all selfish motives. Keats is referring to the approaching death of the father of his close friend. William Haslam, a young businessman.

[49] The Old Cumberland Beggar," l. 153, above.

[50] This and the following two sentences may be paraphrased thus: I myself am far from being completely " disinterested" that is, completely free from all selfish motivations. In fact, like all human animals, I am pursuing my own instinctive course of action. (Also, I am young, groping without much light as yet; and I still do not know very well what would be the full, logical result of attitudes I instinctively adopt.) Yet is this to be greatly condemned? This following of one's instinctive course, this assertion of " self identity ," is not complete " selfishness" so much as it is the instinctive activity of the animal world, innocent and to be expected. It is not, to be sure, the highest development of what human nature can and should be. As Keats's later remarks about the " vale of Soul making " suggest, the developing of human character comes about by gradual concrete experience. From this experience, provided one is endowed with intelligence and sensitivity, wisdom (or philosophy) emerges, man's heart is deepened, and his nature is increasingly " fortified " and perfected into a " soul. "

"How charming is divine Philosophy
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose
But musical as is Apollo's lute "— [51]

Call the world if you please. "The vale of So making," Then you will find out the use of the world (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it) I say '*Soul making*' Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence—There may be intelligence or sparks of the divinity in millions—but they are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself.[52] Intelligences are atoms of perception—they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God—How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them — so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander system of salvation than the chrystiain religion—or rather it is a system of spirit creation— This is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years. These three materials are the *Intelligence*—the *Human Heart* (as distinguished from Intelligence or Mind) and the *world or elemental space* suited for the proper action of *Mind and Heart* on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul or Intelligence destined to possess the sense of identity.* I can scarcely express what I but dimly perceive—and yet I think I perceive it—that you may judge the more clearly I will put it in the most homely from possible—I will call the *world* a school instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read—I will call the *human Heart the horn book* used in that school—and I will call the *child able to read, the Soul* made from that *school* and its *hornbook*. Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul? A place where the Heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! Not merely is the Heart a hornbook, It is the Minds Bible, it is the Minds experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or Intelligence sucks its identity...If what I have said should not be plain enough, as I fear it may not be, I will put you in the place where I began in this series of thoughts—I mean, I began by seeing how man was formed by circumstances—and what are circumstances?—but touchstones of his Heart—? and what are touchstones? but proovings of his Heart? And what are proovings of his Heart but fortifiers or alters of his nature? and what is his altrered nature but hid Soul?—and what was his Soul before it came into the world and had these provings and alterations and perfectionings?—An Intelligence — without identity — and how is this identity to be made? Through the medium of the Heart? And how is the Heart to become this medium but in a world of circumstances?

IX. TO MISS JEFFREY[53]

Wednesday 9 June 1819

Wentworth Place

My Dear young Lady,

I am exceedingly obliged by your two letters—Why I did not answer your first immediately was that I have had a little aversion to the south of Devon from the continual remembrance of my brother Tom. On that account I do not return to my old lodgings in Hampstead though the people of the house have become friends of mind—This however I could think nothing of, it can do no more than keep one's thoughts employed for a day or two. I like your description of Bradley[54] very much

[51] Comus, *II, 476-78*
[52] Seen 49. above.
[53] Miss Jeffrey: A member of a family friendly to Keats, at Teignmouth, Devon. It is uncertain to which of the daughters of the family the letter is addressed.
[54] Bradley: in South Devon.

and I dare say shall be there in the course of the summer; it would be immediately but that a friend will ill health and to whom I am greatly attached call'd on me yesterday and proposed my spending a month with him at the back of the Isle of Wight. This is just the thing at present—the morrow will take care of itself—I do not like the name of Bishop's Teigntown—I hope the road from Teignmouth to Bradley does not lie that way —Your advice about the Indiaman is a very wise advice, because it justs suits me, though you are a little in the wrong concerning its destroying the energies of mind:[55] on the contrary it would be the finest thing in the world to strengthen them—Tobe thrown among people who care not for you, with whom you have no sympathies forces the mind upon its own resources, and leaves it free to make its speculations of the differences of human character and to class them with the calmness of a botanist. An Indiaman is a little world. One of the great reasons that the English have produced the finest writers in the world is, that the English world has ill-treated them during their lives and foster'd them after their deaths. They have in general been trampled aside into the bye paths of life and seen the festerings of society. They have not been treated like the Raphaels of Italy. And where is the Englishman and poet who has given a magnificent entertainment at the christening of one of his hero's horses as Boyardo [56] did? He had a castle in the Appenine. He was a noble poet of romance; not a miserable and mighty poet of the human Heart. The middle age of Shakespeare was all clouded over; his days were not more happy than Hamlet's who is perhaps more like Shakspeare himself in his common every day life than any other of his characters Ben—Johnson was a common Soldier and in the Low Countries, in the face of two armies, fought a single combat with a French trooper and slew him—For all this I will not go on board an Indiaman, nor for example's sake run my head into dark alleys: I dare say my discipline is to come, and plenty of it too. I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing; both from the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying pet-lamb.[57] I have put no more in print or you should have had it. You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an ode to Indolence. Why did you not make your long-haired sister put her great brown hard fist to paper and cross your letter ? Tell her when you write again that I expect chequer work—My friend Mr Brown is sitting opposite me employed in writing a life of *David.* He reads me passages as he writes them stuffing my infidel mouth as though I were a young rook—Infidel rooks do not provender with Elisha's ravens [58] If he goes on as he has begun your new church had better not proceed, for parsons will be superseeded—and of course the clerks must follow. Give my love to your mother with the assurance that I can never forget her anxiety for my brother Tom. Believe also that I shall ever remember our leaving-taking with you.

Ever sincerely yours
John Keats.

X. To BENJAMIN BAILEY
Saturday 14 Aug. 1819

We removed to Winchester for the convenience of a library and find it an exceeding pleasant town, enriched with a beautiful cathedrall and surrounded by a fresh-looking country. We are in tolerably good and cheap lodgings. Within these two months I have written 1500 lines, most of which besides many more of prior composition you will probably see by next winter. I have written two tales, one from Boccaccio call'd

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[55] Your. ..mind: Keats had been speculating about the advisability of becoming a surgeon on an East India trade ship. In an earlier letter to Miss Jeffrey, he had mentioned this as a possibility.

[56] Boyardo: Matteo Maria Boiardo (143494). an Italian poet who wrote chivalric romances based on the legends of Arthur and Charlemagne.

[57] Of. The letter to George and Georgiana Keats (Feb. 14-May 3, 1810), above, n.40, and the discussion in the headnote to *Lamia.*

[58] Elisha'a ravens: Elijah. not Elisha. was fed by the ravens (I Kings 17:6).

the Pot of Basil; and another call'ds. Agnes' Eve on a popular superstition; and a third call'd Lamia—half finished—I have also been writing parts of my Hyperion and completed 4 acts of a tragedy.[59] It was the opinion of most of my friends that I should never be able to write a scene.—I will endeavour to wipe away the prejudice I sincerely hope you will be pleased when my labours since we last saw each other shall reach you. One of my ambitions is to make as great a revolution in modern dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting—another to upset the drawling of the blue stocking literary world—if in the course of a few years I do these two things I ought to die content—and my friends should drink a dozen of claret on my tomb—I am convinced more and more every day that (excepting the human friend philosopher) [60] a fine writer is the most genuine being in the world. Shakspeare and the Paradise Lost every day become greater wonders to me. I look upon fine phrases like a lover. I was glad to see, by a passage in one of Brown's letters some time ago from the north that you were in such good spirits. Since that you have been married and in congratulating you I wish you every continuance of them. Present my respects to Mrs Bailey. This sounds oddly to me, and I dare say I do it awkwardly enough: but I suppose by this time it is nothing new to you—Brown's remembrances to you—As far as I know we shall remain at Winchester for a goodish while—

Ever your sincere friend
John Keats.

XI. To PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
Wednesday 16 Aug. 1820

Hampstead August 16th

My dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost overoccupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering hateful manner, therefore I must either voyage or journey to Italy as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed when I think that come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem;—which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the Cenci, as from yourself from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of; the poetry, and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now a days is considered the mammon. A modern work it is said must have a purpose, which may be the God—*an artist* must serve Mammon—he must have "self concentration" J selfishness perhaps. You I am sure will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist, and "load every rift" of your subject with ore.[61] The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furl'd for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of Endymion! whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards—I am pick'd up and sorted to a pip. My Imagination is a monastry and I am its monk—you must explain my metap[rs] to yourself. I am in expectation of Prometheus[62] every day. Could I have my own wish for its interest effected you would have it still in manuscript—or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first-blights, on Hampstead heath—I am "returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in

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[59] tragedy: *Otho the Great,* which was written rapidly, amid much distraction, and gives little indication of Keats's potential dramatic ability.
[60] excepting. ., philosopher: This exception should be kept in mind in reading *Lamia* and the *Fall of Hyperion.*
[61] Cf. Spenser, *Faerie Queen,*. II. vii. 28, p. 130.
[62] Prometheus: Shelley's verse drama, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820).

the volume [63] I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been publish'd but from a hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you I remain

most sincerely yours,
John Keats—

XII. To CHARLES BROWN
Thursday 30 Nov. 1820

Rome, 30 November 1820.

My dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine, summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, &c., walking with her,[64] and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me: he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George, for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness: and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn [65] is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam [66] I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost,—she is so like Tom. I can scarcely bid you goodbye, even in a letter; I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you!
John Keats.

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[63] volume: Keats's new volume, which contained *Lamia, Isabella, Eve of St. Agnes, Hyperion,* and the odes.,

[64] her: Fanny Brawne.

[65] Severn: Joseph Severn, a young painter who befriended Keats and nursed him in his last illness.

[66] See n. 47, above.

ERRATA
UNIT 22: THE AGE OF DRYDEN

Page No.	Line No.	Incorrect	Correct
7	17	Fiction	fiction
8	12	conflict,	conflict
	14	national,	national
	35	consious	conscious
9	6	has	his
	7	relations	relations,
	12	christian	Christian
	16	clergy	Clergy
	20	illuminating	illuminating.
	24	earth	earth,
	29	.....	(start separate line with) But
9	34	way,	way.
11	1	public'	public
12	19		(shift the line to the left hand margin)
	33	'the	the
	35	was	was,
13	8	wills	Will's
	14	scientists	Scientists
	17	my own apartment	'my own apartment'
14	14	Commonwealth	Commonwealth'
	20	goal	gaol
15	6	New	new
	8	respectively	respectively,
	11	books	books".
	15	christian	Christian
	38	Society for	Society for Promoting
		promoting christian knowledge	Christian Knowledge
16	6	afterwards them	afterwards change them
	39	end	and
18	30	'Eighteenth	Eighteenth
19	39	noun Augustus the Roman Emperor	noun, Augustus, the Roman Emperor,
	41	Classicism	classicism
	46	neoclassical	neo-classical
	47	renaissance	Renaissance
20	3	But	And
	12	poet	poet,
	31	satirist	satirists
	34	them	them,
21	9	virgil	Virgil
	17	criticism Rapim	criticism Rapin
	23	spirit,	spirit
	30	Curiously	curiously
	34	Revolted	revolted
	37	time	time.

Errata

2	3	eternal	eternal.
	30	unnatural	unnatural.
3	13	elegy	Elegy
		country	Country
	15	had	were
	16	his poetry	poetry
	18	had held	held
	31	had excelled	had been excelled
24	15	wordsworth	Wordsworth
	30	verse	verse.
	31	Tis	'Tis
	39	Jolinson	Johnson
25	3	He	'he
	3	astonoshing	astonishing
	6	'British	British
	15-16		(O sacred.. insolence) to be put together
26	6	self-explanatory	self-explanatory.
	11	'greatness	'greatness'
	28	essay	Essay
		criticism	Criticism (insert after Criticism)is in verse
27	2	spirt	spirit
	3	perhaps,	perhaps
	7	christianity	Christianity
	46	Men not afraid of God, afraid of me	'Men not afraid of God, afraid of me'
28	17	Lord	Lord
	21	The identify	to identify
		has never	has, however, never
29	Question 2©	Victoria	Victorian
30	Q.7	age	Age
	Q.17	Virgil epic	Virgil's epic
31	S.No.2 of books	criticism	Criticism

UNIT 23: JOHN DRYDEN

Page No.	Line No.	Incorrect	Correct
32	7	literature	literature
33	12	of	to
34	42	Came	came
35	8	en'n	ev'n
35	39	popish	Popish
	47	Commons	Commons.
		in	Its
	50	Shaftesbury	Shaftesbury,
37	5	Hind	hind
39	10	english	English
	41	humour	Humours
40	20	age	age,
	30	sense?'	sense?
	35	said	said,
	42	will	Will
		prevail	Prevail
	47	in love with	in love with
41	17	with conquest	with the conquest
	29	resentment	resentment'
	45	cormic	comic
42	3	Kind	kind
		tellye	tell ye
	6	what was	what I was
	10	Tis	'Tis
	13	wit.	Wit
	26	yon	you
	27	compared	complained
	32	Farewell	'Farewell Ungrateful
		Ungrateful Traitor	Traitor'
42	41	art	art,
		It	it
	43	Soft	soft
	44	Johnson	Jonson
	46	plays	plays.
		Interestingly	Interestingly
43	5	inrealised	unrealised
	13	verso-satire	verse-satire
	27	'emotionally	emotionally
	30	fountain-head	fountainhead
	32	'the	the
		who:	who
	33	composition:	composition.
	35	essay	Essay
	36	1768	1668
		english	English
	40	Main	main
	47	in French	French
42	2	poets	poets.
	4	Johnson's	Jonson's
	14	if	it
	28	essay	Essay
	44	age	age,
	51	Janus of poet	Janus of a poet

rrata

45	9	influence	influence.
	10	Aristolic	Aristotle
	15	realised	realised,
	16	theres	three
	17	translator	translation
	21	pleeses	pleases
	27	comedy	comedy,
	28	Chauer's	Chaucer's
	33	buffonery	buffoonery
	34	painting	Painting
	39	tragedy	tragedy,
	44	Poem	Poem,
46	33	delicate'	delicate
	40	spenser	Spenser
	42	original	original'
	50	Canterbusy	Canterbury
47	3	life-liness	liveliness
	17	in	is
48	11	Weakness	weakness
	27	bestow's	bestowed
	30	sane	same
	42	imperialism	imperialism,
49	18	entitles	entitled
	21	enlogies	enlogise
50	16	state	state,
	24	Surfi's	Swift's
	29	have	....
	36	situation	situation.
51	10	life	life,
	Q.4	polities	politics
52	13	life	Life
	15	of	on

UNIT 24 MAC FLECKNOE

Page No.	Line No.	Incorrect	Correct
53	9	Poetry	Poetry?
	between insert 14 and 15		24.6.4 Conclusion
54	18	The waste land	The Waste Land
	26	Consequently,	Consequently
55	30	variety	varity
	46	Know	know
56	6	whigs	Whigs
	9	for	far
	29	has	had
60	12	transition	translation
61	1	Poetry	Poetry?
	36	His	Dryden's
63	27	land	Land
	35	said	Said
	40	satire	Satire
64	5	title	title.
65	22	roses	roses,
	30	Devls	Devils
66	note to L61	joy	Boy
69	note to L63-64	play	play.
70	28	the Mac	Mac
71	3	true	turn
	14	action	unction
	23	feel	feet
	after 35 ...		(insert) 24.6.4.Conclusion
	44	loud,	loud
72	1	has	had
	32	history used	history is used
	42	unify,	unify
73	2	Purcell	Pucell
	39	Keat's	Keats's

APPENDIX I

Page No.	Line No.	Incorrect	Correct
104	20	shadwell	Shadwell
	30	though	Thou
	37	what	that
105	59	more	more.
	77	punks	Pukes
	83	clinches	cliches
106	8	true	truce
	29	his	him
	53-54		(Join the two lines together
107	6	Johnson's	Jonson's
	9	Johnson	Jonson
	36	open	pen
	37	purchse	purchase
109	28	flery	fiery

UTTAR PRADESH
RAJARSHI TANDON OPEN UNIVERSITY

MAEN-106
British Poetry

Block

3

THE VICTORIAN POETS: BROWNING, D.G. AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI & OSCAR WILDE

UNIT 36
The Victorian Age: Selected Studies

Unit 37
Robert Browning: Life and Aspirations

Unit 38
Robert Browning: Two Early Poems

Unit 39
Two Poems from *Men and Women*

Unit 40
The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Christina Georgina Rossetti

Unit 41
Oscar Wilde: The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Appendix I Poems of Robert Browning 92

Sordello in Mantua
Porphyria's Lover
The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church
'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'
Fra Lippo Lippi

II Poems of Dante Gabriel & Christina Rossetti

My Sister's Sleep
The Blessed Damozel
Goblin Market

III A Poem of Oscar Wilde
The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Supplementary Readings

The Poetry of Barbarism, George Santayana
Browning, G.K. Chesterton
The Private Life of Robert Browning, Richard D Altick
Browning and Victorian Poetry of Sexual Love, Isobel Armstrong
Browning's *Childe Roland*, Harold Golder
The Life of Fra Filippo Lippi, Giorgio Vasari
Meditations in the time of Civil War, W.B. Yeats
Nineteen Nineteen. W.B. Yeats

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BLOCK VIII - INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Age in English literature takes its name, as you know, from Queen Victoria of Great Britain who ascended the throne in 1837 and was monarch until her death in 1901. However, when we talk of the Victorian Age we have the period of 1830-1900 in mind. Prior to this was the Age of a Romanticism about which you read in the previous two blocks.

1830 marks the beginning of the Victorian period in English literature. In 1832 the Reform Bill introduced in the parliament in the previous year was passed. It was one of the most memorable events in the history of civil liberties of the British people since the signing of the Magna Carta by King John at Runnymede in 1215. By the former Act inequalities in the system of representation was removed and franchise was extended by giving representation to the new centres of population. The act also abolished slavery in the British dominions. This was followed by the Second Reform Act in 1867 which more than doubled the electorate. The successive acts of reform in 1872 and 1884 further democratised the country which ensured not ony the well-being and prosperity of the British people as a whole but also their stability as a society.

The immediate result of the reform act of 1832, however, was the rise of the Chartist Movement between 1837 and 1848. This was a working-class political movement. The working-class had been left out of franchise in 1832 for lack of the property qualification. Hence they demanded universal suffrage which was one of the six points on their 'People's charter'. The condition of the poor found eloquent utterance in the novels of Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81) - the trilogy *Coningsby* - *Sybil* (1853), and *Tancred* - Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) - *Mary Barton* (1848), *Cranford* (1853) and *North and South* (1855) - and Charles Kingsley (1819-75) *Yeast* (1848), and *Alton Locke* (1850). However, Victorian literature is marked by a spirit of reconciliation and compromise.

Just as the condition of the poor found expression in Victorian novels and pamphlets its conservatism on the 'woman question' was voiced in poetry and prose. The king in Tennyson's *The Princess* expressed the conservative opinion about women's role in the society:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man to command and woman to obey.

This traditional view of woman was questioned by John Stuart Mill (1806-73) in *The Subjection of Women*. He pointed out that 'what is now called the nature of women is eminently an artificial thing – the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others.'

Notwithstanding the "elitist" ideology of Mill according to many an upper middle-class Victorian the woman's proper place was the hearth and the heart and it was this attitude that was epitomized by the title of that immensely popular poem *The Angel in the House* (1854-62) by Coventry Patmore (1823-96).

The position of the woman in Victorian society influenced as much as it was influenced by its attitude towards the family. An Englishman's home had always been his castle. However, now it was seen also as a temple, a place of peace and tranquillity. 'This is the true nature of home' wrote John Ruskin in 'Of Queen's Gardens':

> - it is the place of Peace, the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed either by husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by household gods, so far it indicates the name, and fulfills the praise of, home.

Ruskin's diction is significant. The home is a 'vestal temple.' The Victorians valued the purity and chastity of the woman. In stark contrast with these noble aims was the existence in 1850 of eight thousand prostitutes known to the police in London alone. However, people as disparate as Charles Dickens the novelist, William Gladstone the prime minister, and Christina Rossetti the poet, were campaigning with religious zeal to "rescue" them.

Perhaps the best symbol of Puritanism of the Victorian people was their joyless Sunday. In 1837, a Sunday observance Bill was introduced in the Parliament. (It, by the way, was strenuously opposed by Charles Dickens.) Although the bill did not get passed the sober Sunday ritual got established by custom, if not by law.

Although no major Victorian writer was an evangelist it would be difficult to name even one who was not touched by this Low Church movement within the church of England. George Eliot could be cited as an example of this legacy. After having abondoned Christianity and lived for years with a married man she went on to analyse problems of conscience in her novels. Significantly her first published work was a translation of David Friedrich Strauss's (1808-74) *Das Leban Jesu* (1835-6). Strauss had subjected the gospel accounts of Jesus to close examination and found them based on myth rather than historical facts. Her study of Strauss, confirmed Eliot's break from Christianity.

If on the one hand there was the enlightened opinion of persons such as George Eliot (about whom you would read more in MEG-03) on the other there were "fundamentalist" tendencies, as *we* would call it; raising its head at Oxford. In 1833 John Keble (1792-1866) the Oxford professor of poetry (1831-41) delivered a sermon on national apostasy. In it he criticized the prevalent Erastian and latitudinarian tendencies of the Anglican Church. (Erastus or Thomas Liebler (1524-83) a Heidelberg physician had opposed the use of excommunication. He was supposed to have held the view that ecclesiastical power should be subordinated by secular.) The Oxford Movement, as it came to be known, sought to defend the Anglican Church (or Church of England) as a divine institution with an independent status and to revive the High Church traditions of the seventeenth century. A High Church person lays emphasis on rituals, the saving grace of the sacraments and the priesthood as opposed to the Low Churchman. Inspired by Keble's sermon John Henry Newman (1801-90), and R.H.Froude (1803-36) launched their series *Tracts for the Times* in 1833. The Oxford Movement thus began to be called the *Tractarian Movement.* The Oxford Movement helped revive interest in medieval and the seventeenth century church which influenced Tennyson, William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites

You have six units in this block: the first unit will give you a background of the Victorian age. This should help you appreciate its poetry in its proper perspective. In unit 36 we also provide you with models for your own essays that you would be required to write for your examiners. We also give you a model term-paper in this unit.

Besides the introductory unit on the age you will read three units on Robert Browning who was one of the three major poets of his age and one of the great poets of any

time. The other two were Lord Tennyson and Matthew Arnold. You should try to read some of their poems on your own. You may like to write a term paper on an aspect of the age and another on Lord Tennyson and the third one on *In Memoriam* which is considered a great Victorian poem. Besides being a Victorian Browning can also be considered a pre-modernist.

So would Oscar Wilde, whose *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* was a controversial poem in its day but has since then been appreciated. You would read the poem in unit 41.

The mediaevalist tendency of the Victorian age finds representation in the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites (discussed in unit 40). No matter how backward looking they might have been it is through them that we can appreciate an important tendency of the age, i.e. its love for the Gothic.

The frontispiece of this block is Turner's 'Rain, Steam and Speed - the Great Western Railway'. It was done in 1844. If on the one hand the creamy imposto appears to emulate Rembrandt, on the other it seems to anticipate Whistler (1834-1903) and the Impressionists. If the dancing maidens on the bank of the Thames and the plough in a distant field bespeak a society that is fading before the impact of the scientific revolution, the hare racing before the fiery dragon of the train opposes natural to man-made velocity. The present piece by Turner is the third on this course by him and you may compare the three works to discover the impact of the age on the mind of a visual artist of the calibre of Turner.

Editorial

UNIT 36 THE VICTORIAN AGE : SELECTED STUDIES

Structure

36.0 Objectives
36.1 Introduction
36.2 Writing a short essay
36.2.1 'Victorian Complacency'
36.3 Answering a Critical Question
36.3.1 "The great Victorians ... variety of method". Discuss
36.4 Attempting a term-paper
36.4.1 'The Religious Temper of the Victorian Age'
36.5 Let's Sum Up
36.6 Answers to Exercises
36.7 Suggested Reading

36.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- recognise the major and minor poets of the Victorian Age;
- examine the cultural background of the Victorian Age;
- answer critical questions on your examination paper in a better way; and
- write essays or term papers on this course.

36.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first units of previous blocks we have generally discussed the background of the respective periods in detail. However, we did not tell you how to answer examination questions or write essays for yourcounsellors. Some of you might need that kind of help. In this unit our focus would be on *your* style of writing for your examiners.

Most of you should be studying this block in all earnestness in August/September with the final exam just three or four months away. So we have fashioned this unit to cater to that need of yours. We are going to present a model short essay (or a note) and an answer of a critical question in this unit. Besides we are also going to provide you with a long essay or term-paper as we expect you to write some. Needless to say that in this unit we are going to prepare you for the final exam with respect to the Victorian Age in British poetry but you will be able to apply the skills you acquire here and the insights you gain while reading this unit to the subjects of other blocks and units of this course.

36.2 WRITING A SHORT ESSAY

If you are asked to write a short essay or a note on one of the topics out of three or four given on your question paper then how would you do it ? You should prepare a number of topics on a given period and try to understand the focus of such a topic and ways and means of developing the central point. You may have to substantiate your

point with the help of your arguments, details of events, and examples from the poetry of that period. Below is a short essay on 'Victorian Complacency'. Please go through it.

36.2.1 Victorian Complacency

The Victorians in general and the mid-Victorians in particular have been criticised for complacency, self-satisfaction, squeamishness, and snobbery. If these were true, there their were good reasons for them. When the great exhibition opened in the year 1851, the whole nation suddenly realized that a unique thing had happened. Objects of art and curiosity from the entire world were assembled below one roof and London had become the center of the world, if not the hub of mankind. Tennyson, the poet laureate's lines in 'Locksley Hall' reflected the mood of the nation very well:

> For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see
> Saw the Vision of the world and all the wonder that would be
> Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails
> Pilots of the purple twilight dropping down with costly bales:
> Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
> In the Parliament of man the Federation of the world.

The Victorians saw that they could call the 'parliament' of the world and preside over the federation of nations.

In architecture itself the Crystal Palace was a novelty to he built in the fourteenth year of Queen Victoria's reign. Thackeray, who had expressed his opinion in favour of Republicanism and against Chartism, wrote an ode on the Palace:

> As though t'were by a wizard's rod
> A blazing art of palace bright
> Raised from the grass to meet the sun.

In many things, the Victorians saw that their dreams and their achievements were beyond the wildest dreams of mankind.

The industrial revolution had brought great wealth for all sections of the society. The Railways had transformed the country. Tennyson, seated in the first train from Liverpool to Birmingham wrote:

> Let the great world spin for ever,
> Down the singing grooves of change.

The railways had in fact brought about a great change. New houses made of red bricks, cement, lime and welsh slate had sprung up; heavy and ugly in look, but nevertheless a proof of England's economic progress.

Victorian complacency comes to the surface when we witness their economic progress not being matched by their sense of beauty and their scientific discoveries not being commensurate with their ability to doubt their own ardours. The old light furniture of the eighteenth century, that was undoubtedly a proof of grace, good taste and social charm was upholstered and puffed up beyond all proportions. Painting and sculpture had devoted its energy at making likenesses but the invention of the photographic camera, with which they could not compete in portraying likenesses lef them for a time without direction. It was with the experiments of Whistler in the United States that the Victorians set out to paint Impressionistic paintings. In music of course the great age found its peers which culminated in the 1870's with the Sullivan operas that made a dig against the peers and the poor alike.

The Victorian age was peculiarly religious. Perhaps the age can be understood better by an understanding of their religion and their social and political reforms. Evangelicalism permeated Anglicanism, Methodism, Presbyterianism, Catholicism, and all alike. The age produced Gladstone, General Gordon and Livingstone all pioneers in different fields but all held by their solid foundations in Christianity. Trevelyan in the last chapter of his *English Social History* says that the Victorians were truly Greek or Athenian in their pride and confidence in this period of their history and the following lines perhaps best express their self-confidence which in essence is a translation from the Greek writers:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more
> But more of reverence in us dwell
> That mind and soul according well
> May make one music as before
> But vaster.

The Victorians had unbounded faith in their learning and pride in their accomplishments. It was not surprising that they believed in a living Deity. The poor children in their Sunday Schools read:

> A is for angel who praises the lord
> B stands for Bible that teaches god's word
> C stands for Church to which righteous men go
> D stands for devil the cause of all woe.

These lines leave an impression of peculiar complacency among the poor.

Very much the same impression can be had from the books of Samuel Smiles who was the best seller of the year 1859. It was in that year that *Self-Help* was published and 120,000 copies were sold within a few weeks. In the next thirty years about 240,000 copies were sold. His other titles on similar themes were, *Character, Thrift* and *Duty*. The Victorians loved to hear long sermons in the church and preachings from their authors and the priests and writers of the time gave them instructions in profuse quantities.

This mood of self-satisfaction was not challenged at first even by the publication of *The Origin of the Species* of Charles Darwin; published in the same year as *Self-Help*. Besides socialism Science put forward before the Victorians, a new field of cooperation with Europe. Tennyson in *In Memoriam* (1851) surveyed the entire history of mankind from the time of creation to the fifty years of progress in the nineteenth century that was behind him. Asserting his faith in the scientists Tennyson wrote :

> For they to eye an eye shall look
> On knowledge; under whose command is earth
> And earth's; and in their hand
> Is nature like an open book.

But this joy was punctured soon, by the revolutionary ideas on the descent of the human species on the one hand and the Higher Criticism of the Bible on the other. The new *Life of Jesus* presented by David Friedrich Strauss in Germany brought about a spiritual bewilderment in Victorian England. Tennyson gave voice to this spiritual uncertainty in his poetry :

> I falter where I firmly trod
> And falling with my weight of cares
> Upon the great world altar stairs
> And slope through darkness upto god.

I stretch lame hands of faith and grope
And gather dust and chaff and call
To what I feel is lord of all
And faintly trust the larger hope.

The hope now in God was weaker than before. The confidence in the Bible that teaches God's word was gone.

But it was not in Religion alone that the confidence was shaken. Carlyle showed how the Victorians had become 'Spinning Arachnes' and 'building beavers' who made money but at the cost of the sense of wonder. He suspected the liberal tendencies of his generation and like a Hebrew prophet warned that their regeneration did not lie in parliamentary reforms but in searching out their true god.

Matthew Arnold, the son of the great head master of Rugby, saw clearly in which sense his own age had lost in the bargain with the last. He pointed it out in the following lines of 'The Scholar Gypsy' :

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily on the sparkling Thames:
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry its divided aims,
Its head o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife –

The complacency of the previous years came to an end in 1870 when in a resounding victory of Prussia against France in the Battle of Sedan the emperor Napoleon III himself became a prisoner of Bismarck. Now onwards England could not dare attempt a victory like that at Crimea (1854-'56) in Europe. In Africa its position was challenged by Germany and the Victorian complacency was at an end. Besides Germany, Italy also emerged from the victory at Sedan as a unified powerful nation which could challenge France and England in North Africa. Across the Atlantic, the railways in the United States and the repealed Corn-law (in 1846) made it easy to flush English markets with cheap foreign corn and threaten English agriculture. The Industrial Revolution in other lands made the Victorians review their stand on free trade and demand fair trade instead. The protective tariff walls in Germany gave a direction to other countries on the continent and the scramble for an empire became a national imperative. The colonies were no longer considered mill stones round the neck of the mother country. Thus the Britishers reviewed the progress they had made in the previous twenty years and disapproved of most of it. The Victorians had been somewhat blind and complacent but soon woke up to reality.

Now that you have read the essay you can imagine and then plan what you would be required to do to write some essay of the above type on the Victorian age, or any other age for that matter. You need not panic because such preparations are often done on one or two periods and good examiners make sure that they do not leave out any one period on the question paper. You would be able to exercise your choice. What is, however, required in this case is that you must remember a few passages from the poetry of the period you are preparing for your final, i.e. term end examination.

Now do the exercise given below.

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. Find out about the Crimean War. What was it ? Write in no more than 15 words

2. Who was Napolean III?

3. In which year were *The Origin of the Species* and *Self-Help* published and who wrote them ?

4. Did you discover any difference in the style of an essay and a lesson? What are those?

36.3 ANSWERING A CRITICAL QUESTION

The difference between an essay and a critical question is in their different focii. The essay has a well-defined focus of attention which is decided upon by the author (i.e. you). In a critical question a point of view is provided by the examiner. Such questions have a few twists and curves in them and you must understand all of them and not overlook any in your answer. It is not necessary either to agree or disagree with the point of view of the critic. However, you must substantiate your point of view with suitable examples (i.e. passages from poetry) and short and appropriate quotations. Inapt quotations will damage the quality of your answer. Below you will read one such answer. Go through it and then ask yourself how the pretended examinee has answered the critical question and how you would plan your own answers. Don't overlook the content either. Rather, your first reading should be for the content and not the style.

36.3.1 'The great Victorian poets lacked the fire and passion which we find in the poets of the Romantic Revival, but they excelled them in breadth of outlook and variety of method.' Discuss.

The great Victorian poets are undisputedly Tennyson, Browning and Matthew Arnold and each in his own way was influenced by the masters of the Romantic age. Early Tennyson was very powerfully under the influence of Keats and in certain respects even excelled him. The sensuousness that we find in 'moss'd cottage tree' of 'Ode to Autumn' becomes in 'Mariana' - 'The cluster'd marish-mosses crept'. 'The Lotus-Eaters', 'Recollections of the Arabian Nights' and 'Oenone' show Tennyson's proneness for the suave mellifluousness of Spenser through Keats. Keats had appreciated the 'Spenserian vowels that elope with ease' in his youthful 'Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke'. Tennyson constantly also kept working over the sonorousness of the English language and succeeded in exploring the musical quality of his native speech. Keats wrote in a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds after he abandoned *Hyperion* – 'English must be kept'. While we find the influence of Keats on early Tennyson we do not fail to discern the latter's untiring experiment with sound, the result of which was the memorable lines of 'The Brook' which as it were, for its novelty, became a type in itself :

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down the valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.



Lord Tennyson

Any one who sets out to cite lines from this poem can hardly check the temptation of going on. What, however, Tennyson gained in technique – the lines cited convey little to our intellect other than the thoughtless rush of the brook on a craggy path – he lost in the quality of sensuousness that Keats had. While we read lines from 'Autumn' we experience the 'ripeness to the core' or taste the grapes bursting against

our palate or look with attraction to the 'unravished bride of quietness' or the heaving heart of the beloved's breast in the 'Bright Star' sonnet. To say this is not to mean that Tennyson provides us with no compensation. Hardly did any Romantic poet, not even Shelley in 'Epipsychedion', attempt a variation on the theme of love as we find in 'Enoch Arden'. Wordsworth's 'Michael', if compared with 'Enoch Arden' from the point of narrative suffers on at least two grounds. The former narrative is less sustained and the philosophy or belief of Wordsworth is too obtrusive. As an extension of the range of poetry Tennyson's achievement in writing on themes like King Arthur or the Arabian Nights or the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' is really admirable.

If Tennyson's first poems were Keatsian, Browning wrote his early poems under the spell of Shelley. *Paracelsus* and *Pauline* are at least two most important poems of this phase. Soon, Browning was to become more confident and the liberal ideal, the scientific changes and a desire to explore the English language to its depths; not for the resonance and mellifluousness as Tennyson desired but for a nakedness of speech of a highly compelling quality, became his all consuming pursuit. Poems of *Men and Women* are all representative of this later phase. While one reads the account of his wife from the Duke of Ferrara, whose picture he got painted by some priest named Pandolf in 'My Last Duchess' one is teased into endless thought. Did the Duke get the Duchess murdered ? Was it the infidelity of the Duchess that invited her end ? Or, was it the pride –

> She thanked men - good! but thanked
> Somehow - I know not how - as if she ranked,
> My gift of a nine-hundred year-old name
> With anybody's gift.

- that brought about her end? These are just some of the questions. Inquiries multiply as the poem unrolls, clothed in a language adequate to the subject –

> This grew; I gave commands;
> Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
> As if alive.

Even when read in their contexts there will perhaps be little in Romantic poetry that can be read with equal thrill than the haunting lines of the Duke :

> Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
> Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
> Much the same smile ?

And it was this quality – humility and culture perhaps - that was misinterpreted by the Duke with fatal consequences for the Duchess. In breadth of vision, in its wider sympathies, in its greater awareness of the social changes, Browning's poetry far outstrips the poetry of the Romantic poets. In its manipulation of the dramatic monologue, Browning has hardly anyone to match him. Wordsworth was involved with the early stages of the French Revolution but hardly any poem stands out from the corpus of his poetry as does 'Home thoughts from Abroad' or 'Home thoughts from Sea'. *The Ring and the Book* presents one murder from the point of view of nine characters who differ widely among themselves.

Compared with Tennyson Matthew Arnold presents a much sober picture. He, with his sympathy for the classical masters could not love the more fiery ones among the Romantics. His ideal was Wordsworth :

Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power.

For Matthew Arnold, with Wordsworth's death the 'last poetic voice became dumb' -



Matthew Arnold

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remained to come:

The last poetic voice is dumb -
We stand today by Wordsworth's tomb.

This influence was reflected in the serenity of Matthew Arnold's poems - 'Quiet Work', 'A Question: To Fausta' and 'Switzerland'. But it is much more than what Wordsworth had heard in his 'Intimations of Immortality'– from the winds –

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

Somewhat like Sophocles on the shores of the Aegean, the disillusioned Arnold hears no soothing voice while he stands on Dover Beach –

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The thought that the sound of waves evokes is far more realistic than the winds spurred in Wordsworth or Keats. The latter wrote in *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*:

'Or thou might'st better listen to the wind,
'Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
'Though it blows legend laden thro' the trees.

Matthew Arnold only heard the 'still sad music of humanity' as Wordsworth might have said.

The intensity born out of the association of the Romantic poets with nature and the individual passions of men is not to be found in the poetry of the Victorian poets but Tennyson's wider response to a variety of emotions attached with love, war, and medievalism: Browning's treatment of the themes of patriotism, liberation and the complex psychology of men: and Arnold's criticism of life with its portrait of the Victorian 'Sick hurry and divided aims' or his vision of his generation as hanging between "one dead and the other powerless to be born" is not to be found in the poetry of the Romantic Revival. What is also of the highest import is the fact that each of the Victorian poets discovered a suitable medium for himself – Tennyson's exquisite discovery of the music of the English language; Browning's discovery of the dramatic monologue and Arnold's revesal to the classical model, thus inflicting a simplicity over his medium are only some of the elements of the expanding range of themes and techniques used by the Victorian poets.

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Who were the major Victorian poets and who were they most influenced by ?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Name at least five major minor and two minor Victorian poets.

_____

_____

_____

36.5 ATTEMPTING A TERM-PAPER

In a note (or short essay) on a given topic on an examination question paper you don't have to give the exact reference such as the page number of your source from which you have cited a passage in prose or verse. We don't do that while teaching either in a face-to-face situation or through the distance mode. However, you have to cite your sources on a term-paper or long essay such as the one on 'The Religious Temper of the Victorian Age' that you are now going to read. The style of presentation in the essays that you read earlier and in the one you are now going to read remains more or less the same. However, a term-paper is written with access to books and journals while you are writing them so you don't have to remember the passages you quote. The danger, however, is to be unable to resist the temptation of copying in extension and fail to overcome the attraction of the passages of other people which will neither advance your argument nor provide another dimension to your thesis. In short, they will create a hodge-podge.

On this course we have favoured the idea of writing three term papers because we wish to encourage you to do some research and begin to learn to present your material in a scholarly fashion. This is a modest beginning but we believe that it would be useful for you in future. Now read the essay attentively.

36.4.1 The Religious Temper of the Victorian Age

If we just scan the figures of censuses: the number of churches and chapels that were built; the money that was spent on holy activities; the bills for the reform of church that were passed by the parliament; the propaganda that was carried out by the various denomination; the tracts loaded with controversies, that came frequently before the reading public; we will have no doubt left about the extraordinary activity that the English people indulged in on the issue of religion in the Victorian period. In matters of morality Prince Albert was a stickler and it was he, 'who insisted on spotless character, the queen not caring a straw about it'[1], the Duke of Wellington told the diarist Charles Greville. The prince was 'extremely strait-laced'[2] and royal dinner parties became a conspicuous model of decorum. Sunday observance[3] and Bible reading were works in which the whole nation took part. The prosperity of the English merchant was due to his honesty, his shrinking from ostentation and his thrifty ways. What he did not spend on pleasure he saved for investment in works both temporal and divine.

The most important aspect of the religious outlook of the Victorians was their emphasis on conduct. A sentence in the life of Cardinal Manning (1808-1892) by Leslie Shane is one that could be repeated *mutatis mutandis*, of the majority of the famous Victorians :

> At Totteridge he learnt of the *Book of Judgment*, and endeavoured to conceal himself from God under a writing table[4].

To a Victorian trader, Last Judgment appeared as real as the week's balance sheet, hell and heaven as certain as tomorrow's sunrise and evangelicalism made otherworldliness an everyday proposition, as real as his business enterprise.

Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;
For God's all seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy works and ways.'

could have been said by most Victorians.

Evangelicalism, however, was one creed that permeated all denominations. It emphasized the centrality and authority of the Bible. It laid stress on the faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. It revived the simplicity of the Gospel. The evangelists in the nineteenth century were descendants (in a way) of the Methodists in the eighteenth century, although the former was a movement inside the Church and the latter ramified into various small sects. It was the zealous attitude of the Methodists that all denominations adopted. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (1801-85) made his contribution to factory reforms, William Wilberforce (1759-1833) to the abolition of slavery and Hannah More (1745-1833) to education. On certain issues they could enlist the support of the entire nation and in this fashion went a long way in ending cynicism. Very few Victorians could regard the world's wickedness with equanimity. Lord Melbourne and Robert Surtees (1779-1834) appear rather as survivals from an earlier generation and Disraeli as a brilliant eccentric. This enthusiasm can be seen in certain reforms of Parliament, liberalism of Gladstone and the brilliant foreign policy of Palmerston and after him of Disraeli. The above mentioned facts, of course, had other influencing factors, like the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, the American and the French revolutions, the European revolution of 1830 and 1848, progress of science in Europe in general and England in particular and Britain's comparative peace and supremacy in Europe. Evangelicalism itself might have been born out of these factors but it contributed not a little to embolden the society. Perhaps its best specimen is the Clapham Sect[6]. The distant influence of the sect can be seen on T.B. Macaulay, Fitzjames and Leslie Stephen, Robert and Samuel Wilberforce, and in a later generation, E.M Forster, and Virginia Woolf who were powerful people in handing down excellence as their inheritance, force as their prize. Dr. Johnson, who died in 1784, could be taken as a devout eighteenth-century intellectual at his best. But even he believed with sad sincerity that schemes of improvement are generally absurd. Clapham in the nineteenth century, though well aware that the world is corrupt, believed that it could be changed.

The accent on the Bible as a source of guidance in life, underlined the importance of authority and an object of worship for all Englishmen. Somehow the Bible could not remain as sacrosanct as it was in the hands of the brothers John and Charles Wesley and George Whitfield in the eighteenth century. The **superstructure** of a code of conduct built on the basis of a particular book of the **Bible** could clash with a similar one built on the basis of another. For the common **man the** authority of the Bible appeared confused. Darwin's theories on the origin of species, natural selection and descent of man on the one hand and the Tubingen school of Higher Criticism on the other, shook the faith of the more enlightened public in the Bible as the authentic word of God. Darwin's theory was reduced to the simple controversy over man's descent from monkeys. The researches of David Friedrich Strauss(1808-74) in Germany and Ernest Emert Renan (1823-72) in France shook the foundations on which the reverence of the people for the Bible stood. The archaeologists and anthropologists produced evidence from their study of earth formation which revealed the inadequacy of the Biblical story of creation. Renan's extensive researches in Palestine convinced him that the Bible was no revealed word of God but the result of an evolutionary growth from primitive mythology and that Christ was an unhappy deluded man. Strauss's *Das Leban Jesu* (1863) was translated into English by George Eliot and of the three words – 'God, Immortality, Duty – She pronounced with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second* and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*'[7]. Duty, as

the Victorians conceived it was a strain in their religious makeup which remained even when their faith in Christianity vanished.

The two commandments of Christian morality – 'Love thy creator' and 'Love thy brothers' – remained important in some ways till the end. The father in the family was a terrible force to reckon with. This we observe in the biographies of the age. It was difficult to disagree with one's father. The second commandment took a unique expression in the activities of many nonconformist sects. The anti-slavery movement the poor law, the factory and church reforms for the promotion of education, philosophic radicalism, Christian Socialism, Guild and Fabian Socialism were all expressions in various forms of the commandment that exhorts a good Christian to love one's neighbour as oneself.

Late in the century, when disillusionment and pessimism were fast descending on the once complacent Victorian people and when the elite took refuge in the cult of beauty, or imperialism, the moulds remained the same. Their new ideals continued to reinvigorate them and give them a sense of purpose with a force that the Bible had done before. The desire to obey the dictates of authority and a streak of selflessness was present in the philosophy of the imperialists. When Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) exhorted the Americans in 1899 to take up the 'White man's burden' in the Philippines, it was not for the benefit of the Filipinos but to test their own manhood:

> Take up the White man's burden -
> Send forth the best ye breed -
> Go bind your sons to exile
> To serve your captives' need;
> To wait in heavy harness
> On fluttered folk an wild -
> Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
> Half devil and half child.[8]

He was convinced about the future of the people who were under the British that they would degenerate into chaos just as the British themselves did, after the withdrawal of the Romans, centuries ago. In the 'Recessional' (1897) he remembers the days of splendour of the Roman Empire with a haunting sense of a parallel:

> Far-called, our navies melt away;
> On dune and headland sinks the fire:
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre ![9]

Rudyard Kipling, William Henley (1849-1903) and Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) felt an adoration for some authority. Occasionally it was the queen's but very often it was a vague ideal of the empire, the interests of the ruled, the Gods of the hosts, the need of conformity to principles even if the rules of the game became an end in themselves. The 'Recessional' is the haunting cry of an evangelical sensibility that has lost faith in God but not in the things that were taught by his faith.

> If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
> Wild tongues that have not thee in awe,
> Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
> Or lesser breeds without the Law –
> Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
> Lest we forget – lest we forget![10]

Kipling was a typical evangelist born late. And Kipling's generation was a product of the early evangelical *Zeitgeist*. There is a thread connecting the religious activists like Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and Charles Kingsley (1819-1936) who did have some faith in some type of God on the one hand and these stoic activities like Henley,

Housman (1859-1936), Newbolt and Kipling who accepted all the paraphernalia of the elder generation without, of course, the presiding deity on the other.

In this respect even the Aesthetes were not different from the others of their time. They insisted that technical processes were more important than the purpose or content. This is not different from Kipling's suggestion in 'The Galley-Slave':

> It was merry in the galley, for we revelled now and then –
> If they wore us down like cattle, faith we fought and loved like men!
> As we snatched her through the water, so we snatched a minute's bliss,
> And the mutter of the dying never spoiled the lover's kiss.

A little later he says:

> Bear witness, once my comrades, what a hard hit gang were we –
> The servants of the sweep–head, but the masters of the sea !
> By the hands that drove her forward as she plunged and yawed and sheered,
> Woman, Man, or God or Devil, was there anything we feared ?[11]

Somewhat alike the galley slaves and soldiers were the men and women in the plays of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). The wit combats of Wilde's plays appear as an effort to reduce all life to style where as those in the Restoration comedies they can be seen to be in reaction to the over religious, even hypocritical atmosphere of the earlier generation. The love of the late Victorians for rules and of the Edwardians as well, for that matter, was not different in this respect – in the world of attitudes – and was a close cousin of Victorian public school civil service morality of holding on. The outlook that produced Sir Thomas Arnold and his students at Rugby was a part of the spirit of the age. In face of disgust and disillusionment, even apparent futility, a White Man had to obey the commands of the leader, if the empire was to remain a reality. 'Rugby Chapel' is a classic poem of the age that presents this outlook at its best:

> Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
> Follow your steps as ye go.
> Ye fill up the gaps in our files
> Strengthen the wavering line,
> Stablish, continue our march,
> On, to the bound of the waste,
> On, to the city of God.[12]

The evangelical note of endurance, endeavour, and struggle can be seen coming to fruition in the late Victorian age among the imperialists and aesthetes. The sentiment, as it came to seed, is perfectly expressed in Henley's following lines from 'England, My England':

> What have I done for you,
> England, my England?
> What is there I would not do,
> England, my Own?[13]

Evangelicism, could, of course, not be expected to be the only force, no matter how popular it was. The tendencies that produced the Graveyard school of poets, the Gothic novel and revived the medieval motif in poetry and architecture, impelled religious minds to look for the roots in religion. In an earlier generation, the Methodist fanfare and their drawing the lots from the Bible could be seen as a product of the same tendency. In 1833 John Keble, cleric, poet, and theologian inaugurated the Oxford Movement by a sermon on 'National Apostsy'. Along with him were Edward Bouverie Pussey (1800-82), William George Ward (1803-36), Frederick Oakeley (1802-80) and Isaac Williams (1802 – 65) and of course Newman

and Manning. The Tractarian movement as it was also called – it took its name from the famous *Tracts for the Times* published in Oxford – was a High Church movement inside the church of England that emphasized the importance of clerical office, vestment and ritual. After the publication of tract 90, which tried to prove that the 39 articles of the Church of England had nothing contradictory to the Roman Catholic Church, many left the Anglican faith and joined Rome. Foremost among them were Newman and Manning. Newman wrote his spiritual biography *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* to show how his conversion to Roman Catholicism was a natural product of his spiritual progress. However his conversion in 1845 raised scarcely less outcry than Peel's conversion to free trade the following year. Such conversions, however, did not take place on a wide scale, even if they were symptomatic of the times

The Tests and Corporations Act was abolished, the universities were opened to the dissenters but the growth in the catholic population and their places of worship was not however due to the popularity of Rome among common people. The 1851 census revealed that out of the 519,959 Irish living in England seventy-five per cent were Roman Catholics.

The more we analyze the facts with regard to the adherence to a particular dogma the more we get tempted to enquire about the emotional side of the problem. How did a common man, not very erudite, of middling sensibility, react to the issues? Not many must have noticed or felt the morality gap that Tennyson talked about in the seventh quatrain of the opening invocation of *In Memoriam*:

> Let knowledge grow from more to more
> But more of reverence in us dwell
> That mind and soul, according well
> May make one music as before.
> But vaster.[14]

To these lines Arnold Toynbee wrote, his uncle Percy would have reacted –

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more' full mark. A recitation of the three lines would have made him restive. He would instead have pulled Goethe out of the shelf and pointed gleefully to Faust, part I, lines 1236-37
>
> Mir hift der Geist! Auf einmal seh'ichrat
> Und schribe getrost: 'Im Anfang war die tat!
>
> ('The spirit succours me ! All at once I see light and write confidently: "In the beginning was the deed" ')[15]

It was late in the day that most people became affected by a general loss in faith. The fault (in the geological sense of the world) was a typical erudite discovery.

The hope offered by Christianity was eroding and being replaced by that peculiarly Victorian liberal sensibility, but God, despite Darwin and Tiibingen School of Higher Criticism was a reality for most Victorians and Jesus offered hope that was more than a silver lining in the dark cloud. An ordinary but typical Victorian would have agreed with Browning in *La Saisiaz*

> ...he at least believed in Soul, was very sure of god[16]

and would have criticized his age in the manner Browning did in 'Bishop Blougram's Apology':

> What have we gained then by our unbelief
> But a life of doubt diversified by faith,
> For one of faith diversified by doubt.
> We called the chess-board white, - we call it black.[17]

In this respect perhaps the twentieth century was in continuation with the nineteenth and not a break from it.

ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1968), vol. 22, p. 1039.

2. *loc.cit.*

3. Hughes. J., *A Victorian Sunday*, (London: Wayland Publishers, 1972); Taine H., *Notes on England*. translated with an introduction by Edward Hyams, London, 1957, p. 29

4. Shane, L., *Henry Edward Manning* (1921), p.8

5. Eliot, George, *Adam Bede* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p.22

6. It was a name given to a group of Evangelical and anti-slave trade philanthropists at Clapham. Among its members were William Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay (father of Thomas Macaulay) and the Thornton family (ancestors of E.M. Forster).

7. Daiches, D., *Some Late Victorian Attitudes*, p.10. Daiches quotes F.W.H. Meyers's reminiscences of Eliot's remark made in 1873 about God, immortality and duty.

8. *Rudyard Kipling's verse: Definitive edition* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940... 1960), 323. This work will hereafter be referred to as RKV

9. RKV, 329

10. *Ibid*

11. RKV, 74

12. *Selected poems of Matthew Arnold*, Golden Treasury Series (London: Macmillan, 1910), 224

13. Quiller-Gouch, Sir Arthur, *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1957), No. 855, p. 1029

14. *Poems of Tennyson* (1830-1870), ed., T. Herbert Warren (London: OUP, 1912...1946), 350

15. Toynbee, A.J., *Experiencs* (Oxford: OUP, 1969), 301.3.

16. *Browning: Poetry and Prose* ed., Simon Nowell-Smith (London: Rupert-Davis, 1950), 636

17. *Browning's Men and Women* (1855), ed. G.E. Haddow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 135

36.6 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you read about the victorian compromise between the various sections of the society: the major poets – Tennyson, Browning and Arnold – as they stood with

respect to their predecessors, the Romantic poets i.e. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley and finally you read an essay on the religious temper of the Victorian age. In the last essay we combined the influence of religion on literature, especially poetry and examined how they evolved as the century progressed. However, in this unit we discussed how YOU are to present your material for the examiners.

In this connection we examined three types of scripts – the short essay (or note), the critical question and the long essay or term paper.

36.7 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. (Consult an atlas.) Crimea is a Russian peninsula lying between Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. The Crimean War (1854-56) was fought between Russia on the one hand and Turkey, France and Britain on the other. However, the Eastern Question still remained unresolved even after the War.

2. Nopoleon III (Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, 1808-73) was nephew of Napoleon I (1769-1821). He was elected president of the French Republic in 1848 and proclaimed emperor four years later. His capture by the Germans at the Battle of Sedan (1870) brought about an end to his career.

3. Charles Darwin (1809-82) wrote *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) wrote *Self-Help* (1859).

4. Discuss this with some other friend on the course.

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Broadly speaking, Alfred Tennyson was influenced by John Keats; Robert Browning by P.B. Shelley; and Matthew Arnold by William Wordsworth.

2. A.E. Housman (1859-1936) Professor of Latin at Cambridge wrote *A Shropshire Lad*. Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83) was very popular for his free translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859). William Morris's (1834-'96) *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-'70) was hugely popular in its day. You will read more about the Pre-Raphaelite poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti and their sister Christina Georgiana Rossetti in unit 40 and Oscar Wilde in Unit 41. You have already read about Thomas Hardy and Robert Bridges in *Understanding Poetry* (EEG06). Coventry Patmore and Arthur Hough Clough may be considered by some as minor poets of the Victorian era.

36.8 SUGGESTED READING

You must have noticed that in this unit we did not teach you facts the way we did in units 27, 22 or 12. Hence it becomes important for you to consult some book(s) on history of English literature. *English Literature: Its history and its significance*... by William Long covers Victorian poetry in the first part of chapter XI. However, he leaves out Arnold altogether. Among the major minor poets Elizabeth Barrett, D.G.Rosetti, William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) have been discussed very briefly. On the whole the treatment is rather sketchy for you. Edward Albert in chapter XI of his *History of English Literature* examines Victorian poetry in about twenty pages; satisfactory but not exhaustive. Much more exhaustive

than either of these is a *History of English Literature* by Emile Legouis. Book VI of part II of his book deals with the period 1832-75 and Book VII from 1875 to 1914. You may pick and choose what is of use to you from these two books.

Oliver Elton's *The English Muse: A Sketch* (1950) has long been acknowledged as a labour of love and I would strongly recommend Chapter XVIII, 'The First Victorians', chapter XIX, 'The Mid-Victorians' and chapter XX, 'Later Poetry (I)' to all serious students of Victorian Poetry. *From Dickens to Hardy*, volume VI of *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, edited by Boris Ford must be glanced through for useful articles on any topic you propose to write your term paper on.

Among the scholarly works on the age is G.M.Young's *Portrait of an Age: Victorian England*. It was first published in 1936 but it is still useful though a little outdated. G.Kitson Clark's *The Making of Victorian England* (1961) and Asa Briggs' *Victorian People* (1955) may be delved into selectively. Basil Willey's essay on Matthew Arnold is a scholarly exploration, in *Nineteenth Century Studies* (1949). Heavily informed by the recent trends in literary theory are the studies of Prof. Isobel Armstrong. They deserve serious attention whenever you encounter any of her books and articles on Victorian poetry. One of her essays has been included in this block. However, don't try to read every critical work that is mentioned above even if you have access to them all for you must remember that you have to concentrate your attention on the texts of the poems prescribed for detailed study.

UNIT 37 ROBERT BROWNING: LIFE AND ASPIRATIONS

Structure

37.0 Objectives
37.1 Introduction
37.2 Robert Browning: The man and the poet
37.3 On *Sordello*
  37.3.1 An Historical Perspective
  37.3.2 'Sordello in Mantua': An Explication
37.4 Let's sum up
37.5 Answers to exercises

37.0 OBJECTIVES

After a study of this unit you would be able to:

- speak on Robert Browning's life and work and the relationship between them;
- appreciate *Sordello*; and
- understand Browning's conception of the office of a poet.

37.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will read a brief sketch of Robert Browning's life. This would be helpful to you in writing your own term-paper. Still more, it will help you appreciate Browning's poetry.

Robert Browning is buried in Westminster Abbey where poets such as Chaucer and Spenser also lie interred. 'A good many' wrote Henry James about Browning, 'oddities and a good many great writers have been entombed in the Abbey; but none of the odd ones have been so great and none of the great ones so odd' (*The Speaker*, January 4, 1890). It is the combination of Browning's greatness and oddity that you should be able to appreciate finally after you have completed your study of the present and the two following units.

The excerpt from *Sordello* that you will also read in this unit will enable you to understand Browning's aims and aspirations as a poet. Hope you will enjoy reading about Robert Browning and a specimen of his poetry.

37.2 ROBERT BROWNING (b. MAY 7, 1812 – d. DEC 12, 1889)

The poet Robert Browning bore the name of his father and grandfather. As a young man Browning's father had been sent by his father to West Indies to take care of the family plantation. However, he revolted against the cruelty towards the slaves there, returned home and his father found him employment in the Bank of England as a clerk on a small salary. Robert Browning, Sr. (d. 1866) worked at the Bank until his retirement in 1852. He was a self-effacing person, mild and studious and had collected a library of 6000 books of Greek, Latin and recondite English writings. (A

recondite work as you know is about obseure abstruse out of the way or little known subject) The poet's father was more a man of learning than business and in his youth he had hoped to become an artist. All his life he drew sketches and illustration to amuse his children and friends. The poet Browning could have inherited his aptitude for the visual arts from his father.



Robert Browning

Browning's mother. Sarah Anna Wiedmann (d. 1849) was born in Scotland of a German father and Scottish mother. She was devoted to her family. her rose garden and the Congregational chapel and was thus a non-conformist. Her husband and children were also made to follow her to the Congregational chapel and not to the

Church of England. Her daughter Sarianna and her son, the poet, were passionately devoted to her.

Robert Browning, the poet, was born on May 7, 1812 at Camberwell, a suburb of London. He was raised there and at New Cross, further to the southeast from London. Browning was a restless child and his biographers record the public reproof of George Clayton, the preacher at his mother's chapel for his restlessness and inattention'. He had rebelled from school and was later to rebel from London University. His education was conducted mainly by his father and a series of tutors of Greek, Latin, French, Italian and music. He become famous for his quaint learning which was acquired chiefly in his father's library. For his pleasures he roamed the fields, rode on horseback and spent time in Dulwich Gallery. He grew up to be passionate, brilliant but also indisciplined, with an inordinate estimate of his powers, which however, were indeed very great.

Browning's first volume of poems *Incondita* was a collection of lyrics. It was written when he was twelve years old. He later destroyed them: but two survive *Paulitive* : A *Fragment of a Confession* was published anonymously in 1833. It is marked by the influence of the Romantic poets, especially Shelley: whom he called 'sun-treader': 'Sun-treader, life and light be thine for ever!' However, it is also a work, which records his disavowal of Shelley who was not popular in the early nineteenth century. At the age of 14, Shelley had provided an exit for Browning from the middle class world of Camberwell and New Cross. The children there never went to Harrow and Rugby much less Oxford and Cambridge. Browning became a disciple of Shelley, took to vegetarianism, adopted liberalism of an extreme kind and also atheism. However, his mother Sarah Anna Wiedmann won her from atheism not through reason but by her tenderness and love, impairing his intellectual independence in religious matters forever. *Pauline* is a record of his faith in 'God and truth' rather than Shelley:

> Sun-treader, I believe in god and truth
> And love: and as one just escaped from death
> Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel.
> He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee!
> Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom
> If such must come, but chiefly when I die,
> For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
> To fight a giant: but live thou forever,
> And be to all what thou has been to me!

Browning's exposure and exploitation of his own emotions and his 'intense and morbid self-consciousness' in *Pauline* was disliked by J.S. Mill (1806-73), a leading intellectual of his time. Perhaps it was Mill's criticism that discouraged him from confessing his own emotions and encouraged him to write objectively.

In 1834 Browning went on a tour of Russia with George de Benkhausen, the consul general. In 1838 and '44 he made two short visits to Italy. In the meantime *Paracelsus*, Browning's first acknowledged work, was published in 1835. The career of the historical Paracelsus (1493-1541), the Swiss-born physician served Browning as a stalking-horse or pretext for his exploration into the true felicity of a poet's endeavours, that is, in the conflicting claims of love (self-forgetting) and knowledge (self-assertion) in the mind of the poet. *Paracelsus* was a resounding critical success It introduced him to the great artistic and literary world of London. At a dinner in 1836 Wordsworth, who in a few years was to become the Poet Laureate proposed a toast to Browning and welcomed him to the company of the poets of England. (The event may remind you nearer home of the reception of Rabindranath Tagore by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya). Browning came to know not only Wordsworth but also Dickens, Henry James, Carlyle and Tennyson. The publication of *Sordello* in 1840, however, eclipsed Browning's reputation for over twenty years

Fortunately *Paracelsus* had found him two friends: John Forster (1812-76) the drama critic, editor, biographer and later literary executor of W.S. Landor, Dickens and Carlyle, and William Charles Macready (1793-1873) actor and manager of both Covent Garden and Drury Lane theatres at different times. They encouraged Browning to write for the theatre. *Strafford* (1837), a historical tragedy in blank verse, was written at the instigation of Macready who produced it on the day of its publication, in Covent Garden with himself in the title role. (If you have read British history you would recall that Sir Thomas Wentworth, first earl (1593-1641) of Strafford was the chief advisor of Charles I). In the meantime Browning helped Forster to write the biography of Strafford.

Browning found writing plays more congenial to his temper because it allowed him to escape his subjective emotions and for the next ten years he wrote plays that were published along with his shorter dramatic poems under the title *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841-46). These were a series of eight pamphlets that were published as one volume after 1846. *Pippa Passes* (1841), *A Blot in the Scutcheon* (1843) and *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846) were among the better known plays of his. As a playwright, however, Browning was not much successful. The reason, Browning himself pointed out, was his emphasis on 'Action in character, rather than character in Action.'

The third and seventh pamphlets in the series (1842,1845) were devoted to short poems. These included 'My Last Duchess', 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister', 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', 'How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix' (16 -), 'Pictor Ignotus', Florence 15 -, 'The Lost Leader', 'Home Thoughts from Abroad' and 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church'. These were lively, carried the force of emotion but were often learned. 'They' wrote a contemporary reviewer, 'look as though already packed up and on their way to posterity'. However, Landor opined thus:

> ... Since chaucer was alive and hale
> No man has walked along our road with step
> So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
> So varied in discourse...

It was clear to Landor that Browning was in the tradition of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Donne.

The reason for the choice of his title *Bells and Pomegranates*, however, was not clear to anyone until Browning had explained it in the last number of the publication. It, indicated, Browning pointed out, 'an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought; which [looked] too ambitious, thus expressed, so the symbol was preferred'.

One of the contemporary poets who admired Browning's early poems was Elizabeth Barrett (1806-61) daughter and eldest of the twelve children of Edward Moulton Barrett, a rich proprietor of Jamaican plantations. She came to know Browning from his writing and sent her two volumes of her *Poems* (1844) which he received on his return from a trip to Italy. In some of the poems in these volumes she had praised Browning and the latter responded through a telegram on 10 January, 1845: 'I love your poems, dear Miss Barrett, and I love you too.' However, it was not until the May of 1845 that he was allowed to call.

Almost everything appeared to be unpropitious when Browning met Elizabeth Barrett in 1845. She was six years older than him. In 1838 she had fallen ill seriously due to a broken blood vessel and was sent to Torquay to recover. There her eldest brother Edward was drowned, to her lifelong grief. As a result she returned to London in 1841, still an invalid. On top of these Mr. Barrett was a tyrannical father and he had forbidden any of his children to marry. Browning found Elizabeth in her invalid's

dark room chained bu weakness to her couch, her dark, heavy hair framing her sentitive and sharp counternance. However, Browning for that matter no man could see her frequently as the suspicious father was quite against it. So Browning earne when Mr. Barrett was out. There began a series of correspondence between the two lovers. Elizabeth was reluctant on the begining to involve Browning in her sorrowful and invalid life. However, this state gave way to a conviction of his love and finally came the capture of love and happiness. She recorded these experience in her *Sonnet from the Portuguese* (1850). The title was theant to hide the personal nature of he love. Browning had read her 'Catarina to Camoens' and from that gave her the nickname of the Portuguese. The sonnet sequence described the Portuguese woman's devotion to her poet lover



Elizabeth Barrett Browning

It was clear that Browning and Elizabeth could not get married with her father's consent. So they married clandestinely in September 1946, and a week later left for Italy

The Brownings took up residence in a flat in Casa Guidi in Florence. Elizabeth's health improved remarkably and their son Robert ("Pen") was born in 1849. Browning had always depended for his finances on his father and most of his works were published at his father's expense. Now Mrs. Browning supported the family with her small income (Her father remained unreconciled to her until his death. He used to return her letters to him unopened.) Mrs Browning's works had been a raving success, so much so that when Wordsworth died in 1850 her name was widely canvassed as his most appropriate successor as poet Laureate.

Her verse novel *Aurora Leigh* (1857) was a tremendous critical success. Ruskin asserted that it was the greatest poem written in English. The poem is a female *Prelude*, the portrait of a young woman as an artist. According to Virginia Woolf 'Elizabeth Barrett was inspired by a flash of true genius when she rushed into the drawing-room and said that here, where we live and work is the true place for the poet'. *Aurora Leigh* offers, as Woolf points out:

> ...a sense of life in general, of people who are unmistakably Victorian, wrestling with the problems of their own time, all brightened, intensified, and compacted by the fire of poetry.
>
> ...Aurora Leigh, with her passionate interest in social questions, her conflict as artist and woman, her longing for knowledge and freedom, is the true daughter of her age.

The Brownings were very happy in Italy. Elizabeth Barrett espoused the cause of Italian independence in *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851). Browning published his most admired work *Men and Women* (1855) in two volumes. It is a collection of 51 poems. Some of the poems in these volumes are among Browning's most celebrated dramatic monologues – 'Karshish', 'Cleon', 'Adrea del Sarto', 'Fra Lippo Lippi', 'A Grammarian's Funeral' and 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' – while others like 'Memorabilia', 'Love Among the Ruins', 'A Toccata of Galuppi's', 'Two in the Campagna' and 'One Word More' are warm personal poems. 'Memorabilia' records Browning's timeless respect for Shelley:

> Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
> And did he stop and speak to you?
> And did you speak to him again?
> How strange it seems and new!

Italy and the Italians were dear to him as they were to Elizabeth. 'Italy was my university' wrote Browning. He recorded some of his memorable experience of Italy in 'De Gustibus':

> Italy, my Italy!
> Queen Mary's saying serves for me –
> When fortune's malice lost her – Calais –
> Open my heart and you will see
> Graved inside it, "Italy"
> Such lovers old are I and she:
> So it always was, so shall ever be! (ll. 39-46)

In some of the poems in *Men and Women* Browning spoke about his love for his wife: obliquely in 'By the Fire-side' and openly in 'One Word More':

> God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
> Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
> One to show a woman when he loves her.

In the next stanza he began,'

> This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
> This to you–yourself my moon of poets!

However, *Men and Women* was not very successful except among the young people. The reviews were uncomprehending and unsympathetic. Even eight years after its publication Chapman and Hall, his publishers, still had unsold copies on their shelves. Browning got bitter and took refuge in drawing and clay modelling and the society of his friends.

However, a graver matter began to occupy his days. Mrs. Browning's health, which in the beginning had been remarkably restored, began to fail. On 29 June 1861 she died with her husband by her side. Browning was heartbroken. He decided to return to England. A few months later he left Florence, never to return and slowly travelled back to England with his son.

Back in England he prepared Elizabeth's *Last Poems* for publication and as usual the sale of her book much exceeded his own. He also took interest in Pen's education and in planning his career as an artist. *Dramatis Personae* (1864), Browning's next book of poems, was unexpectedly popular. It included some of his intricately argumentative monologues such as 'A Death in the Desert', 'Caliban upon Setebos' and 'Mr. Sludge "The Medium"'. A second edition of *Dramatis Personae* was brought out the same year. It now appeared that Browning had at long last overcome the mistrust of the British people. A selection of his poems and a volume of the collected edition published in 1863 had both sold off very well.

Browning had begun writing *The Ring and the Book* in 1860. It was a poem in over 21000 lines in blank verse divided in twelve books. It was published in four monthly instalments from November 1868 – February 1869. It is based on a collection of documents based on an Italian murder trial in the seventeenth century. The sale of this book was once again encouraging and a second edition of it was brought out in 1872.

Since the mid-sixties Browning's reputation remained on the ascendant and he remained prolific until the end. *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* (1889), his last book of poems, was a success. He caught cold, fell ill and died on 12 December, the same year.

Browning wished his poems to be read for their own sake. He thought that his works should rise or fall by their own merit, independent of his life and habits. Perhaps his Shakespeare spoke for him:

> Which of you did I enable
> Once to slip inside my breast,
> There to catalogue and label
> What I like least, what love best,
> Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
> Seek and shun, respect-deride?
> Who has right to make a rout of
> Rarities he found inside? ('At the Mermaid' V)

In 1969 Richard Howard, an American poet dedicated his volume of monologues to Browning: 'to the great poet of otherness... who said, as I should like to say, "I'll tell my state as though't were none of mine." If we are ever to understand Browning – the man who lived humbly, like the poet in his 'How it Strikes a Contemporary', but inwardly, as his poems speak so eloquently – it can be through a study of his poetry.

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. Why did Browning (in your own words) call his series of pamphlets *Bells and Pomegranates* ?

2. Who was the Portugues in the title *Sonnets from the Portuguese* ?

3. What did Virginia Woolf think about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and the poet herself ?

4. When was Browning finally able to gain the attention of the English people ?

5. Did Browning like his poetry to be read in connection with his life ?

37.3 *SORDELLO*

Robert Browning's thoughts about the office of a poet and his own role and future career as a poet can be understood from some of his early poems. *Sordello* is one of them. You will now read lines 475-693 from the second book of *Sordello*. The excerpt 'Sordello in Mantua' is given in the appendix. You may first familiarize yourself with the historical background of the work, then try to go through the excerpt and then read 37.3.2 in which the excerpt has been explicated. After having done that go on to the next two units and then return to 'Sordello in Mantua' once again in order to understand it fully. The poem would need more attention and concentration of mind than most other poems but the effort would be rewarding.

37.3.1 *Sordello*: An Historical Perspective

Browning began writing *Sordello* shortly after the publication of *Pauline* in March 1833. It was published on 7 March 1840 by Edward Moxon at the expense of Browning's father. The poem in 5800 lines, next in length only to *The Ring and the Book*, was received by the public with incomprehension and with derision by the critics. The poem was found notoriously obscure and caused severe and prolonged damage to Browning's reputation. Browning gave some thought to revising the poem before republication. However, it was not included in his canon in 1849. When Browning republished *Sordello* in 1863 he had added 85 lines to it and supplied quotation marks to the text, the lack of which had added to its obscurity. Besides

these, Browning supplied running titles designed to elucidate the action of the poem in the 1863 edition of his poem.

Browning seemed, at least publicly, to have no heart to defend *Sordello*. Tradition has it that the poet admitted that 'When the poem was written, two knew what it meant – God and Robert Browning. Now god alone knows !' (David Loth. *The Brownings: A Victorian Idyll*, p.47) part of the confusion crops up from its historical setting. It is loosely based on the life of Sordello (c.1200-69) who, according to one tradition, was the son of Elcorte, the archer ; according to another of Taurello Salinguerra, a soldier, from his first wife Retrude, daughter of the German emperor Frederick II (1194-1250; emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1220 until his death). Browning favours this latter story. Salinguerra at an advanced age married Sofia, fifth daughter of Eccelino Da Romano II (surnamed the Monk). Cunizza (Palma, in Browning's narrative) was daughter of Eccelino II from Agnes Este, his first wife who was a Guelph. In 1194 Eccelino II, who had allied himself with the Republics of Verona and Padua, was defeated by Podesta his enemy. The latter exiled him, his family and his faction from Vicneza. Eccelino before submitting to this sentence burned the neighbouring houses and a great part of the town. A son (Eccelino III) was born to him from Adelaide in the midst of this confusion. According to Browning the mother and child were saved by Elcorte, the archer, who died in the conflict. Retrude, wife of Salinguerra, present on this occasion, died soon after she was brought to Adelaide's castle at Goito. Her new born son, however, survived. Adelaide dreading his future rivalry with her son brought up Sordello as her page, declaring him to be Elcorte's son adopted out of gratitude. In due course of time there appeared an 'intrigue' between him and Palma (Cunizza) which was stronger on her side. Palma was determined to see Sordello restored to his rightful place. So she conspired with Salinguerra, her father's faithful ally, to break her marriage with the Guelph Richard, Count of San Bonifacio; she out of her love for Sordello and he out of his sense of loyalty for the Ghibellines to which her father belonged. In the meantime Eccelino had assumed the monastic habit in the first place owing to Adelaide, his second wife's death and in the second out of remorse for his connivance at the wrong done to Salinguerra by the concealment of his son by Adelaide, his second wife.

According to his biographers, Browning had prepared himself for this work by studying the chronicles of this period in Italian history. He also supplemented his reading by a visit to the places connected with his story. We should, however, hope to learn from *Sordello* historical truth not in letter but spirit.

Sordello's sole title to immortality rested on Dante's (1265-1321) mention of him in the Ante-Purgatory where he acts as a guide to Virgil (70-19 B.C.) and Dante in the valley of the Kings in 'Purgatorio' VII. He is recognized as a fellow-townsman by Virgil. Dante in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* speaks of Sordello as having created the Italian language. Browning fully exploits Sordello's passion for his art in his poem. In real life Sordello had lived in Provençe under the patronage of Charles of Anjou and wrote 'troubadour' poetry in Provençal. He thus became an important link between the love poetry of Provençe and of Italy, which derived from it. A mysterious obscurity shrouds the life of Sordello and his violent death is remotely indicated by Dante.

Browning dedicated *Sordello* in 1863 to J. Milsand of Dijon. In his dedicatory letter of 9 June 1863 Browning pointed out:

> The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study.

Browning, as John Pettigrew has pointed out, 'felt free to treat chronology with abandon...' Sordello and Salinguerra probably never knew about one another's

existence. Sordello's love was Cunizza, daughter of Eccelin and Adelaide, a lusty lady married five times. Palma, daughter of Eccelin and Agnes Este was her half-sister. G.K. Chesterton was right in thinking that Browning's poem was, 'The most glorious compliment that has ever been paid to the average man'.

In the nineteenth century, Sordello was a seminal text for the Pre-Raphaelite poets. In the last century Arthur Symons called it a 'psychological epic'. Perhaps *Sordello* should be read not for its medieval background narrative but as a veiled account of Browning's own explorations into the nature of art and the role of the artist in society. The contradictory claims of egoism and sympathy, contemplation and action finally kill the hero.

Early in the twentieth century, Ezra Pound (1885-1972) found *Sordello* a model of lucidity. In trying to write an epic, Pound found in *Sordello* a model to react against. The 'Three Cantos' which began publication in *Poetry* in June 1917 demonstrates that *The Cantos* adopted a method and style opposed to Browning's poem:

> Hang it all, there can be but one *Sordello* !
> But say I want to, say I take your whole bag of tricks,
> Let in your quirks and tweeks, and says the thing's an art form,
> Your *Sordello*, and the modern world
> Needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thoughts in;
> Say that I dump my catch, shiny silvery
> As fresh sardines flopping and slipping on the marginal cobbles ?
> I stand before the booth, the speech; but the truth
> Is inside this discourse - this booth is full of the marrow of wisdom.
> Give up th' intaglio method. ("Three Cantos" *Poetry* 10(1917), ll.1-10)

Pound does not think that Browning was right in suppressing his own voice; in keeping subjectivity at bay; in creating a persona to speak for him. Truth is not to be found anywhere outside the discourse but inside it. Besides, Pound would also discard Browning's intaglio method. When an artist digs on the surface of a rock to make a pattern he follows the intaglio method opposed to which is the cameo method in which he removes pieces of rock in order to raise a pattern against the background of the rock. Pound would use the cameo method because poetry fo him is the impression of history on the present.

The above background on *Sordello* should help you appreciate the extract from the poem we have decided to discuss with you in this unit. Read 'Sordello at Mantua' printed in the appendix before reading the next section.

However, in order to make sure that you have understood the background properly do an exercise. Having written your answers compare them with the answers provided by me in this unit under 37.5. In case you feel you have not understood the background properly it may be a good idea to reread the section above.

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Who was Sordello? How did Browning treat him in his *Sordello*?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What did nineteenth century readers of *Sordello* think about it?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What according to Ezra Pound was wrong with Browning's method in writing *Sordello*? How did he decide to rectify it?

_____

_____

_____

37.3.2. 'Sordello in Mantua': An Explication

You have six verse paragraphs from the second book of *Sordello* prescribed for detailed study. *Sordello* consists of six books in all. In the first book we see Sordello as a refined and beautiful boy:

> (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine
> A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
> With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
> Delight at every sense; Book I, ll 463-66

And he appears to be framed for spiritual delights only. He is an artist in the making who lives his imagination and partakes the joys of everything around him whether in the gloom of Goito castle or the sunny glades and woods around it. However, he has had one glimpse of Palma and she becomes his source of inspiration. As he is growing up he also longs for sympathy – which in reality is his craving for applause. He therefore makes a crowd of carved and tapestried figures around himself. It is at this point that he is invited to participate in a song contest at the court in Mantua.

The opening lines of the excerpt (printed in this block) effectively sets the tone:

> The evening star was high
> When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived,
> Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,
> And Naddo looked an angel...

Through these lines, right at the outset, you come to know the way Sordello is being treated by his friends and well wishers i.e. with clapping and applause and by rivals and enemies by acquiescence. Naddo, Browning's biographers surmise, was fashioned after John Forster. Browning's attitude towards this character is best reflected in the following lines:

> 'The knowledge that you are a bard
> Must constitute your prime, nay sole reward!'
> So prattled Naddo, busiest
> Of the tribe of genius-hunters...

Naddo's high sounding words are meaningless for a poet such as Sordello. He utters bland 'common sense' which is of not much use to a true-poet that Sordello is. The way Naddo discusses Sordello's poetry with him shows how superficial his precepts are. 'Now, you're a bard, a bard past doubt,' Naddo tells Sordello, and goes on:

> And no philosopher; why introduce
> Crotchets like these? Fine, surely, but no use
> In poetry – which still must be, to strike,
> Based upon common sense; there's nothing like
> Appealing to our nature! No tricks were tried
> In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!

Sordello replies:

> " The man", said we," tells his own joys and woes:
> We'll trust him."

To this Naddo responds:

> Would you have your songs endure?
> Build on the human heart! – why to be sure
> Yours is one sort of heart – but I mean theirs,
> Ours, everyone's, the healthy heart one cares
> To build on!

It shows according to Sordello (Browning) how poor an understanding of the true poet's creative process Naddo has. A true poet must not only write about himself/herself but must observe others also. However, Naddo tries to impress other poets such as Sordello. So he uses as high sounding language as he can command:

> Central peace, mother of strength ,
> Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
> When they have got their calm! And is it true,
> Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?

Naddo tries to impress his auditor by high sounding philosophical arguments.

Sordello participates in the song-contest, defeats the court poet Eglamor who dies soon after his defeat. However, Sordello the 'Goito–manufacture' soon finds that he won with the help of Eglamor's rhyme and by doing exactly what he disliked in people such as Naddo. The narrator points out:

> Then he found,
> (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
> That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
> A sore annoyance; it was the song's effect
> He cared for, scarce the song itself...

Sordello's success was in reality his failure. However, Naddo and ' every whelp of Naddo's litter' felt happy with Sordello's performance. Naddo calls him ' true bard':

> " The master certes meant to waste
> No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
> He'd please anon: true bard, in short,- disturb
> His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
> Fancy nor reason,wanting in him; whence
> The staple of his verses, common sense;

However. Sordello feels alienated from the art that has won him the applause and the position of the court poet. He would prefer his Goito and the woods around it to Mantua and the glory of the court.

Sordello has won everything that his success as a poet can procure him. Power, money, fame and above all the love of women – Bianca and others. They observed Sordello's facility in his poetry:

> Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape:
> Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
> As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
> Sinner the other flared portentous by
> A greedy people.

Since Sordello was so successful, the narrator asks

> Then why stop, surprised
> At his success?

And goes on to answer:

> He caught himself shamefully hankering
> After the obvious petty joys that spring
> From true life, fain relinquish pedestal
> And condescend with pleasure – one and all
> To be renounced, no doubt; for thus to chain
> Himself to single joys and so refrain
> From tasting their quintessence frustrates, sure,
> His prime design; each joy must he abjure
> Even for love of it.

Sordello would be glad to leave his elevated position at Mantua's royal palace and all the benefits that go with it in order to know the joys and sorrows and frustrations of common life in their true essence.

While the third paragraph descirbes the poet's slow transition from his life of popular success to that of his aspirations in poetry the fourth gives us an account of some of the achievements of Sordello in poetry. Sordello's first attempt was to perfect his language – 'the stuff/That held the imaged thing…' Sordello forged a people's language as against Latin.

We know that Provençal or *langue d'oc* the language of Southern France, the language of the troubadours was based on late Latin. The word for 'yes' in late Latin was *hoc ille* which became 'oc' in the South and 'o'il' in the North - and so the language was known as *langue d'o'il*. The chief languages of the Paris region in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were Norman, Picard and Francien. They enjoyed some independence. However, in course of time Francien became the predominant language and thus the ancestor of modern French.

Browning gives Sordello credit for forging Provençal *or langue d'oc*. Provencal was a class language which avoided marked regional features. Browning's Sordello.

> sought
> The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought
> That language, - welding words into the crude
> Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
> Armour was hammered out, in time to be
> Approved beyond the Roman panoply

However, when Sordello came to use the language, to be able to give shape to his perceptions in it, then he found that it failed him:

> Piece after piece that armour broke away,
> Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
> To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
> As language:

Browning points out that thought and arguments can ill afford to present perception to the reading public,

> thought may take perception's place
> But hardly co-exist in any case
> Being its mere presentment…

Thought rationalizes experience; it does not present it which Browning thought made great poetry. (When you read 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. praxed's Church' in the next unit you will be able to understand what Browning is driving at.) These experiments of Sordello are a sweetly-painful experience for him. Browning clinches his portrayal of Sordello in the fourth paragraph with an *exemplum*.

According to Greek mythology Apollo, the god of poetry, loved Hyacinthus and was playing quoit with him. Zephyrus, the greek Varuna, felt jealous of Apollo and blew the disk thrown by him toward Hyacinthus which killed him. Sordello's best efforts to perfect his language apparently, killed his art. However, unperturbed by his failure to please his audience the troubadour set off on his new task of celebrating the exploits of Simon de Montfort, the father of the famous English baron, who led the crusade against the heretical Albegenses in Southern France early in the thirteenth century. Browning, we can say, treated history with abandon. It is ironical that the defeat of the south in the Albegensian war led to the decline of Provençal as a literary language.

When Sordello sang the praise of Montfort to the Mantuan public they praised Montfort and considered Sordello's song a fair reward for the hero's valour but not the poet:

> -Mantuans, the main of them admiring still
> How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak
> Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
> His finger's ends; while past the praise-tide swept
> To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept.
> The true need for true merit! -

This hostile attitude of the Mantuans towards himself incensed Sordello. He recalls the song contest in which he had participated. On that occasion, in one corner sat Palma, his Daphne, his source of inspiration and in the other Adelaide with her dark, funereal hair.

> Ay, he strewed
> A fairy dust upon the multitudes;
> Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
> His giants dignified those puny elves,
> Sublimed their faint applause.

Sordello used artifice to flatter his audience. He called mischievous dwarfs giants. He tried to find in them a use, which they did not have.

This deception, however, had a harmful effect on him. It 'Sundered him in twain; each spectral part at strife with each';

> One jarred against another life;
> The poet thwarting hopelessly the Man –
> Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
> Here, there:

The 'poet-half' was at war with the 'man-half'. The former disapproved of any compromise. The latter was

> - not to be put off
> With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,

The poet also pinioned the man-part in Sordello. Browning presents the image of a bird of which the pinions have been clipped and thus made unable to fly. In such a circumstance the poet-part grew, 'the Art/Developing his soul a thousand ways'. His

command over his language also grew 'Into a bravest of expedients, too'. Browning compares Sordello once again with an Apollo who had thrown away his bow and quiver and retained the lyre alone. Sordello spent his days mastering the various forms of troubadour poetry such as tenzon, sirvent and rondel. However, his complete plunge into his art did not allow him to be a sociable person. He lost his audience and with it his due reward.

> But the complete Sordello, man and Bard,
> John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
> That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
> A bitter-sweetling of a book – was gone.

Browning's mother and wife were both devout Christians and so was he. One of his greatest appeals to the members of the Browning societies in England and America was his piety. In the lines quoted above he alludes to the angel in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. Browning wants to say that Sordello for the time being could not achieve the unity between the man and poet, and he uses the image of Saint John to clinch his point. His *exemplum* shows his attitude towards Sordello i.e. the high esteem in which he holds him, i.e. his own ardours for the office of a poet that he has adopted for himself.

Sordello can be called Browning. The narrator, in the fifth book confesses it himself

> Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play;
> Once more I cast external things away,
> And nature composite, so decompose
> That' ...why, he writes *Sordello*! (ll.616-620)

Sordello writes Sordello i.e. Browning writes about himself in the poem. The story of Sordello against the background of thirteenth century Italy was a ruse for Browning to tell his own story. Sordello also helped him clarify his doubts and discover his intentioned stance as a poet of England and Europe.

Self-Check Exercise-III

1. Who was Palma?

   _____

   _____

2. Who was Eglamor?

   _____

   _____

3. Who was Naddo?

   _____

   _____

34.4 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you read about Browning's life. Although he asserted that the readers of his poetry should not relate his poems to his life you saw that in his own poems he sometimes asserted quite the opposite. This issue is complex and can never be conclusively resolved either way. However, it offers you a helpful stand-point for an understanding of Browning's poetry. We have also suggested that you may need to read the poem 'Sordello in Mantua' a few times and follow the discussion on the poem in the unit closely before the poem becomes completely clear to you.

37.5 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. Because he wanted to avoid a pedantic and pompous title such as The Poetry of Thought and Emotion or the Poetry of Sense and Music. Bells probably symbolised the music in his poetry and pomegranates the flesh of his feelings and emotions, thoughts and ideas.

2. Elizabeth Barrett, the poet who wrote her sonnets for her lover, a poet i.e. Robert Browning.

3. Virgina Woolf liked Mrs Browning's adoption of the drawing room as the scene of action of her poem and called her a 'true daughter of her age'.

4. In 1864, with the publication of *Dramatis Personae*.

5. From what you have read above you will say 'no'. However, wait until you've read the next section.

Self-Check Exercise-II

(a) Sordello was a Troubadour poet who wrote in provençal and lived in Southern France. He found mention in *The Divine Comedy* of Alligheri Dante. Browning makes use of his life to explore his own ideas of a poet's joys and sorrows hopes and aspirations.

(b) A majority of 19th century readers, including Mrs. Browning, found *Sordello* incomprehensible. However, for the Pre-Raphaelite poets it was a seminal text.

(c) According to Pound Browning followed the intaglio method. However, according to him the cameo method was better for poetry which he followed himself.

Self-Check Exercise-III

1. Palma was Sordello's beloved and her source of inspiration at the song-contest.

2. Eglamor was the court-poet whom Sordello defeated at the song-contest in Mantua.

3. Naddo represents the mediocre poet. Perhaps John Forster was the original of Naddo in Browning's life.

UNIT 38 ROBERT BROWNING: TWO EARLY POEMS

Structure

38.0 Objectives
38.1 Introduction
38.2 'Porphyria's Lover'
38.2.1 An Analysis
38.3 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church'
38.3.1 An Appreciation
38.4 Let's sum up
38.5 Answers to exercises
38.6 Further reading

38.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit you will be able to have an idea of and write on Browning s poetic art as evident from his early poetry. This would, however, be with special reference to 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church'. Your study would enable you to comment on selected passages from the two poems mentioned above.

38.1 INTRODUCTION

Now that you are familiar with Robert Browning's life and early aspirations as evident from the passage you studied from *Sordello* you can go on to appreciate the development of Browning's art and craft as a poet. In this unit you are going to study two poems: 'Porphyria's Lover' and 'The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Chruch' The former was published in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842) and the latter in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). You should be able to see the developmentin Browning's art even within a period of three years. Artistically, the latter poem appears to be more sophisticated compared with the former.

38.2 'PORPHYRIA'S LOVER'

'Porphyria' was probably written is 1839 when Browning was on a brief visit to St. Petersburg, Russia. It was first published along with 'Johannes Agricola' anonymously (signed "Z") in *The Monthly Repository* (January 1836). The editor Mr. Fox also published a song from *Pippa Passes* and some verses later introduced in *James Lee's Wife*. He was, as Mrs. Sutherland Orr points out, 'the generous and very earliest encourager of Mr. Browning's boyish attempts at poetry'.

Browning grouped the two poems, i.e. 'Porphyryia' and 'Johannes Agricola', under the general title 'Madhouse Cells' in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). He lengthened the titles to 'Johannes Agricola in Meditation' and 'Porphyria's Lover' in 1849. However, the two poems were delinked in the collected poems of 1863 and in later collections. The linking together of the two poems under the title 'Madhouse Cells' offers a clue to our understanding of 'Porphyria's Lover'. Both, Porphyria's Lover and Johannes Agricola (1494-1566) the

founder of Antinomian heresy are extreme solipsists (one who pays too great attention to oneself rather than to relation with others) if not mad.

'Porphyria's Lover', is a soliloquy rather than a dramatic monologue. It is a simple lyrical and narrative poem, rich in visual details. You can appreciate it without the intervention of a teacher. So read it and THEN do the following exercise based on the poem.

Self-Check Exercise-I

In order to answer the following questions you may be required to read the poem once again.

1. Who are the characters in the poem?

   _____

   _____

2. Record below the lines in which marks of exclamation occur.

   _____

   _____

3. Scan the following lines and comment on the chief prosodic features:

   The rain set early in tonight

   The sullen wind was soon awake,

   It tore the elm tops down for spite,

   And did its worst to vex the lake:

   I listened with heart fit to break

   _____

   _____

   _____

38.2.1 An Analysis

Browning wrote 'Porphyria' in his early twenties. It belongs to his exploratory period in which he was trying to discover his poetic ideology, medium and style through a number of long poems such as *Pauline* (1833), *Paracelsus* (1835) and *Sordello* (1840) and plays such as *Pippa Passes* (1841) and shorter dramatic lyrics such as 'Porphyria', 'Johannes Agricola', 'Cristina', 'Count Gismond', 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister' and 'In a Gondola'.

You must have noticed that Browning tells you the story of Porphyria's Lover with utmost economy. So much so that we don't even know his name. He must be an insignificant person, not just socially but also morally. He lives on the margins of the society, a cottager to whose house Porphyria could come only in a storm when there could not be a witness to her act of stealth. Her lover is not alert and vigilant like herself. When she enters her room she notices that the fire has not been properly stoked which she does and cheers up the room shutting both the storm and the cold out. Having brought life to the cheerless place she proceeds to ring the bells of existence into her lover's self. She removes, one by one, her clothes, in order to waken him up from his torpor. Her lover has refused to respond much less take the masculine lead in the love-act. She gives him a call. He does not reply. Then she takes the lead once again, puts his arm about her waist, bares her shoulder for him and when he is still unresponsive he makes his cheek lie on it and covers his head with her golden

locks. Having performed all these acts of love herself *she* confesses her love for him.

If you carefully examine the text once again you will find that after a description of the weather in the opening five lines Browning, rather the lover, devotes the next fifteen lines describing Porphyria's acts – sensuous and warm – almost with vatsyayanian felicity. In its progression the narrative looked at from the heroine's point of view, has a lyrical charm from the opening through most of the twenty-first lines.

The anti-lyrical movement begins after the caesura in the twenty-first line. So far, the reader who has not been very clear about the role of the lover begins to get a better look into his character – diabolical ? Not. Insane ? Yes. He who has described his Porphyria's acts in all its telling details now proceeds to analyze her character as 'weak' and 'proud' and 'vain' – weak according to him, because she could not dissever her ties with the false pride of her class and station in the society. She could come to his cottage that night partly because of her uncontrollable passion, infrequent as it was, and partly because she got a suitable cover for it by the 'wind and rain'. However, this rare blissful condition, provided by his beloved, brought a sudden thought to Porphyria's lover. He was pale owing to his unfulfilled desire for possessing her.

Having described his own wan condition he now hurriedly describes the steps that led to the strangling of Porphyria at the end of the second section of the poem (which ends with line forty-one). The lover looked into the beloved's eye – 'happy and proud'. Her pride indicates her station in life; while happiness tells us about her condition by the side of her lover. This told her in no unmistakable terms that Porphyria loved, no 'worshipped' him. The lover, finding that he had got something which neither his station nor his character entitled him to he 'swelled' in satisfaction and pride and perversely, rather in a fit of madness, began to plan what he could do. Right at the peak of his experience of bliss when she appeared to him to have been his completely and perfectly, in all her being, in all her perfection and purity and goodness he thought of strangling her to death with the 'String' of her golden hair.

The third section of the poem is even more eerie than the second. The narrator now goes on to justify the act and display composure which no one but the mad person can have. He asserts that Porphyria did not feel pain. However, his assertion in line forty-one is trivialized by the colloquial 'quite sure' in the succeeding line.

> No pain felt she;
> I am quite sure she felt no pain.

Like an innocent child that opens a bud into which a bee has entered with its tiny fingers, the murderer opens her eyelids and she appears to be laughing innocently. Next he untightens the tresses around her neck and feels that her blood has once again coursed through her veins and to her cheeks. While he did not once caress or kiss her when she was alive, he now offers her corpse his 'burning kiss' at which she even responds by blushing. However, the 'only' discordant note in the tune is struck by the head of the corpse, which 'droops' upon his shoulder.

Otherwise, the demented lover believes that the 'smiling rosy *little* head' (emphasis added) of his beloved is glad to have 'its utmost will'. However, it is noticeable that he is lying. While until line fifty-one he uses the personal pronoun 'her' for Porphyria in lines fiftyone through fiftyfour she is referred to as 'it'. He is aware that a corpse is an inanimate thing and thus has no gender.

However, his assertions regarding Porphyria in those very lines are meant to mislead others; those who are ready to overhear him.

The climax of the poem is gradually built towards the close i.e. in its sharply ironic statements of the poet:

> Porphyria's love; she guessed not how
> Her darling one wish would be heard.
> And thus we sit together now,
> And all night long we have not stirred,

The lover's lurid romantic posturing at the close sharply contrasts Polyphria's healthy stance in lines six to twenty one. In fact the heroine's liveliness and vigour are set in sharp relief by the insane joyousness of her low and despicable lover. The ambiguity of the situation is perhaps best summed up in the last line of the poem:

> And yet God has not said a word !

Does it mean that Browning holds here as in the famous lines in *Pippa Passes*:

> God's in his heaven –
> All's right with the world!

However, in that case Pippa was witness to an idyllic scene. In his words:

> The year's at the spring
> And day's at the morn;
> Morning's at seven;
> The hill- side's dew-pearled;
> The lark's on the wing;

and

> The snail's on the thorn:

Should we assume that Porphyria's lover also imagines himself being in a perfect situation, with his beloved by his side, for perpetuity.

Or, is he also an antinomian, somewhat like Johannes Agricola who believed that he was exempt from all ethical considerations as he was a Christian. Agricola even went beyond it. He claimed to have been made even before the sun and the stars:

> .... God said
> This head this hand should rest upon
> Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
> And having thus created me,
> Thus rooted me, he bade me grow;
> Guiltless forever, like a tree
> That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
> The law by which it prospers so:

Agricola is a solipsist like Pophyria's lover and the consequence is mania, delusion, paranoia and possession by the delusion of total power. In fact it is possible that Porphyria's lover is a fantasist who has conjured up the whole situation in his dream where he can see the process of his reduction.

Porphyria's lover, just like the Duke of Ferrara in ' My Last Duchess' is a jealous lover. While the former kills his beloved the latter probably has her

killed and *possesses* her painting, so that he alone can savour her beauty. The Duke in 'My Last Duchess' tells the Count's messenger:

> Oh Sir, she smiled, no doubt,
> Whenever I passed her; but who passed without
> Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
> Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
> As if alive.

Both Porphyria's lover and the Duke are neurotics. They wish to possess their beloveds in the most extreme sense and if murder is necessary for it they would go to the extent of committing even that. 'Prophyria's Lover' is a penetrating study of type of a neurosis.

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Porphyria's lover strangled her to death. Which other character in Browning's poetry had his wife murdered ?

   _____

   _____

2. What's common between Porphyria's lover and Browning's Johannes Agricola ?

   _____

   _____

38.3 THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH

The poem was first published in *Hood's Magazine* (for March 1845) edited by F.O. Ward as 'The Tomb at St. Praxed's'. Browning appears to have felt dissatisfied with the title so when it was published in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845) it became 'The Bishop orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church'. Browning does not tell us the Bishop's name. His archrival in the poem – Gandolf – is likewise fictitious. However, the poem could have been inspired by the little church of Santa Prassede (built 822) which was restored just before Browning visited it in 1844. Santa Prassede, the virgin saint after whom it was named, was daughter of Pudens, a second century Roman senator.

The closest analogue to the Bishop in the monologue is the life of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este the Younger, a materialistic, vain and extremely stingy person. The effigy of Cardinal Cetive (d. 1474) on top of his tomb is in front of one of the entrances of 'Garden of Paradise', a splendid chapel full of mosaics. It could also have inspired the poem. However, Browning does not describe either any person or the structures in detail.

While portraying the Bishop, as K.I.D. Meslen pointed out, Browning may have remembered Thomas Macaulay's (1800-'59) review of Leopold Ranke's (1795-1886) *Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes of Rome, during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (translated into English from the original in German by Sarah Austin) in the *Edinburgh Review* (October 1840). Macaulay deplored a pope such as Leo X (1531-'21) who along with the latinity of the Augustan age had also acquired its atheistical and disrespectful spirit. He spoke of the Incarnation of God in his Son Jesus Christ and the Christian ceremony of Eucharist (based on Christ's last supper on earth) or Mass in the same vein as Cotta and Velleius.

John Ruskin (1819-1900) the famous Victorian writer, scholar and sage was full of appreciation for 'The Bishop orders his Tomb'. His observations offer a valuable insight into the poem:

> I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit - its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin.

Ruskin went on to add:

> It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice* put into as many lines, talked of the oracle of Delphi, or of the voice of Faunus in the wilderness.

Talking about the Popes

Macaulay deplored:

> Their years glided by in a soft dream of sensual and intellectual voluptuousness. Choice cookery, delicious wines, lovely women, hounds, falcons, horses, newly-discovered manuscripts of the classics... These things were the delight and even the sensuous business of their lives. (*Edinburgh Review*, 72, Page 242)

Browning's poem reflects the mindset like that of Macaulay. When you read the poem you will find the influence of Macaulay's review published less than five years ago in the *Edinburgh Review* on it.

With this background knowledge you should read the poem (printed in this block) first and then do the following exercise.

Self-Check Exercise-III

a. What kind of a person is the Bishop? Give at least three examples in support of your opinion.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

b. Who was Gandolf ? What is the Bishop's attitude towards him?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

c. Scan the following lines and comment briefly on the chief prosodic features:

> Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
>
> Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?

Nephews – sons mine... ah god, I Know not! Well –

She, men would have to be your mother once,

Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!

38.3.1 A Discussion

The Bishop, who asks, rather orders his sons to make him a tomb in St. Praxed's Church is a sixteenth century Roman clergyman. It is significant that Browning avoids telling us about the specific date just as he omits the Bishop's name. However, he tells us a lot about the Bishop's character, half-unconscious as he is in the last moments of a strifeful life. And yet, the Bishop in his state of delirium unveils his true life before his own sons, who probably know most, though not every detail of it already.

True to the person and character of a bishop, the poem begins with a well-known Biblical quotation from the Ecclesiastes:

> Vanity of vanities, says The Teacher
> Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

However, the next sentence is in the imperative which effectively, if also ironically, expresses the Bishop's proud demeanour. Apparently, Anselm is the name of one of his sons. Perhaps he is his favourite and he wants him to be close to him. He addresses his sons first as his nephews as he always did in public and then making use of the familiar rhetorical device of *epanorthosis*, changes over to 'sons'. Browning uses a dash between 'Nephews' and 'sons' and suggests a break in speech thus making use of the rhetorical device of *aposiopesis*. Then there are three dots. The latter break is meant to indicate the momentary introspection when he, sort of, confesses falsely before his God. He pleads ignorance before Him: 'I know not !' In tune with his confession he remembers his 'wife' and almost in a tone of complaint utters:

> She, men would have to be your mother once,

The next line (i.e. the fifth) informs us that another colleague of his – Gandolf – was competing with him to win her hand, nay clandestine love (because the clerics have to take a vow of chastity). And yet the Bishop appears to show no warmth of feeling for his late beloved. She was a prize object, which the Bishop won against a colleague just as the latter won the southern corner for his resting-place against him. Ironically, jealousy did not forsake these clergymen even in matters of intense life (i.e. love) and death. They truly represent the inordinate lust and acquisitive propensities of the Renaissance.

The Bishop's lustfulness finds expression not just in his affair with a woman who begat him many sons but more so in his words to them. He tells them that he had prayed to St. Praxed to grant them besides horses and Greek manuscripts 'mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs'. He appears to be such a confirmed epicurean that he does not see the irony of such a prayer. Not only that, he does not see the oddness of huddling

.... One pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off.

along with Moses with his tablets; Jesus, making his Sermon on the Mount and Saint Praxed with the nimbus round his head. It is interesting to point out that such an odd assemblage does exist on some of the friezes on the tombs in Rome, which Browning must have remembered vividly.

Howsoever ludicrous the Bishop may appear to us, Browning did not find him absurd. The Renaissance Bishop was a man of the world in the best sense of the term. He is a lover of the classics, which finds expression in his love of good attick Latin. He wants his sons to write his epitaph in the language of Cicero:

... Carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line –
Tully, my master ? Ulpian serves his need ! (ll. 76-79)

Domitius Ulpianus (d .228), a Roman jurist had a style that reflected the decadence, the fall from the urbanity and polish of the classical Roman style of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC). As the night advances the Bishop discloses that he had deliberately had Gandolf's epitaph written in the Ulpian language :

Aha, ELUCESBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! (ll. 99-100)

Cicero would have written *elucebat* (i.e. he was illustrious) and not as the Bishop had it inscribed on Gandolf's tomb – *Elucesbat*.

Besides his appreciation for good Latin, it is also in his close familiarity with the classical culture that we discover the positive aspect of the Bishop's personality that Browning must have appreciated. This is best expressed in the telling *exemplum* of the lynx tied to a tripod:

... Ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a visor and a term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
'Do I live, am I dead?' (ll. 106-113)

The Bishop had a clear idea of what he wanted for his grave. Earlier on he had suggested: 'Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so ! (l. 58). It was not the utterance of a stupefied Bishop. When he comes back to the matter of his frieze he completes the picture in his mind. He wants the vase to be full of luscious grapes. The image of grapes suggests Dionysius, the god of wine, as does the lynx. He wants visors or masks of the helmet and a bust on a pedestal (term) to be part of the illustration on the frieze. Brisk movement is suggested by the struggle of the lynx, which lets the tripod fall to which it has been tied as it

lounges towards the Bishop to comfort him. While it does so the thyrsus, the ornamented staff carried in processions by the worshippers of Dionysus (or the Roman Bacchus), falls on the ground. A bacchanal, as you know, is a noisy feast at which a lot of drinking and disorderly behaviour, even sex, takes place We thus find that without having either Dionysius or Bacchus on the frieze he has everything that suggests them: the grapes, the thyrsus and the lynx. The exemplum is highly suggestive of the character of the worldly, Renaissance Bishop. His thoughts are symbolized best by Dionysius the god of wine and love and the idea of festivity represented by the quick movement of the empathetic lynx which makes the Bishop ask himself 'Do I live, am I dead ?' Brownings's words remind us of Keats' in 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

> Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
> Fled is that music:- Do I wake or sleep?

However, while Keats was inspired by the nightingale's song it is the dead Bishop's statue lying on the entablature that is expected by the dying Bishop to ask this question as he imagines all the props around him – unreal though real somewhat like Yeats' 'form' made by some Grecian goldsmith 'of hammered gold and gold enamelling':

> To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing ,
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium
> Of what is past or passing or to come

However, Browning's image of the Bishop's statue delighting in his funerary artifacts is an art of greater poetic *tour de force* than either Keats' or Yeats'.

The Catholic clergymen are required to take the vow of chastity, obedience and poverty. However, the Bishop is a symbol of avarice. He has choice stallions and has secretly built lavish villas with baths. He wants to have his tomb made of jasper 'pure green as a pistachio-nut' basalt, agate and red marble:

> Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
> As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. (ll. 29-30)

He divulges that he had stolen a precious *lapis lazuli* from a church and then probably burnt it to hide his theft. He buried the blue stone in the vineyard. He gives detailed description of its place of hiding and method of recovery. The Bishop wants this blue stone to be placed between his knees so that Gandolf may burst, of envy and disappointment.

As he is unmindful of his vows and acts contrary to them so is his conduct in discord with even the norms of good behaviour for laymen. He is seen trying to bribe his sons. He has promised to pray to St. Praxed on their behalf. He reminds them of his patrimony of the villas at Frascati, in the fashionable resort town in the Alban Hills, some fifteen miles south of Rome:

> Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
> That brave Frascati villa with its bath, (ll. 45-46)

And if they do not obey his 'orders' he even threatens to tell the Pope about his villas in which case they would revert to him and not to them:

> Else I give the Pope
> My Villas! (ll. 102-3)

The Bishop has the cunning and guile of a worldly person.

The poem is a brilliant account of the changing moods of the Bishop. He appears at the outset to be downcast and depressed to feel that he is dying. So much so that in line 13 he asks himself ' Do I live, am I dead?' Even while alive he feels dead, as the inner precincts of the church is too quiet for the man of activity that the Bishop was. However, he soon overcomes this mood and begins to recall his strife with Gandolf and the thought that the richness of his tomb would, for all times to come, raise his status above Gandolf, his rival, cheers up his spirits. In his exhilaration he goes on to give all the details of his sarcophagus and tomb.

He discloses the way he got the big piece of *lapis lazuli*, and compares its size with a Jew's head and its colour with the blue vein on Mary's breast. Significantly, Mary is no less sacred for the Catholics than Jesus Christ Himself, and John the Baptist was the first great Roman Catholic martyr and the representation of his severed head in the European pictorial art is a common place. However, to the Bishop he is no more than a piece of stone to be poised between his knees. In the great Jesuit church in Rome, the altar of St. Ignatius (1491-1556), the leader of the Counter Reformation is adorned with a group of the Trinity. The Father there holds a globe in his hand, which is said to be the largest piece *of lapis lazuli* in existence. The Bishop in the poem seems to recall it and his nonchalant manner seems to suggest that that might be a matter of emulation, not piety, for him.

However, as the poem draws to a close the candles of his sons 'dwindle' and the memory of their 'tall pale mother with her talking eyes' rekindles in the Bishop's mind. It strikes a discordant tone in the flow of the Bishop's great ideas about his tomb. He discovers that they would not heed his requests, much less care for his commands,

> ... Will ye ever eat my heart?
> Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
> They glitter like your mother's for my soul, (ll. 103-5)

From this low of his disposition he does momentarily rise to a high but then again relapses into despondence:

> There leave me there!
> For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
> To death— (ll.113-15)

He does not hope now that his tomb would be built of anything other than mere sandstone ('Gritstone, a-crumble !').

'In a parody of Dante's tripartite scheme' wrote John Woolford, 'the Bishop distinguishes grades of 'afterlife' on the basis of grades of stone.' (p.116) If Gandolf's 'paltry onion stone' represents the purgatory his imagined basalt and agate and *lapis lazuli* would bequeath upon him an eternal paradisal existence which he could not enjoy even in life. However, as it is, the sandstone sarcophagus with its ' clammy squares, which sweat/As if the corpse they keep were oozing through – 'would offer him the slimy afterlife, a state of rotting as not even in Hell. The Bishop's rich imagination and fulsome, if not true Christian, life finds expression in the multitude of details assembled paratactically in the poem. The Bishop remains his true self till the end. Nevertheless he is reconciled to his fate and tells his children:

> Well go! I bless ye. (l. 119)

Gregg Hecimovich in his paper entitled 'Just the thing for the time'. Contextualizing Religion in Browning's "The Bishop orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" (*Victorian Poetry* vol. 36, No. 3, Fall 1998) has convincingly read the poem as Browning's contribution to the Oxford Movement. However, notwithstanding his worldly picture of the contemporary Bishop, in tune with the Protestant temper, Browning was no Catholic baiter. In fact, though 'a staunch non-conformist his whole life' according to Hecimovich, 'Browning found in the history of the Catholic Church and its sacraments matters of spiritual moment'. To conclude, 'The Bishop Orders His Tomb...' is one of Browning's great early Poems that would sustain many readings and yet succeed in offering a rich, complex, and ever fresh poetic delight.

38.4 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you studied two early poems of Robert Browning. You scanned two passages from the poems in order to understand their rhythm. These were meant to give you a feel for the early evolution in the art of the poet. These analyses should be helpful to you in writing your third assignment on this course which could be on just one work of art, i.e. a poem.

38.5 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. Porphyria and her lover who strangles her to death.
2. Twice: in lines 55 and 60
3. The passage is in regular iambic tetrameter.

/ / / / /
The rain set early in tonight /
/ / / / /
The sullen wind was soon awake, /
/ / / / / /
It tore the elm-tops down for spite, /
/ / / / / /
And did its worst to the lake: /
/ / / /
I listened with heart fit to break

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Probably the Duke of Ferrara in 'My Last Duchess' had his wife murdered.
2. They are both solipsists of the extreme kind.

Self-Check Exercise-III

a. The Bishop, contrary to his accepted vocation, is a worldly person who values wealth, sensual pleasures and does not hesitate even to steal and lie.

b. Gandolf was a fellow priest of the Bishop. The latter is jealous of the former even when he is dead though in life he had won the love of a woman whom Gandolf wished to make his own.

c. Vánity / saith the préacher vánity ! /
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews – sons mine .. Ah God, I know not ! Well –
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!

The dominant meter of the above passage is iambic pentameter. However, the first is a tetrameter line with the first foot being an amphimacer which is succeeded by an anapaest. The first foot of the third line is a trochaic inversion and in the fourth line Browning substitutes a spondee in the first foot for an iambus. The lines do not rhyme. The passage is a good example of the vitality of iambic pentameter poetry.

38.6 FURTHER READING

In case you are interested in reading more poems of this period you may read 'My Last Duchess', 'Count Gismond', 'Soliloquy of a Spanish Cloister', ' In a Gondola' published in *Dramatic Lyics* and ' Pictor Ignatus' and ' The Laboratory' in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. These would be available in any good anthology such as *Norton's* or the *Oxford Book of Victorian Poetry*. *The Works of Robert Browning* ed. F.G. Kenyon (New York: Barnes & Nobles 1966) may be very useful but difficult to lay your hands on. *Browning: Poetry and Prose* selected by Simon Nowell-Smith (London: Rupert-Davis, 1950) is an easily available selection of Browning's poems. *Robert Browning: The Poems* in 2 volumes edited by John Pettigrew (London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) is an authoritative collection of Browning's poems.

Among the critical works, I have referred to in 38.3.1 above is John Woolford's, *Browning the Revisionary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) and you may consult it if it's readily available.

UNIT 39 TWO POEMS FROM *MEN AND WOMEN* (1855)

Structure

39.0 Objectives
39.1 Introduction
39.2 Reading '*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*'
  39.2.1 Introducing 'Childe Roland'
  39.2.2 The plan and purpose of 'Childe Roland'
39.3 Reading 'Fra Lippo Lippi'
  39.3.1 Giorgio Vasari and his Life of Fra Filippo Lippi
  39.3.2 Introduction to 'Fra Lippo Lippi'
39.4 Let's sum up
39.5 Answers to exercises
39.6 Further reading

39.0 OBJECTIVES

After having read this unit you would be able to appreciate two of Browning's poems first published in *Men and Women* (1855). They are:

- '*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*' and
- 'Fra Lippo Lippi'.

By learning to appreciate them you will gain the ability to read and appreciate any other poem of Browning with the help of criticism available on them, on your own.

39.1 INTRODUCTION

In two earlier units you read two poems of Browning and an excerpt from *Sordello*. In this unit you will read two more poems written in the early fifties of the nineteenth century. With the help of these three units you should be able to appreciate the growth and development of Browning's poetic art.

In this unit you will be prepared to analyse another poem of your choice of Browning such as 'Andrea del Sarto', 'The Grammarian's Funeral', 'Abt Vogler', 'Karshish', and 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' with the help of articles and other reference material.

Don't try to read more than a major subsection such as 39.2.1 or 39.2.2 at a time. Give yourself a break after you've read something weighty and follow the suggestions for reading from 'supplementary reading', printed in this block, offered from time to time.

39.2 READING '*CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME*'

In this section first we will introduce you to the poem and then encourage you to read it on your own before you read my discussion on it.

39.2.1 Introducing *'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'*

You may have read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* prescribed for you in B.A. on your *Understanding Poetry* (EEG06) course. Browning's 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' is a dream poem like *The Rime*, 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel', three of the most celebrated poems of Coleridge and it has the same eerie, gloomy, and weird atmosphere. When some stranger asked Browning about 'Childe Roland' in 1887 he admitted:

> ...Childe Roland came upon me as a kind of dream. I had to write it, then and there, and I finished it in the same day, I believe. But it was simply that I had to do it. I did not know then what I meant beyond that, and I'm sure I don't know now. But I'm very fond of it.

Browning remained fond of 'Childe Roland' till the end of his life. 'Childe Roland' was written on January 2, 1852 in Paris in fulfilment of a new year resolution to write a poem a day. On the previous day he had written 'Women and Roses' and 'Love among the Ruins' the day after. All the three poems were published in *Men and Women* (1855). However, Browning placed 'Childe Roland' among the *Dramatic Romances* in 1863. Browning disapproved of any allegorical interpretations of the poem with the words 'Oh, no not at all,' but went on , 'I don't repudiate it, either. I only mean I was conscious of no allegorical intention in writing it.'

Browning also denied that there were any sources for the poem other than the line in *King Lear*, uttered by Edgar which gave the poem its title. Edgar's song in *King Lear* runs thus:

> Childe Rowland to the dark tower came,
> His word was still, 'Fie, foh, and fum,
> I smell the blood of a British man.

However, we know that Childe Rowland is a much older figure in European literature and folk tales than even Shakespeare. According to James Orchard Halliwell (1820-89), a noted Shakespearean scholar, Shakespeare above was quoting from two different compositions: the first line was from an old Scottish ballad in which Roland was the son of King Arthur. He rescued his sister Burd Ellen who had been carried away by the fairies to the castle of the king Elfland. The first line of the quotation above and the title of Browning's poem thus comes remotely from the Scottish ballad. The succeeding two lines, Halliwell pointed out, were from the nursery tale of 'Jack the Giant Killer'. It is also a tale of Northern origin but was known in England since very early times. You may have read it in your nursery class. Still, let me briefly tell you about it.

Jack lived about the time of Arthur (a chieftain or general in the fifth or sixth century). Jack's father was a Cornish farmer. He got known to his people when he killed the giant of Mount Cornwall. For this he dug a pit and covered it with branches, leaves and earth. Then he lured the giant towards it in which he fell and died. From another giant Jack acquired a coat that made him invisible, shoes that gave him superhuman speed, and a sword of magical powers. With the help of these he succeeded in ridding his land of all the giants.

Harold Golder in his article 'Browning's *Childe Roland*' (PMLA, 39,963-78) has shown that Browning must have drawn unconsciously upon several fairy tales such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk', 'Hap-o'-my-Thumb' and 'The Seven Champions of Christendom' apart from 'Jack the Giant-Killer'. You may like to read this article provided as supplementary reading in this block.

A 'Childe' in its medieval meaning is a young warrior serving his apprenticeship to Knighthood. Roland was a hero of the medieval French romance *Chanson de Roland*

(early 12th centrury) and was the commander of the rearguard, appointed to the post by Charlemagne on the advice of his traitor uncle Ganelon. Ganelon was in league with the Saracen king Marsile. (For the later Greeks and Romans, a Saracen was a nomadic tribe of the Syro-Arabian desert. By extension, during the Crusades, it meant a Muslim.) Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1535), the Italian poet, continued the story of Orlando (the Roland of the Charlemagne cycle) and his beloved Angelica begun by Boiardo (?1441-94) in *Orlando Innamorato* 1487. Edmund Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* was influenced by Ariosto in both its form and content. It is almost certain that Browning was influenced by the European tradition of Roland, even if remotely, who appeared in the French romances weaved around Charlemagne, the Arthurian legends of his own country and Orlando in Italian epic poems of Boiardo and Ariosto.

Scholars have also tried to trace some of the imagery in the poem back to Browning's early readings, life and travels. Browning wrote to A.W. Hunt, the painter who had done a watercolour of the scene in 'Childe Roland' in 1866: 'My own 'marsh' was made out of my head, - with some recollection of a strange solitary little tower I have come upon more than once in Massa–Carrara ...' The figure of the horse in the poem, Browning told Mrs. Sutherland Orr, was 'the figure of a horse in the tapestry in his own drawing room'. Regarding the landscape of 'Childe Roland' William Clyde DeVane, a well known Browning scholar, has pointed out that when Browning wrote 'Childe Roland' he had forgotten that most of its imagery came from the seventeenth chapter of Gerard de Lairesse's *The Art of Painting in All its Branches*. According to DeVane, in the chapter called 'Of Things Deformed and Broken, Falsely called Painter-like' one could find

> ...the old cripple, the pathless field, the desperate vegetation, the spiteful little river, the killing of the water-rat, the enclosing mountains, the leering sunset, and many other details of *Childe Roland*....

While these details of source hunting scholarship does throw some light on certain aspects of the poem they do not tell us much about the meaning of the poem as a whole.

Browning himself was reluctant to explain what the dream (or nightmare) signified. Once when a churchman asked him if the meaning of the poem could be summed up in the phrase. 'He that endureth till the end shall be saved'. Browning replied. 'Yes just about that.' 'Childe Roland' offers, as Mrs Orr pointed out,

> ...a poetic vision of life: with its conflicts, contradictions, and mockeries; its difficulties which give way when they seem most insuperable; its successes which look like failures, and its failures which look like success.

Mrs. Orr warned against trying to draw an imagined lesson from the poem, for it offers none.

You are now familiar with my method and you would expect now to be advised to read the poem, printed in this block yourself. 'Childe Roland' is a poem about which it has been said that every reader can be her/his own allegorist. Having read the poem it may be a good idea also to read Harold Golder's article on the poem supplied to you in this block as supplementary reading. This, however, is optional.

Having read the poem you may like to find out how well you have understood what you've read. The exercise below will help you do that. Try to do it before going on to the next section.

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. What is an allegory?

2. Record below three lines from 'Childe Roland' in which Browning describes the horse.

3. Note down three literary works in which Roland figures as a character.

4. Mention three folk tales by which Browning could be remotely influenced in his poem.

39.2.2 The Plan and Purpose of 'Childe Roland'

Rhetoric is born out of our quarrels with other people; poetry, from our quarrels with ourselves. The epistles of *Vinay Patrika* (Petitions to Ram) recorded Tulsidas's frequent ascesis for self-control and petitions to his god to help him overcome his unruly passions:

माधव मोह-फाँस क्यो टूटै।
बाहि कोटि उपाय करिय, अभ्यंतर ग्रन्थि न छूटै।।1।।

.. ..

अंतर मलिन विषय मन अति, तन पावन करिय पखारे।
मरइ न उरग अनेक जतन बलमीकि बिबिध बिधि मारे।। 4।।

In another petition he again says

माधव! मो समान जग माहीं।
सब बिधि हीन, मलीन, दीन अति, लीन-विषय कोउ नाहीं।।1।।

Tulsidas admits to be deeply immersed in carnal desires and wants Ram to pull him out of the slough of such cravings. In another poem he calls Ram by the name of Hrishikesh i.e. master of the senses and exhorts him to relieve him of the pain engendered by them.

हृषीकेस सुनि नाउँ जाउँ बलि, अति भरोस जिय मोरे।
तुलसिदास इंद्रिय-संभव दुख, हरे बनिहि प्रभु तोरे।।5।।

Tulsidas was a contemporary of Shakespeare and just as the latter wrote in England, during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) the former wrote during that of Akbar (1556-1605) in India. There is a relative simplicity in the quality of experience that

Tulsidas, or for that matter Shakespeare, records *vis-à-vis* those of nineteenth and twentieth century poets whether of the United Kingdom or India.

'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' is a complex record of a poet's ascesis in his profession. Some critics have compared it with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. However, while Eliot talks about his age and the European society in that poem, Browning talks primarily, if not entirely, about himself, just like Tulsidas in some of the verses of *Vinay Patika* and W.B. Yeats in 'Meditations in Times of Civil War' and 'Nineteen Nineteen'. The atmosphere in 'Childe Roland' is no doubt eerie just as it is in Eliot's poem or in some of those of Coleridge but the intention is self-discovery, an examination of his office of a poet with respect to others', more active more involved in the daily business of life such as Yeats suspected his descendants could become:

> And what if my descendants lose the flower
> Through natural declension of the soul,
> Through too much business with the passing hour,
> Through too much play, or marriage with a fool?

Most human beings busy themselves in solving routine mundane problems of life, not in creating 'monuments of unageing intellect' or artifices of eternity. However, the poet is not *always* sure that what he is doing is of as great an importance as he imagines. Yeats's own Thoor Ballylee tower was founded by a man-at-arms, a violent man:

> A man-at-arms
> Gathered a score of horse and spent his days
> In this tumultuous spot,
> Where through long wars and sudden night alarms
> His dwindling score and he seemed castaways
> Forgetting and forgot;

However, before recognising the violent man's achievement, Yeats had laughed at the 'benighted travellers' who had laughed at him sitting in his 'chamber arched with stone' in front of.

> A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,
> A candle and written page.

Yeats imagines that before him Milton also must have 'toiled on/in some like chamber' on his 'Il Penseroso', significantly a poem in which Milton was examining his choice of profession in life just as Yeats was examining his own in his 'Meditations in Time of Civil War'.

Browning's 'Childe Roland' records the introspections of a mid-Victorian poet in the middle of his career. Milton wrote his twin poems 'L' Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' when he was around 23 years old; Yeats (1865-1939) when he published his 'Meditations' in the *Tower* (1928) was around 63; and Browning was an unsuccessful poet, unknown to the world at 40 when he wrote 'Childe Roland'. He was known to the American tourists as husband of the much more successful Elizabeth Barrett. Hence we discover a tone of futility in Browning's voice and an atmosphere of deceit, decay and death in the poem. Did I choose the right profession? is what the poet asks himself. And yet it is not a rhetorical question, for Browning was a stubborn optimist.

The opening of the poem reconciles the dichotomy in the image of the 'hoary cripple':

> My first thought was, he lied in every word,
> That hoary cripple with malicious eye

Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

The portrait is highly ironical. The man is a 'cripple' and yet venerable –'hoary'. His physical deformity is manifestation of his moral defect. He looks suspiciously sideways, and when Roland takes the path suggested by him he is scarce able to suppress his joy for having gained one more victim by deceiving a lusty youth.

The introductory section of the poem - i.e. from stanza I to VIII – records the ironical situation in which the inscription of the poem is made. Roland is aware that the cripple sat there on the road with staff in hand only to waylay travellers who might seek his direction. However, all agreed that it was that 'ominous tract' that '[hid]' the Dark Tower. Why should Roland want to follow an 'ominous' tract? Why should he wish to go to a "dark" tower?

Roland's condition is described with the help of an *exemplum* of an old man on his death bed who would rather die in order to please his kin than survive and disappoint them. Roland's kin are his 'Band', namely

The Knights who to the Dark tower's search addressed
Their steps – that just to fail as they, seemed best,

And Roland's fear now is if he is 'fit' to follow that 'ominous tract' on which many knights went before him.

Notwithstanding the fact that many knights had followed the path to the tower, possibly on the advice of the cripple Roland still finds him 'hateful' and takes the path, away from the highway, pointed out by him.

The first section of the poem of the first eight stanzas ends with an eerie picture of the youthful man as an estray i.e. a domestic animal that has strayed away from home:

All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

The heath has caught its 'estray' once again. The coming of Roland is thus a home coming of a quester, a traveller, and a knight. The picture so far is full of tropes: nothing really appears to match its description; words seem to have lost their communicative talent; all is irony and paradox. Poetry here is at its ironical best.

The ninth to the twentyninth stanza forms the middle section of the poem. It is a harrowing tale of the poetic landscape. Outsiders notice only the triumphs of the poets, their laurels and the rare applause but the real experience that the poet has is of cockle and spurge (plants of acrid milky juice) and a burr becomes his 'treasure trove'. Nature that is rich elsewhere and for other people looks peevishly towards the poet:

'See
Or shut your eyes', said Nature peevishly,
'It nothing skills; I cannot help my case;
'Tis the last judgement's fire must cure his place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.'

To Browning in his early forties, the poetic landscape appeared a dead and dreary place where

The dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.

to borrow Eliot's words in *The Waste Land*. While the land in Eliot's poem is dry and parched, in Browning's grass grows as scantily as hair on a leper's skin and the ground appears to be 'kneaded up with blood.' In the midst of death and destruction all around stands a 'blind horse' apparently thrown out of the devil's stable. 'Alive?' asks Roland about the horse and goes on to answer.

...he might be dead for ought I know,
With that red gaunt and calloped neck a-strain.
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;

Like a true soldier, Roland, overcoming despair, prepares himself for a fight.

He does so by remembering his better days. (It appears that Browning wishes to recall those days when he was welcomed by Macready and Forster and above all Dickens.) But even *that* he is not granted. Cuthbert left him cold by his treatment:

I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

Giles, the soul of honour, was treated shabbily by his peers. He was called a traitor, spat upon and cursed. On the one hand Browning is metonymically speaking of gallants – one fake, i.e. Cuthbert, and the other genuine i.e. Giles – but metaphorically they stand for genuine and fake poets as Keats before him had talked about in 'The Fall of Hyperion: A Fragment' (1818).

To revert to the narrative, Roland is deep in despair somewhat like the Irish Airman of Yeats:

The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind

The plight of the Knights such as Cuthbert and Giles makes him prefer his waste land to that of valourous fight for honour. 'Better' he affirms, 'this present than a past like that;' and he commits himself to the 'darkening path'. He hears no sound nor can he have a sight and is afraid that he could be attacked by an owl (howlet) or a sharp toothed bat: 'Will the night send a howlet or a bat?'

Within the middle section stanza nineteen starts a description of a still more ghostly atmosphere reminiscent of those lines from Coleridge's *Rime*:

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

Roland is taken by surprise by the appearance of a 'little river' which comes as unexpectedly as a serpent. The simile performs more than the trope promises. Browning makes use of it to heighten the effect of the atmosphere. Stroke after stroke the weird milieu grows more and more dim as Browning describes the dark river ('black eddy') spattered with white 'flakes and spumes' making the river look like a dark monster baring its teeth. The river is further endowed with tyrannical power as it is metonymically shown carrying animals and vegetables along its course.

...a suicidal throng,
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

Roland's experience of crossing the river is no less gruesome:

...While I forded – good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I trust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
It may have been a water rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Having crossed the river Roland expects to witness a better terrain. However, the loam below his feet tells him of some war that must have been fought on that ground. 'Childe Roland' is a dream poem like 'Kubla Khan' and images often symbolise the human condition that the poet wants to portray.

'Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage-

the fight if animals in the dreadful circular arena – 'fell cirque' – which no animal seems to leave represents the mad fight of poets and men of letters in life. There are besides, the difficult systems of the society, meaningless but painful, created by no one one knows who. These institutions appear in Browning's dream as a 'brake' or machine for separating fiber such as flax or hemp:

And more than that – a furlong on –why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel – that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? With all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

The image of the machine or brake hauntingly suggests the painful torment Browning must have gone through as a poet. Dr. Johnson had known poverty, was even about to be sent to a debtor's prison but was fortunate in his large group of friends, though not of the patrons such as Lord Chesterfield. However, early in his life adversity did not spare him which elicited those memorable linesfrom him in *London* (1738):

Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
And bear oppression's insolence no more.
This mournful truth is everywhere confessed
SLOW RISES WORTH, BY POVERTY DEPRESSED:
But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold;

Johnson had not yet turned thirty while he had just begun his service with Edward Cave on *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Probably Browning's case, more than a hundred years later, was much more difficult with the social fabric of London no longer the same and his own social intercourse being less close and intimate than Johnson's.

Literary texts, we know, are complex by nature, which means that they are not easily decipherable and are not isotropic. Speaking in the context of 'Childe Roland', we can say that this complexity crops up due to interweaving of several motifs i.e. those of the narrative needs of the Roland legend, the metaphoric need of translating Browning's personal message into the overall plan of the narrative, and finally the

aesthetic demand of the appropriate metonymic choice of images which may give an appearance of unity to the poem.

After Roland had witnessed the various forms of fear and tribulations on the heath he began to look for a new direction in which he could take his steps.

> At the thought,
> A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom friend,
> Sailed past, not beat his wide wing dragon-penned
> That brushed my cap - perchance the guide I sought.

Roland is not the folk hero but Browning himself because he is not shown the direction by Apollyon, an angel of the bottomless pit' in the 'Book of Revelation' and in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678-'84) himself but by his 'bosom friend.' Browning the devout Christian that he was would have considered it profane and an expression of his pride to have a Biblical character guide his steps. Bunyan's Apollyon 'had wings like a dragon' and the direction of the fall of the cap showed him the direction in which he could go.

And so it happened. Instead of the heath and waste land Roland now found himself surrounded by mountains, or more appropriately from Roland's point of view, 'ugly heights'. However, Roland recounts:

> Here ended, then,
> Progress this way. When, in the very nick
> Of giving up, one time more came a click
> As when a trap shuts – you're inside the den!

With these words end Roland's difficult journey and Browning's nightmare.

Somewhat as in Shelley's 'Triumph of Life' Browning receives the epiphany of witnessing the poets whose path he had followed all his life:

> There they stood, ranged along the Hill-sides - met
> To view the last of me, a living frame
> For one more picture! In a sheet of flame
> I saw them and I knew them all.

The last section of the poem i.e. consisting of the last five stanzas is a preparation for this end. If Browning is to feel blessed in their company, the poets of yester years are also to feel alive through him. The poetic undertone, as it were, finally becomes the dominant tune in the last lines of the poem:

> And yet
> Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set
> And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.*"

A poetic act is an act of sound and music. The last words are a poetic quotation just as the 'slug-horn' is a poetic coinage (for slogan) of Thomas Chatterton, the marvellous boy. And yet it is poetry that is a sluggish instrument as Browning must have seen it in his early forties. Browning here as Roland is a hero determined to win just as in 'Prospice' he was prepared to face death bravely.

Harold Bloom considered 'Childe Roland' Browning's finest' poem (*The Ringers in the Tower*, p.157). Whether finest or not, it is certainly an example of 'strong' poetry as Bloom would call it and operates at many levels, the most important of which is the autobiographical.

39.3 READING 'FRA LIPPO LIPPI'

While teaching Browning's poems earlier in this and the previous two units we had adopted the method of first providing a background to the study of the poem; then asking you to read it and finally presenting you with an analysis and appreciation of the poem. In the present case we are going to adopt a slightly different strategy.

The poem 'Fra Lippo Lippi' published in *Men and Women* for the first time was based on the life of the painter Filippo di Tomasso Lippi (c.1406-1469) written by Giorgio Vasari. An English translation of the 'Life' by Julia Conway and Peter Bondanella is printed in this block. You may go through it before reading the poem. If you wish to know about Giorgio Vasari please read the following sub-section.

39.3.1 Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574)

Giorgio Vasari was an Italian painter, architect and celebrated author of *The Lives of the* most excellent *Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors* (1550 and 1568). This work ranked him along with Machiavelli and Ariosto, as a leading Italian literary artist. Vasari claimed that he had learnt his art in the first place from Michelangelo in Florence, a story which has been disputed, and after his departure for Rome, from Andrea del Sarto (1484-1530) and Baccio Bandinelli. However, later assessments of Vasari have confirmed his titanic energy as an architect but not as a painter. Michelangelo doubted the quality of Vasari's inspiration in his paintings and posterity is in agreement with him. Nonetheless, when the first edition of Vasari's *Lives* was published in 1550 Michelangelo, the century's greatest artist and lyric poet wrote a sonnet on him.

No true reference work existed for Vasari to consult and base his *Lives* upon. So, in a way, he invented the discipline of art history. However, art critics have pointed out that Vasari's technical vocabulary is often inadequate. For instance, he too frequently uses the word beautiful which shows his lack of discrimination.

Notwithstanding his faults, which were of his time, his encyclopaedic knowledge of the major and minor Italian artists, his understanding of the trends in the development of Italian art and his insights into the technical aspects of art counterbalance his deficiencies which seem trivial in comparison. To give you an example of Vasari's insight into the technical aspects: he pointed out that Titian lacked a sound knowledge of human anatomy which was fundamental to the reproduction of the human figure. Vasari valued design in art because he believed that an artist must have a clear *idea* of what he wanted to say through a particular piece of art. Vasari's *Lives* are enriched by the anecdotes from the lives of the painters which at the same time significantly illustrate their characters and make an indelible mark on our memory.

For instance Vasari tells us that Fra Filippo Lippi had lost his mother at his birth and his father two years later. So he had to be brought up by Mona Lapaccia, the sister of his father Tommaso. As she found it difficult to bear the costs so Vasari tells us, Filippo had to be made a friar at the Carmine church at the age of eight. (The footnote to the 'Life' would tell you that Filippo took the vows not in 1414 but in 1421 when he was fifteen. Vasari is often careless about his dates. However, considering the scale on which he was working and the documents so few on which he could base his researches Vasari deserved the praise of the posterity that he got.)

You would enjoy reading the 'Life of Fra Filippo Lippi'. If we had been in the classroom we would have discussed it. We would still do the same through the following check your progress exercises'.

Self-Check Exereise-II

1. Who was Filippo's first teacher of art at Florence?

2. How did Filippo elicit 'compassion and freedom, from the Moors of Barbary?

3. Who was Cosimo de' Medici? What did he do to Filippo and Why? How did the artist respond and what was his master's reaction to his act?

4. Who was Lucrezia Buti?

39.3.2 Introduction to 'Fra Lippo Lippi'

Now that you have read Vasari's life of Fra Filippo Lippi you are ready to read Browning's verse narrative which was based on that life.

Browning must have seen in and around Florence many of Lippi's works. In lines 344-77 of the poem he tells the watchmen about his plan to paint 'The Coronation of the Virgin' for St. Ambrose's Convent. There is another reference to Lippi's painting in line 73 of the poem of St. Jerome (340-420), which he did for Cosimo, his patron. Lippi was rebelling against the work of painters such as Giotto (whom you met in the first block of this course), Fra Angelico, Giovanni da Fiesole (1387-1455), and Lorenzo Monaco (c.1370-c.1425). Angelico was the model Medieval painter who took painting as an act of piety and painted the portraits of the saints kneeling down. Lippi talks about another type of piety. The world of beauty according to him was God's creation and was not to be passed by unheeded:

> Oh, oh,
> It makes me mad to see what men shall do
> And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

Lippi's life and career, it appears, provided Browning with a perfect objective correlative, to use Eliot's term in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), for the expression of his own beliefs and ideals.



FRA FILIPPO LIPPI. *MADONNA ENTHRONED.*
1437. Panel, 45×25½" (114.7×64.8 cm).
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome

Read the poem first and then, read Isobel Armstrong's article on Browning afforded in this block for supplementary reading.

39.4 LET'S SUM UP

With this unit you come to the end of the discussion on Browning on this course. We could have made this block one entirely on **Robert** Browning as we did earlier in the

first, second and fourth blocks on Chaucer, Spenser and Milton. However, we decided to take up one major along with three more major minor poets of the Victorian period. These will be discussed in the succeeding two units. It was our endeavour to examine texts closely and if you could get a hang of this method of close analysis we would consider our task accomplished

39.5 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Self-Check Exercise-I

1. An allegory is a figurative narrative or description meant to convey a veiled moral. It is in a way an extended metaphor. *The Faerie Queene*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* personify abstract qualities. *Absalom and Achitophel* is a political allegory. Fables usually have a more well defined moral and the characters in it are animals. Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a political satire in the form of a fable.

2. One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
   Stood stupefied, however he came there;
   Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

   Above are the last three lines of the 13th stanza. The first three lines of the 14th stanza also describe the horse. A stud is a stable. Notice how well Browning creates the weird atmosphere with the help of the image of the grotesque that is the horse.

3. Shakespeare's *King Lear* which Browning admitted to have provided him with the title of his poem; the early twelfth century French romance *Chanson de Roland;* and the Italian *Orlando Innamorato* by Boiardo and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* have Roland as the hero.

4. 'Jack the Giant Killer', 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and 'The Seven Champions of Christendom'.

Self-Check Exercise-II

1. Masaccio was doing the frescoes (pictures painted on fresh plaster) on the walls of Branacci chapel of Sta. Maria del Carmine. These were going to be some of the most influential paintings of the Renaissance. Filippo thus got his first lessons from a master artist of Renaissance Italy.

2. Later researches have shown that Vasari's story about the kidnapping of Filippo and his friends while they were amusing themselves in the March of Ancona was fanciful. In 1434 Filippo was at Padua and art historians have felt the effect of his presence there on the art of that period on the paintings at Padua, especially those of Mantegna.

3. The story narrated in the fifth paragraph of the 'Life' has been found to be broadly true by later scholarship.

   The last few words of the paragraph – 'rare geniuses are celestial forms and not beasts of burden' – are memorable.

4. Lucrezia Buti, daughter of Francesco Buti (a Florentine citizen), was a nun at the convent of the nuns of Sta. Margherita. He fled with her in 1456 from Prato causing much harm to the reputation of the convent and shock to her father. The Pope, however, granted him permission to marry her and from this union was born Filippo, called Filippino, one of the most renowned Florentine painters of the latter half of the fifteenth century.

39.6 FURTHER READING

You have several articles in this block which you may like to go through. In this unit we have referred to Harold Bloom's 'Browning's *Childe Roland*: All things deformed and broken' (pp.157-167) published in *The Ringers in The Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition* (University of Chicago P: Chicago, London, 1971) and to 'Testing the Map: Browning's Childe Roland' (pp 106-122) published in *A Map of Misreading* (O.U.P.: Oxford, New York, 1975, 1980) by the same author.

It would be useful to consult any of the following three books if you are going to attempt a poem for your term paper not discussed on this course. The books are as below:

1. Mrs. Sutherland Orr, *A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning* (G. Bell & Sons: London, 1919)

2. William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (1935, Appleton- Century – Crofts, Inc.; New York, 1955)

3. Ian Jack, *Browning's Major Poetry* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1973)

Those who don't have access to a good library may write sessional essay on 'Fra Lippo Lippi'.

UNIT 40 THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD:DANTE GABRIEL AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Structure

40.0 Objectives
40.1 Introduction
40.2 The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Movement in Art and Literature
40.3 Dante Gabriel Rossetti
- 40.3.1 Early Works
- 40.3.2 Personal Experiences
- 40.3.3 Portrayal of Women
- 40.3.4 Literary Endeavours

40.4 The Poems
- 40.4.1 "My Sister's Sleep,"
- 40.4.2 "The Blessed Damozel"

40.5 Christina Rossetti
- 40.5.1 "Goblin Market"

40.6 Let's sum up
40.7 Suggested Readings
40.8 Bibliography

40.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- write about the Pre-Raphaelite Movement in art and literature in the nineteenth century,
- understand the work and achievements of two of its practitioners. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his sister, Christina Rossetti.
- be aquainted with some of their poems.

40.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will first familiarize you with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement that took place in the nineteenth century. Then it will speak of two poets of the movement. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Rossetti, analyzing two of the former's poems and one by the latter.

40.2 THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD :A MOVEMENT IN ART AND LITERATURE

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement was not a movement confined to literature. In fact. it started with painting. In 1848 a group of young British painters banded together in a reaction to what they conceived as the unimaginative painting of the Royal Academy. They purportedly sought to express a new moral seriousness and sincerity in their works. They were inspired by Italian art of the 14th and 15th centuries. and their adoption of the name Pre-Raphaelite expressed their admiration for what they saw as the direct and uncomplicated depiction of nature typical of Italian painting before the

High Renaissance and, particularly, before the time of **Raphael**.* Although the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's active life lasted less than 10 years, its influence on painting in Britain, and ultimately on the decorative arts and interior design, was profound.

Apart from Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood comprised Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais. They were all under 25. The painter James Collinson, the painter and critic F.G. Stephens, the sculptor Thomas Woolner, and the critic William Michael Rossetti (Dante Gabriel's brother) joined them by invitation. William Dyce and Ford Madox Brown were also notable practitioners of the Pre-Raphaelite style in painting.

Paintings:

The Brotherhood immediately began to produce highly convincing and significant works. Their pictures of religious and medieval subjects emulated the deep religious feeling and naive, unadorned directness of 15th-century Florentine and Sienese painting. The style that Hunt and Millais evolved featured sharp and brilliant lighting, a clear atmosphere, and a near-photographic reproduction of minute details. They also frequently introduced a private poetic symbolism into their representations of Biblical subjects and medieval literary themes. Vitality and freshness of vision are the most admirable qualities of these early Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

At first the Brotherhood exhibited together anonymously, signing all their paintings with the monogram PRB. When their identity and youth were discovered in 1850, their work was harshly criticized by the novelist Charles Dickens, among others, not only for its disregard of academic ideals of beauty but also for its apparent irreverence in treating religious themes with an uncompromising realism. Nevertheless the leading art critic of the day, John Ruskin, stoutly defended Pre-Raphaelite art, and the members of the group were never without patrons.

40.3 DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI: INTRODUCTION TO THE POET

D. G.Rossetti [original name GABRIEL CHARLES DANTE ROSSETTI] (1828--1882)], was an English painter and poet who helped found the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He was educated at King's College before he went to "Sass's," an old-fashioned drawing school in Bloomsbury (central London), and thence to the Royal Academy schools, where he became a full student. A voracious reader, he was well read in William Shakespeare, J.W. von Goethe, Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott. He was fascinated by Gothic tales of horror and the work of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe. In 1847 he discovered the 18th-century English painter-poet William Blake whose diatribes against the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds encouraged Rossetti to attempt lampoons of his own against the triviality of early Victorian paintings.

By the time Rossetti was 20, he had already done a number of translations of Italian poets and had also composed some original verse. Simultaneously, he was in and out of artists' studios and for a short time was, in an informal way, a pupil of the painter Ford Madox Brown. He acquired some of Brown's admiration for the German "Pre-

* RAPHAEL☹1483-1520) Italian artist, master painter and architect of the Italian High Raffaello Sanzio Renaissance. He was a disciple of artists like Leonardo do Vinci and Michelangelo. Raphael is best known for his Madonnas and for his large figure compositions in the Vatican in Rome. His work is admired for its clarity of form, ease of composition and for its visual achievement.

Raphaelites," the nickname of the austere Nazarenes,** who had sought to bring back into German art a pre-Renaissance purity of style and aim.



D, G.Rossetti

Largely through Rossetti's efforts, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in 1848 with seven members, all Royal Academy students except for William Michael Rossetti. They aimed at "truth to nature," which was to be achieved by minuteness of

** The Nazarenes (so called because they sported the biblical style of hair and dress) was an association of German painters, formed in 1809, who wished to revive the medieval spirit in art through fresco painting. It was anti-academic movement that reacted against the 18th century Neoclassicism. The Nazarenes' belief in the honest expression of deeply felt ideals had an important influence on the English Pre-Raphaelite movement of the mid-nineteenth century.

detail and painting from nature outdoors. This was, more especially, the purpose of the two other principal members, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. Rossetti expanded the Brotherhood's aims by linking poetry, painting, and social idealism and by interpreting the term Pre-Raphaelite as synonymous with a romanticized medieval past.

40.3.1 Early Works

Rossetti's early oil paintings were simple in style but elaborate in symbolism. Some of the same atmosphere is felt in the rich word-painting and emotional force of his poem "The **Blessed Damozel**," published in 1850 in the first issue of ***The Germ***,*** the Pre-Raphaelite magazine. When it was exhibited in 1850, his painting "Ecce Ancilla Domini" received severe criticism, which Rossetti could never bear with equanimity. In consequence, he ceased to show in public and gave up oils in favour of watercolours, which he could more easily dispose of to personal acquaintances. He also turned from traditional religious themes to painting scenes from Shakespeare, Robert Browning, and Dante, which allowed more freedom of imaginative treatment.

40.3.2 Personal experiences

Much of Rossetti's work has its roots in his personal life. His paintings and poems are based on lived events and experiences and the persons they immortalize are generally intimately connected with his life and work: the public and the personal are not separate. Hence, some awareness of his personal life, and the people he came into close contact with, is essential for a proper understanding of his work.

An important chapter in Rossetti's life began in the 1850s with the introduction into the Pre-Raphaelite circle of the beautiful **Elizabeth Siddal**, who served at first as model for the whole group but was soon attached to Rossetti alone and, in 1860, married him. Many portrait drawings testify to his affection for her. In 1854 Rossetti gained a powerful but exacting patron in the art critic John Ruskin. By then the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was at an end, splintered by the different interests and temperaments of its members. But Rossetti's magnetic personality aroused a fresh wave of enthusiasm. In 1856 he came into contact with the then-Oxford undergraduates Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. With these two young disciples he initiated a second phase of the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

From 1860 onward, trials were part of Rossetti's much-disturbed life. His marriage to Elizabeth Siddal, clouded by her constant ill health, ended tragically in 1862 with her death from an overdose of laudanum. He was so stricken with grief and remorse that he buried with her the only complete manuscript of his poems. That he considered his love for his wife similar to Dante's mystical and idealized love for Beatrice is evident from the symbolic "Beata Beatrix," painted in 1863 and now in the Tate Gallery.

40.3.3 Portrayal of women

Under the influence of new friends --- Algernon Charles Swinburne and the American painter James McNeill Whistler --- Rossetti explored a more aesthetic and sensuous approach to art. In particular, he focused on portrayals of female beauty,

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*** ***The Germ***: A periodical edited by W. M. Rossetti, of which the first issue appeared on Jan 1, 1850. ***The Germ*** was the spokesman of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but survived only four issues, the last appearing on April 30, 1850. The last two issues of the journal were renamed ***Art and Poetry, being Thoughts Towards Nature***. ***The Germ*** published the poems of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and is believed to have inspired William Morris's ***Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*** (1856) which continued the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

such as his mistress, Fanny Cornforth, gorgeously appareled and painted. Among these works is "The Blessed Damozel" (1871-79). The luxuriant colours and rhythmic design of these paintings enhance the effect of their languid, sensuous female subjects, all of whom bear a distinctive "Pre-Raphaelite" facial type. The paintings proved popular with collectors, and Rossetti grew affluent enough to employ studio assistants to make copies and replicas.

40.3.4 Literary Endeavours

Rossetti had enjoyed a modest success in 1861 with his published translations, *The Early Italian Poets*; and toward the end of the 1860s his thoughts turned to poetry again. He began composing new poems and planned the recovery of the manuscript poems buried with his wife in Highgate Cemetery. Carried out in 1869 through the agency of his unconventional man of business, Charles Augustus Howell, the exhumation greatly distressed the superstitious Rossetti. The publication of these poems followed in 1870.

The Poems were well enough received until a misdirected, savage onslaught by "Thomas Maitland" (pseudonym of the journalist-critic Robert Buchanan) on **"The Fleshly School of Poetry"** singled out Rossetti for attack. Rossetti responded temperately in "The Stealthy School of Criticism," published in the *Athenaeum*; but the attack, combined with remorse and the amount of drugs and alcohol he now took for insomnia, brought about his collapse in 1872. He recovered sufficiently to paint and write, but his life was subsequently that of a semi-invalid and recluse. In the early 1880s Rossetti occupied himself with a replica of an early watercolour, "Dante's Dream" (1880), a revised edition of ***Poems*** (1881), and ***Ballads and Sonnets*** (1881), containing the completed sonnet sequence of "The House of Life," in which he described the love between man and woman with tragic intensity. From a visit to Keswick (in northwestern England) in 1881, Rossetti returned in worse health than before, and he died the following spring.

Rossetti remains an important figure in the history of 19th-century English art and literature because he broke with tradition and experimented with new themes. What is remarkable in his work is his eye for detail, through his painting as well as his poems. In his poetry, through the accumulation of details and the building up of a deep emotional intensity, he is able to create the desired atmosphere effectively. This is what he does in his poem **"My Sister's Sleep"** where one can almost feel the silence and sickness of the woman's room and the sense of doom that prevails. In other poems, too, he employs similar effects, as in "The Wood Spurge" and the lyric "I have been here before. "The Stream's Secret," haunted by the ghost of his dead wife, evokes pity and regret by the power of its verbal music. This theme of death, grief and longing is a prominent one in the work of Rossetti. The relation between life and death, the physical and the spiritual, haunted him throughout, heightened particularly by the tragic loss of his wife.

Rossetti's poetic art had other, less subjective aspects. "The Last Confession," a tragic episode set against a background of the Italian Risorgimento (the movement for the liberation and unification of Italy, 1750-1870), is a powerful dramatic monologue that can bear comparison with those of Robert Browning. With his feeling for medieval subjects, Rossetti also caught the spirit of the ballad as in his "Sister Helen" and "Eden Bower." "The White Ship" and "The King's Tragedy," are outstanding re-creations of the historical ballad. Early in Rossetti's career, the sight of the great winged bulls in the British Museum evoked his poem "Burden of Nineveh" (1850), a meditation on the unpredictable course of history that is rich in word-music and far-ranging in imaginative vision.

In this section you will read two poems of D.G. Rossetti. They are 'My Sister's Sleep' and 'The Blessed Damozel'.

40.4.1 "My Sister's Sleep"

In "My Sister's Sleep" Rossetti attempts with the help of words what the Pre-Raphaelite painters did with paintbrush and easel in their paintings: he uses verbal effects where they use colours and paints to evoke a realistic scene in the minutest detail. The setting appears to be the Rossetti home but the dying sister is a figment of his imagination.

The poem is remarkable for its creation of a hushed atmosphere, its concentration of detail, and its visual images. There is in the poem the sorrow that is inevitably related to death and the idea of dying. But the sorrow does not become claustrophobically unbearable as there is an element of equanimity that pervades the poem, a calmness that makes sorrow an acceptable reality.

Rossetti's, poetic style needs a special mention. He tends to use monosyllabic words and his lines are short, composed in simple iambic (an unstressed and a stressed syllable) tetrameter (three feet in each line). The stanzaic pattern is rhymed *abba* quatrains. What holds the attention most, however, is not the technicalities of the poem but the play of light and colour throughout. Rossetti remains a painter even in his poems, creating visual art with words. His poetry appeals more through the images it evokes than the ideas it contains.

As is evident from "My Sister's Sleep," Pre-Raphaelite poetry generrally focuses on a single female figure: its beauty, grace, and divinity is evoked in sensuous detail. One may notice a romantic idealization of womanhood in these portrayals. The women, as in romantic poetry, are frail, weak, weeping, pining, swooning or dying. They need to be looked after, to be supported, to be protected. True, this is a chauvinistic view, but such was the stereotype favoured in the nineteenth century. Anything different was seen as an anomaly. Such is also the female figure presented in Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel."

40.4.2 "The Blessed Damozel"

"The Blessed Damozel" was first written in 1847, when Rossetti was 19, and published in ***The Germ*** in 1850. There is also a painting by Rossetti of the same subject which dates much later (between 1875 and 1879). The poem, as Rossetti himself said, is inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" in which speaks of a grief-stricken lover. The Rossetti's were familiar with foreign literatures and had discovered Poe's work much before it hit the European scene. As Rossetti was to state later in life, "I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the condition, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven."

So, in Rossetti's poem, the beloved is in heaven, longing for her lover who has survived her on earth. One may trace in the poem the obvious influence of Dante Just as Dante, in his *Divine Comedy*, glorifies his beloved, Beatrice, and looks on her as a medium that will take him to divinity, so too, Rossetti looks upon the woman in the poem as some kind of a divine creature, looking down at her mortal lover. Like Dante's poem, "The Blessed Damozel" combines physical love with the spiritual, seeking a plane that transcends earthly bonds.

The manner in which Rossetti turns to heaven and to a spiritual after-life would convey the idea that his is religious poetry. In fact, the title of his poem ("The

Blessed Damozel") brings to mind the Virgin Mary. But Rossetti's intention was never to write for religious purposes. On the contrary, whereas religion believes in a shedding of all earthly bonds following a union with God, the idea Rossetti presents in "The Blessed Damozel" is that earthly love survives in heaven. There is also a lot that the religious-minded would object to in his portrayal of the disconsolate woman's indifference to all heavenly delights in her disconsolate, grief-stricken state.

The poem begins with a picture of the beloved in her heavenly abode. But she is discontented and sorrowful. Oblivious of all the beauties that surround her, she looks down at the earth below:

> The blessed damozel leaned out
> From the gold bar of heaven;
> Her eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even;
> She had three lilies in her hand,
> And the stars in her hair were seven.

This opening stanza of the poem prepares us for what is to follow. It "locates" the poem, so to speak, identifies its main character, and points a cue to the stylistic devices the poet uses.

Location-wise, the scene is heaven. But there is an ambivalence in Rossetti's portrayal of heaven: the "gold bar" brings to mind the bars of a prison, it suggests a lack of freedom. For the woman, no doubt, heaven is a prison that keeps her away from her true love. (The last stanza of the poem will tell us that they are "golden barriers.") Similarly, there is irony in the poet's use of the adjective "blessed" for the girl. A blessed state generally connotes contentment, bliss, peace, shades of divinity. In the girl's case, however, there is neither peace nor happiness. Even though her sorrow is not outlined in the opening lines, a suggestion of it is present in the "bar" that confines her to heaven and in the mysterious depths of her eyes (l.3).

The description of the girl merits some more attention. The three lilies in her hand and seven stars in her hair are a statement on the Pre-Raphaelite poetic method: its concentration on minute detail in order to create a realistic picture. There is also a romantic element in the description of the girl with languid, deep eyes, adorned with flowers and stars, leaning over the gold bar. It reminds us of idealized female figures in romantic poetry. As we proceed further into the poem, this impression is reinforced when we are told that the woman pining for her lover. This brings to mind the woman wailing for her demon lover in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." But the situation is somewhat different because in Rossetti's poem it is the woman who is divine ("blessed") while her lover is mortal.

The poem may be divided into two almost equal parts. The first half (65 lines) of the poem concentrate on the forlorn woman's elysian surroundings while the second half comprises mainly her monologue, her yearning for her lost love.

In the first half of the poem there is a constant play on the polarities of this world that the girl now inhabits (heaven) and the other world (the earth) that she has left far behind, that lies way below. It may be noted that whereas the first is described in detail, the second (the earth) is not described at all and there is a constant reference to the gap, the chasm that separates the two. Even though the girl tries hard to see what is happening in the world below, she is unable to do so. All she sees is mists and darkness, both symbolic of her unmitigated despair.

The poem does not end on a note of hope even though there is a temporary calming of grief in the penultimate stanza when the girl is "Less sad of speech" and she smiles. It is almost as she consoles herself, reconciling herself to her present forlornness. Perhaps in her heart of hearts she knows that reunion is impossible, and

she realizes the futility of her longing, because the concluding stanza tells us again that she weeps with her face buried in her hands.

Despair, in Rossetti's vision, is also to be found in heaven! Despair and longing for earthly bliss, for human love.

Simple exercises for comprehension:

1. Show how Rossetti in his poems uses words the way a painter uses colours. [You will have too look at the poems carefully and study the images they describe, their concentration on detail, the use of colour, light, and shadows. You will also assess the symbolic value of the images and their appropriateness in the given context.]

2. Explain how Rossetti is concerned with the connection between this physical world and the other world of afterlife. Do you find traces of romanticism in this concern? Illustrate your answer with the help of the themes and images employed in his poems. [For this question you will first speak of the theme of death in both the poems that have been discussed in this unit. Then you will show how death has been treated. You will try to figure out in what way it is connected with earthly existence. Which of the two, in your opinion, seems more satisfying to the poet? Life or death?]

3 With the help of the two poems you have read by Rossetti, comment on the Pre-Raphaelite treatment of women. [Keep in mind that the important women in Rossetti's life were initially models who posed for the young painters. So, for the Pre-Raphaelites they were tools that could take them towards success. Paradoxically, even though they could be "hired" in the commercial sense, these women were idealized by the Pre-Raphaelites. They were not visualized as drab, ordinary women, but as divine, ethereal creatures. So the women they painted or wrote about were transformed from ordinary, realistic human beings into extraordinary, "blessed" creatures who, by virtue of their suffering or by dying, acquired a halo of divinity. The poets seemed to believe in the romantic concept of women as creatures who are frail and may swoon, faint or die. This point may be easily illustrated with the help of Rossetti's work.]

40.5 CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI, pseudonym ELLEN ALLEYNE (b. 1830--1894), one of the most important of nineteenth-century English women poets both in range and quality. Christina was the youngest child of Gabriele Rossetti and was the

sister of the painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In 1847 her grandfather, Gaetano Polidori, printed on his private press a volume of her ***Verses***, in which signs of poetic talent are already visible. In 1850, under the pseudonym Ellen Alleyne, she contributed seven poems to the Pre-Raphaelite journal ***The Germ***. In 1853, when the Rossetti family was in financial difficulties, Christina helped her mother keep a school at Frome, Somerset, but it was not a success, and in 1854 the pair returned to London, where Christina's father died. In straitened circumstances, Christina entered on her life work of companionship to her mother, devotion to her religion, and the writing of her poetry. She was a firm High Church Anglican, and in 1850 she broke her engagement to the artist James Collinson, an original member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, because he had become a Roman Catholic. For similar reasons she rejected Charles Bagot Cayley in 1864, though a warm friendship remained between them.



Christina Rossetti

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In 1862 Christina Rossetti published ***Goblin Market and Other Poems*** and in 1866 ***The Prince's Progress and Other Poems***, both with frontispiece and decorations by her brother Dante Gabriel. These two collections, which contain most of her finest work, established her among the poets of her day.

In 1871 Christina was stricken by Graves' disease, a thyroid disorder that marred her appearance and left her life in danger. She accepted her affliction with courage and resignation, sustained by religious faith, and she continued to publish, issuing one collection of poems in 1875 and ***A Pageant and Other Poems*** in 1881. But after the onset of her illness she mostly concentrated on devotional prose writings. ***Time Flies*** (1885), a reading diary of mixed verse and prose, is the most personal of these works. Christina was considered a possible successor to Lord Alfred Tennyson, as poet laureate, but she developed a fatal cancer in 1891. ***New Poems*** (1896), published by her brother, contained unprinted and previously uncollected poems.

Though she was haunted by an ideal of spiritual purity that demanded self-denial, Christina resembled her brother Dante Gabriel in certain ways, for beneath her humility, her devotion, and her quiet, saintlike life lay a passionate and sensuous temperament, a keen critical perception, and a lively sense of humour. Part of her success as a poet arises from the fact that she apparently succeeded in uniting these two seemingly contradictory sides of her nature. There is a vein of the sentimental and didactic in her weaker verse, but at its best her poetry is strong, personal, and unforced, with a metrical cadence that is unmistakably her own. The transience of material things is a theme that recurs throughout her poetry, and the resigned but passionate sadness of unhappy love is often a dominant note.

While looking at Christina Rossetti's poetry, one must keep certain factors in mind. In the first place, it is important to remember that in the nineteenth-century Victorian Age there were several repressive forces constantly operating on women. Women were not supposed to be opinionated. They were conventionally required to simply conform to the male line of thought. Christina Rossetti was gifted with a sharp, intelligent mind but the keenness of her mind was suppressed by the pressures of social propriety. She lived a more or less sheltered life with little contact with the world outside except through her brothers and their bohemian friends. She was not learned, unlike Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and remained unexposed to scholastic theories. Above all, what governed her actions throughout her life was her deep religious belief.

40.5.1 "Goblin Market"

"Goblin Market" is Christina Rossetti's best known poem. Unfortunately, it is only in recent decades that it has received the attention it deserves. Formerly it was generally relegated to the children's literature or fantasy literature category. The reason for its neglect was partly because its main characters are two young girls and partly because Christina Rossetti's talents remained undiscovered until she was resurrected by contemporary feminist critics.

On the surface level "Goblin Market" (hencefortl. **"GM"**) is what may be called a "story poem." Loosely speaking, it may be placed in the ballad tradition. It is a narrative that follows a swift, racy pace, revolve ound a given character and her fate, leads up to a central event, and apparently underscores a (then) socially acceptable moral lesson. The distinctive feature lies in that this poem is about a female character, her fall from grace, and subsequent redemption. If we look at the theme we find similarities with the ambitious project tackled by Milton in his *Paradise Lost*. There are, however, significant differences: Christina Rossetti's poem speaks of no male characters, except for the goblins who are not human but half-animals; whereas Milton's epic speaks of the fall of Adam, **"GM"** speaks of transgression by a female protagonist; the role of a Christ-like saviour is taken up by

another female character, the erring girl's sister. The central motif remains the same: succumbing to temptation, suffering as punishment, sacrifice and redemption.

In the very first lines (ll.1-80), the poem lays bare the situation: there are two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, both young, innocent, and virginal. And there is temptation that lurks everywhere in the form of strange, deformed goblins who appear as fruit-sellers to seduce and destroy the innocence of unsuspecting girls. The goblins are fearsome, yet fascinating. One of the sisters, Laura, finds herself being drawn towards them despite her sibling's admonishments.

Lines 81-140 speak of Laura's transgression: she partakes of the goblins' fruit, paying for them with a symbolic lock of her golden hair, and returns home satiated. A wise Lizzie upbraids her and reminds her of the harm the goblins did to a certain Jeanie who had tasted their fruit and died in her youth. Laura, however, is sort of intoxicated with the goblin's feast and pays little attention (81-183). As they fall asleep, they present a pretty picture (184-198), typically Pre-Raphaelite in its detailed description.

The following day, a change comes over the errant girl. She goes about her chores as usual but pines for the night when the goblins would appear again with their wares. However, when twilight gathers, her sister, Lizzie can hear the goblins' call but not Laura. This makes Laura realize that her desire for more fruit from the goblins would never be satisfied and that she is now doomed to a life of frustrated desire (199-268).

Lines 269 to 328 describe Laura's suffering and decline. It appears that she will now suffer a fate as miserable as Jeanie's. Finally, when she is at death's door, Lizzie decides to save her somehow, so she goes to the goblin men and asks for some fruit. The goblins insist that she should eat the fruit in their presence but she refuses to do so. Thereupon they are enraged and attack her with the fruit, trying to force her to eat. She stands stoically, braving their assaults and is covered with juices (329-446). In this dishevelled state, drenched with fruit-juices, Lizzie runs home and tells Laura to lick the juices off her. The ailing sister does so, and is saved but only after sufering a raging fever (447-542).

The concluding lines of the poem (543-567) shift the focus into the future and speak of the two sisters as grown women, contented with their home and children, warning their daughters of the dangers that may befall them if they go astray, advising them to stand by each other in time of need.

This is the narrative on the obvious level. Writing in times when women were supposed to be angels in the house, it appears as though Christina Rossetti is reinforcing the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Laura is innocent and happy as long as she remains within the confines of domesticity, away from temptations of the outside world, particularly temptations related to female desire. Accepting the repressive norms of society, she may ensure for herself a trouble-free existence. However, when she breaks the social taboo, she has to suffer. Lizzie, who admonishes her from time to time, acts as the moral voice of her times, repeating the socially correct message.

Some critics, referring to the poet's personal life and her rejection of men and marriage, read the poem as an expression of Christina Rossetti's underlying fear of sexuality. The goblins, in their evil, distorted guise, represent the latent fear of men that Christina Rossetti probably lived with. This may be related to the fact that there are no other normal men in the narrative. Even when, in the final stanza, "GM" tells of Laura and Lizzie in their maturer years, neither their husbands nor their sons are mentioned. They are shown only in the company of their daughters and the close bonding between them is stressed. The concluding lines are:

> 'For there's no friend like a sister
> In calm or stormy weather;
> To cheer one on the tedious way,

To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.'

These lines further strengthen the theme that sisterhood is powerful and make **"GM"** an unmistakably feminist poem. No wonder, therefore, that feminist critics discovered much to be lauded in the poem.

The two sisters of the poem, it has been argued, may be taken to represent two sides of the poet: one stern, self-denying and ascetic, the other sensuous, hedonistic, and self-indulgent. Lizzie represents the society with its repressive norms while Laura is the rebel, questioning and transgressing those norms. In keeping with the Victorian ideology, Laura suffers because she breaks the rules. She pays a heavy price for not observing the moral code. And when she regains life and vitality through her sister by symbolically "eating" her, she is in a way ingesting the moral code, reconciling to and accepting the social norms she had earlier transgressed. Consequently, she can be happy once more.

Like the women portrayed by the other Pre-Raphaelite poets, **"GM"** also gives us a picture of a woman who is weak and vulnerable. Laura, as she wilts away, is very close to the kind of women immortalized on the canvas by Rossetti and his followers. Christina Rossetti was far too conditioned by her social milieu not to be influenced by the stereotype. And yet, being an intelligent, thinking, person, she could not rest with merely the conventional portrait of a woman. So her protagonist is given other traits: a questioning mind (like her creator's), a spirit of adventure, and the courage to face the consequences of rebellion. Similarly, Laura, even through she represents the patriarchal order, is presented as an individual that one may not break: for instance when she stands firm as a rock facing the onslaughts of the goblins. Contrasted with the evil role played by the (male) goblins, she takes on a positive, nurturing role as she risks her own life to save her sister and nurse her back to health once more. For this reason **"GM"** remains a strong, woman-centered poem.

The poem may be compared to Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" where a loitering knight encounters a beautiful woman and succumbs to her charms. The woman betrays him and he is doomed to pine forever more. Whereas Keats portrays a *femme fatale* (a deadly woman), Christina Rossetti in **"GM"** portrays *les homme fatales* (dangerous men) in the horrendous band of goblins. She is concerned with how men manage to seduce women and then discard them once their object is fulfilled. According to the patriarchal Victorian ideology, women are attractive as long as they are virginal, but once "fallen," they are of no use and lose their charm. These are rules laid down by men (goblins in the poem) who are the lawmakers.

The parallel between the consumption of the fruit and the loss of chastity, thus, is obvious through the poem. And yet the theme is subtly dealt with, in keeping with the Victorian taboo of female sexuality. Christina Rossetti, even though she tackles a bold theme, does not openly flout convention. She veils her point so successfully through this allegory that **"GM"** is often mistaken for children's literature.

Self–Check Exercises

1. Make a list of the animals mentioned in the poem and note how they are all connected with the goblins. Try and assess the symbolic value of the animal imagery.

2. Do you think the goblins of "GM" represent the male world? If so, is the poem an attack on patriarchy? Illustrate your answer with the help of the appearance, habitat, and profession of the goblins. [Note that they inhabit a glen --- a shady, mysterious place --- and only emerge in the dark, after sundown. Also take into account that theirs is a forbidden world into which maidens may stray only at the risk of their lives. Besides, they are merchants engaged in selling fruit that is not normal or seasonal, but enchanted, which has a disastrous effect on anyone (any girl) who eats it. This fruit is given not at an honest price, but for a lock of hair (to Laura) or forcibly thrust (so attempted in Lizzie's case). The girls are either helplessly caught in the game the goblins play or else they, like Lizzie, must remain strong and ward them off.]

3. Highlight the connection between poetry and painting in "Goblin Market." [Compare the images and colours Christina Rossetti uses for the goblins with those used for the two sisters. Note how, like Dante Gabriel, she uses words the way an artist would use paints.]

40.6 LET'S SUM UP

In this unit you have been told about the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, how it originated and made a mark on the literary and artistic scene. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his sister Christina Rossetti, two of the main proponents of the movement have been discussed in detail. You should now be able to write about the movement and also about the works of these two poets.

40.7 SUGGESTED READING

Critical analyses of her writing include Dolores Rosenblum, *Christina Rossetti: The Poetry of Endurance* (1986); David A. Kent (ed.), *The Achievement of Christina Rossetti* (1987), a collection of essays; Antony H. Harrison, *Christina Rossetti in Context* (1988); and Katherine J. Mayberry, *Christina Rossetti and the Poetry of Discovery* (1989). Edna Kotin Charles, *Christina Rossetti: Critical Perspectives, 1862-1982* (1985), surveys critical responses to her poetry over 120 years. Sandra Giblert and Susan Gubar have made a detailed study of "Goblin Market" in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979).

40.8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Evelyn Waugh, *Rossetti: His Life and Works* (1928, reprinted 1978), gave an unsympathetic view of him; it was followed by the overt hostility of Violet Hunt, *The Wife of Rossetti* (1932). Against this prejudice the daughter of W.M. Rossetti

came to her uncle's defense: Helen Rossetti Angeli, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Friends and Enemies* (1949, reprinted 1977). *The Pre-Raphaelite Poets* by Lionel Stevenson (1972) speaks of the movement and the main artist-poets.

Assessments of Rossetti's achievements are found in Florence Saunders Boos, *The Poetry of Dante G. Rossetti: A Critical Reading and Source Study* (1976); Joan Rees, *The Poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Modes of Self-Expression* (1981); David G. Riede. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Limits of Victorian Vision* (1983); and David G. Riede (ed.), *Critical Essays on Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1992), which includes several contemporary responses to his poetry as well as more modern critiques.

UNIT 41 OSCAR WILDE: *THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL*

Structure

41.0 Objectives
41.1 Introduction
41.2 Historical, Biographical and Ideological Perspective
41.3 *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* – A Discussion
41.4 Summing Up
41.5 Suggested Reading

41.0 OBJECTIVES

The Objectives of this unit is to familiarise the reader with the life, times and works of Oscar Wilde (1856-1900). Coming as it does at the end of the century, the poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1896) encapsulates the literary movements and controversies of the age. Dealing as it does with the themes of sin, guilt and redemption it cannot escape comparison with another landmark poem written about a hundred years earlier, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). A extensive comparative analysis of the two poems will be undertaken later in the unit. The attempt will be not only to evoke appreciation for the poem *per se* but to place it in the context of dominant social, political, religious and ideological issues of the day.

41.2 INTRODUCTION

The reader is advised to read the unit from the end first. Begin by reading the text of the poem and see how much you can understand. It is always better to approach a text without any preconceived notions and information. After that come back and read the biographical, historical and contextual discussions provided in the unit. This reading will enhance your appreciation and understanding of the text and provide additional insights to your initial reading of the text.

41.2 HISTORICAL, BIOGRAPHICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Oscar Wilde is difficult to place in literary history since as he himself admitted, he devoted his genius to life rather than to his art. Wilde today survives as a figure of fascinating mythology, where the works inevitably seem secondary to the legend of the man.

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin in 1854, the son of an eminent surgeon. He attended Trinity College, Dublin and then Magdalene College, Oxford, where in the last years of the seventies he started the cult of Aestheticism, of making an art of life. His first book *Poems* was published in 1881 and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* followed in 1891. His first stage successes came in 1892 with *Lady Windermere's Fan*. More acclaim came with *A Woman of Substance* (1893) and *An Ideal Husband* and *The*

Importance of Being Ernest both in 1895. *Salomé* was refused license in England but was published in France in 1893.



Oscar Wilde

Most of his significant works occupy the last two decades of the nineteenth century. A few words about the times would not be out of place since Wilde's works are inextricably linked with the social and moral atmosphere of the age. It has been said that "the nineties" was not a period but a state of mind – that is, there are many writers who chronologically speaking were most productive in that decade, yet had nothing in common with its supposed spirit. It is therefore difficult to comprehend nineteenth century England on the basis of a single philosophy. Numerous philosophies began to take shape, making it an age of tremendous initiative, upheaval

and contradiction. The general upheaval in society originated from the gap between what man wanted and what he achieved.

Scientific philosophies and fact philosophies emerged from the then dominant empiricist world view. They however failed to provide an adequate alternative for belief, for man to withdraw his faith in God and posit all his hopes on the Benthamite philosophy of utilitarianism.

Men like Coleridge, Mill, Arnold, Carlyle tried to provide adequate solution to the battle between science and religion, God and Mammon, truth and half-truth. They believed that all suffering results from ignorance and hence the need to acquire the right knowledge. Coleridge's philosophy was a reaction to the empiricist ideological framework! The epistemological shift from the visible to the invisible emphasised that the highest truths are those which are beyond the range of empirical experience. Coleridge's doctrine expressed the revolt of the human mind against the mental and physical finites of society. His philosophy is grounded in a conformity to human and religious values and belief in the predominance of the mind for acquiring knowledge.

With time however the Coleridgean principles of integrity, transcendental knowledge and Christian values of love and prayer began to crack under pressure from socio-economic realities. The possibility of ultimate truth and value seemed doubtful and conviction in all kinds of moral, intellectual and social certainties was vanishing. Hence towards the end of the nineteenth century a belief gained ground that art and morality/society were two separate realms and the former was considered completely independent of the latter. Thus art and literature had moved into a new phase, though critics remained divided over how to best describe this phase of cultural history. To refer to it as a homogeneous and uniform decade would be misleading, since many of the essential attitudes of the nineties had their roots in the seventies and eighties: specifically the *Aesthetic Movement* which has often become synonymous with the innovations of the nineties. The word *Decadence* has broader application but suffers from an ambiguity – suggesting sometimes a combination of physical lassitude and psychological and moral perversity, exemplified for example in J-K. Huysman's novel *A Rebours*. The phrase *fin de siécle* is a more useful term for it points to the preoccupations of the last years of the nineteenth century without being limited to a single decade and can also cover particular manifestations such as *decadence* or *aestheticism*.

In so far as *fin de siécle* refers to a serious and consistent cultural attitude it has two essential characteristics : the conviction that all established forms of intellectual and moral certainties are vanishing, and that the new situation requires new attitudes in life and art; and the related belief that art and morality are entirely separate realms and the former must be regarded as wholly autonomous. Hence the doctrine arose of *art for art's sake*. It must however be noted that "the nineties" was a state of mind that originated in Europe. One has to go to French literature to observe the genesis of this psychological phenomena.

If *fin de siécle* tried to establish a break with established Victorian attitudes, then the break was not particularly clean, for in a literary sense there are lines of development that link the *fin de siécle* poets with the Romantics – Keats, Blake and particularly Coleridge.

One writer who absorbed the lessons of the age not wisely but only too well, who achieved a tragic celebrity with relatively slender talents and whose name is still a symbol for the whole *fin de siécle* period and state of mind is Oscar Wilde. Mistrust of theory and system, and a corresponding stress on sensation and impression is perhaps the best description of Oscar Wilde's art.

Exercises

1. Give a brief account of Wilde's life and works.

2. What was the mental and ideological condition of the age in which Wilde was writing?

3. What were the major movements of the age?

41.3 *THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL*: A DISCUSSION

The Ballad of Reading Gaol was written in 1896. Almost a hundred years earlier, 1798 to be precise, came a poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge which built the foundation on which Wilde was to build a hundred years later. So any exclusive discussion of the former, without putting it in the perspective of the latter will not be unfair to the poem, it will also fail to provide any glimpse of the intellectual movement of the age. *The Rime* was Coleridge's chief contribution to *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798). It is a long poem written in the ballad form and divided into seven sections. The Mariner either out of anger or irritation shoots the albatross; for this heinous crime he is punished by the curse of life in death. However when love gushes from his heart at the sight of the water snakes, the horrible spell breaks and the albatross falls from his neck. To kill the albatross is a sin, therefore, the rest of the action follows with an inexorable fatality. *The Rime* is a tale of guilt, penance and expiation and each section of the poem reveals a new stage of the act of expiation; it is the saga of a guilty soul and the poem marks in clear stages the passage from crime through punishment to such redemption as is possible in this world.

The Rime is essentially a religious poem deeply rooted in Christian ethics. Several kinds of religious feelings are merged as Coleridge deals with sin, remorse, penance, punishment, confession, grace and redemption at successive stages of the narrative. The validity of the gospel is affirmed and re-affirmed vis-à-vis the progress of events. Killing the albatross is a sin and the Mariner is punished for it in myriad ways. However his act of love in admiring the water snakes saves him from the curse and there is a return to the old world after the resolution. However the world to which he returns is a different one, for the Mariner is now an enlightened man, a man with knowledge.

More than physical woes, the Mariner suffers from existential loneliness typical of Romantic heroes. The other members of the crew have rejected him and he suffers alone and in silence. The lack of certitude in the Mariner, his solipsistic fear is understandable keeping in mind the trial he is undergoing. But what is noteworthy is the note of hope – not only does penance deliver him from his torturous physical condition, but also from solitude and ignorance. In fact his suffering is a process of spiritual growth and enlightenment. His expiation is possible only because of his love, again a Christian concept of life. When he can see beauty in the deadly water snakes – he is at once released and he is able to pray, the body of the albatross falls into the sea and he is refreshed with a gentle sleep. The different episodes of the narrative can be seen as components of "something great; something one and

indivisible"' – the phenomena of sin, penitence and resolution i.e. the phenomena of life according to Christian philosophy. The suffering of the Mariner becomes meaningless unless it is seen as a part of his penance. "The man hath penance done, and penance more will do"[ii]. Even his fantasies, dreams and nightmares harmonise to evoke a sense of grace that saves the Mariner.

The heavy religious imperative behind the symbols and images strengthen Coleridge's argument for the validity and adequacy of religious norms. The albatross is a symbol, existing between the literal and the metaphorical. It is supposed to be a harbinger of peace and prosperity and to take away its life is an act of sin which endangers one's own being and that of one's companions. Coleridge in fact suggests a pantheistic oneness with nature as the albatross is a symbol of God's presence for the Mariner. The shooting of the bird becomes significant only in the context of this fact. Coleridge thought of nature as an "eternal language which spoke of God's presence". Drought and a pitiless sun suggest a state of spiritual waste. The "bloody sun" however is later replaced by a gentle light. It is a positive linear movement from death to life, darkness to light, despair to hope, from guilt to explanation, from despair to redemption, from suffering in isolation to a return to the world of men. The Mariner however fails to achieve a final salvation – "I pass, like night from land to land"[iii]. Yet the discourse moves around the theme of conformity to divine legislation. By shaping the symbols into a consistent whole and subordinating them to a single plan Coleridge communicates a spiritual myth of a dark and despairing crisis in the human soul.

The poem progresses in a symbiotic relation of action as *cause* and the condition of the spirit as *effect:* subsequently the spiritual condition becomes the cause, and actions the effect. There can be separation in Coleridge's philosophy between the moral and the spiritual, no possibility of spiritual regeneration without corresponding growth in understanding human behaviour.

The era which began with the *Lyrical Ballads* came to a close with the Aesthetic Movement of the 80's and the 90's. One of the major writers of the period/movement was Oscar Wilde whose works had strong Romantic undertones conveying messages of love and despair. *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1896) is a ballad in six sections. It tells of the hanging of a murderer for killing the woman he loved. Like *The Rime* it is also a tale of crime and punishment. The tale is narrated by a fellow prisoner whose sympathies are clearly with the condemned man for he is powerfully aware of the arbitrariness of man-made laws. Like life-in-death of *The Rime*, *The Ballad* is a discourse on waiting for death in the presence of palpable and actual death. The first three sections narrate the six weeks spent waiting for death, the fourth describes the execution and its effects on the other prisoners. The next section is devoted to the poet's reflections on execution and the prison as a place for reform and repentance. The concluding part is a kind of an epilogue which reiterates the central theme of the poem – "All men kill the thing they love".

In strict contrast to *The Rime*, Wilde's *The Ballad* suggests **loss of faith in Christian** ideology and the futility of Christian ethics for the English **society. *The Ballad* is a** story of crime and punishment but aims at no salvation **or redemption. In fact the** attempts at setting things right is mocked at and ridiculed. **The man has murdered the** woman he loves and spends the first three sections waiting **"to swing". The agony** and despair of the criminal is however shared **by his fellow prisoners (unlike in *The*** *Rime*). There is however no movement towards **spiritual growth or enlightement**; despite deep mental and physical agony there is **no confession or prayer. he accepts** everything. Stoically –

He did not wring his hands nor weep
And again –
And strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look

So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

There is only "Black Despair" and "crooked shapes of Terror" in the Goal. Not only for the condemned, but also for his fellow prisoners hope is dead for they

'wondered if each one of us would end the self – same way"

The agony of prison life and the inhuman treatment of the Governor, the prison Wardens, the Doctor and the Chaplain constitute of his suffering. Yet in spite of his penance there is no grace and redemption – he is hanged like a beast and there isn't any requiem for his soul either ... He has no redemption at the end because "he does not win who plays with sin / In the secret House of Shame". In fact at every step Christian ideology fails to save him.

While in *The Rime* love is the means of salvation and redemption, in *The Ballad* it leads to destruction and despair. Love is treated cynically by the poet – *"For each man kills the thing he loves / Yet each man does not die"* – he kills the woman he loves. Cruelty has three dimensions here – the cruelty of the crime, the strong impression that such cruelty is pervasive and the cruelty of his punishment by an equally guilty society.

Wilde departs from the supernatural world of Coleridge and situates his poem against the nineteenth century English social background. The miserable living conditions in the prison, the stifling overwhelming presence of authority (state) and the inequity of justice are highlighted in the fifth section. The poem shows total cynicism and irrelevance, if not total rejection of institutions – both man-made and divine. The arbitrariness of law is emphasised and hence the possibility of redemption through penance is also bleak. The end of the era mood of despair is reflected in repeated use of such terms as "yellow face of Doom", "Cave of Black Despair", "dead was hope", "Man's grim Justice". A society perched on the edge of corruption and despair finds graphic illustration. Unlike *The Rime* which abounds in supernatural elements, *The Ballad* has a predominantly gothic touch – the macabre details of the grave, quicklime dissolving the body, religion too takes on a gothic face. The prison is a place of horror and shame where man mistreats man – Christ would have been ashamed to see the actions of his children.

The effective use of symbols is as much strategy in Wilde as it is in Coleridge. While in *The Rime* symbols are used to establish the validity and efficacy of the Christian world view, in *The Ballad* .they become symbols of the inefficacy of Christianity. Nature and religion become symbols of fear, despair and dissolution. That is how the profound and the sublime are made profane in *The Ballad* – *"God's dreadful dawn"*, the Chaplain symbolise the utter irrelevance of the divine. The central issue of destruction is reiterated repeatedly through the system of symbols.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

A morbid preoccupation with death and destruction is noticeable in the poem – beginning with capital punishment, the graphic details of the execution, to the horror of the corpse in the grave. *The Ballad* is nearly an anarchist's poem where even a noble emotion like love is treated with violence, and a deep undertone of faithlessness and cynicism permeates everything. The narrative of *The Ballad* moves

in an opposite direction to that of *The Rime* – a movement from life to death, light to darkness, hope to despair.

The human condition in the two poems have been dealt with differently. Yet the crux of the problem is the same in both the poems – the problem of the essential loneliness of man, though again the nature of the loneliness is different. The Mariner kills an albatross which is an act of sin and has grave cosmological effect – death, starvation and havoc on the seas. Yet the same act also leads to salvation. Unlike the killing of the bird, the murder of the woman in *The Ballad* is not an act of sin and the poet almost sympathises with the murderer, defending the criminal's act – every man kills the things he loves, yet every man does not die. But behind this statement is a philosophy – that man is by nature cruel and destructive, and his act of love is also an act of destruction. This murder has no cosmological implication. The prison conditions continue to be as inhuman as before, he also suffers the fruit of his actions, though his fellow prisoners offer him silent sympathy. The Christian apparatus is overwhelmed by the socio-political apparatus. The poem alternates between an elegy on the human condition and a protest against the inhumanity of man-made laws. Wilde's prison house is a micro-cosmic versión of the doomed finality of the larger world. Wilde expresses serious reservations about theories and systems – the law fails to distinguish between the guilty and the innocence and hence to deliver justice. *The Rime* on the other hand progresses through a belief in systems and rules. Conformity to order enables man to easily distinguish between right and wrong. And it is this belief in a system which makes it easier to categorise the killing of the bird as sin for which the fellow prisoners curse the Mariner. But in *The Ballad* the fellow prisoners are lost without any philosophy of life and have no choice but to sympathise with the criminal and sail in the same boat. If we assume that by sympathising with the criminal they identify with him, then the murder acquires a collective dimension. *The Ballad* explores the perplexities of these moral desperation – things have fallen apart and the centre cannot hold.

The poem under discussion is a ballad which has a forceful and direct effect. Emphasis is achieved by repetition of words, phrases, sentences and stanzas though at places these repetitions become both tiresome and puerile. An atmosphere of despair and gloom is established by repeated use of words like "alone", "terror", "impotent despair", "Pale anguish", "degraded" etc. The total effect of this poem of 660 lines is one of 'death' which is essentially the theme of the poem. While *The Rime* has four line stanzas, *The Ballad* progresses through six line stanzas.

Endnotes:

1. Basil Willey. *Nineteenth Century Studies* – Essays on Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
2. *The Rime of Ancient Mariner* - Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
3. *Ibid.*

Exercises

1. What are the points of similarity between *The Rime* and *The Ballad*?

   _____
   _____
   _____

2. What are the points of difference between *The Rime* and *The Ballad*?

   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Mention some stylistic and structural features of *The Ballad*.

41.4 SUMMING UP

Wilde achieved his effect by appealing directly to the emotion to prove superiority of art over nature – this was his proclaimed aim in literature. He strove to refine sensations and impressions and believed in perfection and sensibility.

The change from *The Rime* to *The Ballad* may be summed up in terms of religion, philosophy, human conditions and technique. Coleridge is a conformist in religious matters and believed that redemption is possible even in this ugly world, the main cause of which is ignorance. His technique is more symbolic and suggestive.

Wilde on the contrary is more sceptical and shows more irrelevance towards all institutions – human and divine. He is an aesthetic and therefore has faith only in aesthetic values. The ultimate (spiritual) values of life have no place in his creative world, keeping in mind the contemporary socio-political-economic situation. His solution to the ugliness of life is the acquisition of aesthetic/sensory perfection. Nevertheless he like Coleridge aims at greater human happiness and the eradication of the ugliness of life.

41.5 SUGGESTED READING

1) Bower, C.M. *The Romantic Imagination* (Oxford, 1969)
Studies of major Romantic poets underlining the socio-political impacts and the play of language in the early Romantic Age.
2) Pollard, Arthur. *The Victorians* (Barrie & Jenkins 1970)
Essays on major Victorian writers and on the major socio-political issues of the age.
3) Trevelyan, G.M. *English Social History* (Macmillan 1977)
History of English Literature against the backdrop of history of English society from Chaucer to Victorians.
4) Willey, Basil. *Nineteenth Century Studies* (Cambridge University press, 1980)
Essays on major Victorian writers.
5) Ellman Richard, *Oscar Wilde* (Hamish Hamilton, 1985)
Life and Works of Oscar Wilde.

APPENDIX

POEMS PRESCRIBED FOR DETAILED STUDY

POEMS OF ROBERT BROWNING

1

'Sordello at Mantua'

The evening star was high
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,
And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
Angels, and all these angels would be blest
Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned
Goito-manufacture. Then he found
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
A sore annoyance; 't was the song's effect
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!
In the past life, what might be singing's use?
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured
That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,
No overleaping means for ends—take both
For granted or take neither! I am loth
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors
Go pine; "the master certes meant to waste
No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
He'd please anon: true bard, in short, -disturb
His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence
The staple of his verses, common sense:
He built on man's broad nature—gift of gifts,
That power to build! The world contented shifts
With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak
(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)
With our herd's stupid sterling happiness
So plainly incompatible that—yes—
Yes—should a son of his improve the breed
And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed!"
"Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
If the worst happen: best go stoutly on
Now!" thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet!
You pother with your glossaries to get
A notion of the Troubadour's intent
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
Much as you study arras how to twirl
His angelot, plaything of page and girl—
Once; but you surely reach, at last, —or, no!
Never quite reach what struck the people so,
As from the welter of their time he drew
Its elements successively to view,
Followed all actions backward on their course,
And catching up, unmingled at the source,
Such a strength, such a weakness, added then
A touch or two, and turned them, into men,
Virtue took form, nor vice refuse a shape:

Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
Sinner the other flared portentous by
A greedy people. Then why stope, surprised
At his success? The scheme was realized
Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
To speak, delicious homage to receive,
The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,
Who said, "But Anafest—why asks he less
Than Lucio, in your verses?how confess,
It seemed too much but yestereve!" – the youth,
Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!
You love Bianca, surely, from your song;
I knew I was unworthy—soft or strong,
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From true life, fain relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures—one and all
To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain
Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure
His prime design; each joy must he abjure
Even for love of it.
He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He look because, at the first line, a proof
'T was heard salutes him from the cavern roof?
"On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
To the day's task; compel your slave provide
Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief—
Cannot men bear, now, something better? —fly
A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
Of essences? the period sure has ceased
For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
Not portions of ourselves. mere loves and hates
Made flesh: wait not!"
Awhile the poet waits
However. The first trial was enough:
He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light—his Language. How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought
That Language, -welding words into the crude
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
Armour was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply
Melted to make it, —boots not. This obtained
With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result—a creature, and, by one

And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
"Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!" Fond essay!
Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take perception's place
But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment—of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,
Has rent perception? Into: it's to clutch
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. "For the rest,
E'en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
The whole dream, what impertinence in me
So to express it, who myself can be
The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those
I sing to, over-likely to suppose
A higher than the highest I present

Now, which they praise already: be content
Both parties, rather—they with the old verse,
And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse!"
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, which rings
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps;
So might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.
He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.
Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure, now his aim
Merely, —what was it? "Not to play the fool
So much as learn our lesson in your school!"
Replied the world. He found that, every time
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
His auditory recognized no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce
Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
His will....conceive it caring for his will!
—Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:
The true meed for true merit! —his abates
Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who were
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care
About their recognition, ay or no?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers

With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
A fairy dust upon that multitude,
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
His giants dignified those puny elves,
Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every way
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not?
Weeks, months, years went by;
And Io, Sordello vanished utterly,
Sundered in twain: each spectral part at strife
With each; one jarred against another life;
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man—
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there: let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods) —of incurring scoff
From the Man-portion-not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright. Who sauntered forth in dream,
Dressed any how, nor waited mystic frames,
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self? —who yet might be
Sorrier for aught he in reality
Achieved, so pinioned Man's the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art
Developing his soul a thousand ways—
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze

The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature that the nature's prince
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
Into a bravest of expedients, too;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went
To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—
So hampered him the Man-part , thrust to judge
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
A minute's toil that missed its due reward!
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she love me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck: her cheek once more
Blushed bright I beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how

Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now.
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

3
The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church

ROME, 15—

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine...ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
-Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find.....Ah God, I know not, I!
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast.....
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,

For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black-
T was ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables.....but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world-
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
-Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My Villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,

And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs—
Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

4
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"
(See Edgar's song in "LEAR")

I

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eve
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travelers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end described,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring-
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend
And hears one bid the other go, draw breadth
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend:"

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band" — to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now — should I be fit?

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark! No sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 't was gone; grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on: nought else remained to do.

X

So, on I went, I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature: nothing throve:
For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think: a burr had been a treasure-trove.

XI

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,

"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped: the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 't is a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards — the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disagree!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honour — there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst,
Good — but the scene shifts — faugh! What hangman-hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor. Spit upon and curst!

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that:
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms:
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or fell the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
— It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! It sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other banks.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what was did the dank
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime. Christians against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? With all the air

Of Tophet's tool on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with: (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils:
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I sough.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains — with such name to grace
Mere ugly hights and heaps now stolen in view,
How thus they had surprised me, — solve it, you
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then.
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts —you're inside the den!

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight:
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain....Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII

Not see? Because of night perhaps? — why, day
Came back again for that! Before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
"Now stab and end the creature — to the heft!"

XXXIII

Not hear? When noise was everywhere! It tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventure my peers, —
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! One moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! In a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*

5
Fra Lippo Lippi

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, "t is past midnighut, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain ... how d'ye call?
Master—a... Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's gripe!

But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads! More beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern, — for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a, — dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk!
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,-
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme- and so on. Round they went,
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight, —three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up… zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture — a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met, —
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head-
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!

Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time,—
"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce"... "the mouthful of bread?" thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me:
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'T was not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for" —that came next,
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!

Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "amo I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, —
How say I? —nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street, —
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eves and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior , "turn him out, d'ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.

What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away,
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean; then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
on tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so, was gone.
I painted all, then cried "T is ask and have;
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister —wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—"That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke... no, it's not...
It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's ... well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a praising God,
That sets us praising,-why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece... Herodias, I would say,—

Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece... patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—'it's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old:
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third"!
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr... manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream.
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled for ever one way, As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught:
I always see the garden and God there
A making man's wife; and , my lesson learned.
The value and significance of flesh.
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards,

You understand me; I'm a beast, I know,
But see,, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning star's about to shine,
What will hap some day, We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike,
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? Or dwelt upon
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say,
But why not do as well as say,— paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then,"
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perpaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Pending our minds out. Hve you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,

Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink,
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folk—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is— you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! Don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself;
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
...There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i" the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friend and gives them a long day,
And job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man f Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Whee's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm-"Not so fast!"

Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw-
His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Kippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece... Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

POEMS OF DANTE GABRIEL AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

6

My Sister's Sleep

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve.
At length the long-ungranted shade
Of weary eyelids overweighed
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
Over the bed from chime to chime,
Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little worktable was spread
With work to finish. For the glare
Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again.
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled—no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say,
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned,
But suddenly turned back again:
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word.
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept:
And both my arms fell, and I said,
"God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o'clock,
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
"Christ's blessing on the newly born!"

7

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

D.G.Rossetti

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
...Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face....
Nothing : the autumn-fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stopped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells

Possessed the midday air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come,' she said.
'Have I not prayed in Heaven? —on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.
'We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith his Name audibly.

'And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here, which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know.'

(Alas! we two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me,
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

'We two,' she said, 'will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen
Margaret and Rosalys.

'Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

'He shall fear, haply, and be dumb
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak;
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

'There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:-
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, —only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.'

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild, —
'All this is when he comes.' She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

8
GOBLIN MARKET
Christina Rossetti

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries; —
All ripe together
In summer weather, —
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,

Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."



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Goblin Market: Illustration by D.G. Rossetti

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
their evil gifts would harm us."
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men

With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly";—
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How hope should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore,
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen

In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
To-morrow night I will
Buy more": and kissed her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest,
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their nest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:

Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homewards said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n the wind not chill:
Listening eve, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urge, "O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?

Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy": —
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandfull breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy": —
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear:
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,

Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps
of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel-and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes, —
Hugged her land kissed her:
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and such them,
Pomegranates, figs." —

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many."
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.

May take a seat with us
Honour and eat with us."
They answered grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful land starry.
Such fruits as these
No man can carry:
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us.
Be welcome guest with us
Cheer you and rest with us."—
"Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee." —
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood, —
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously, —
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire, —
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee, —
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,

Coaxed and fought her.
Bullied and besought her.
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink.
Kicked and knocked her.
Mauled and mocked her.
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrupped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took.
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse, —
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me:
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?

Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?" —
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked
at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their
eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass

Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men.
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town:)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together.
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

A POEM OF OSCAR WILDE
9
The Ballad of Reading Gaol

He did not wear his scarlet coat,
For blood and wine are red,
And blood and wine were on his hands
When they found him with the dead,
The poor dead woman whom he loved,
And murdered in her bed.
He walked amongst the Trial Men
In a suit of shabby grey ;
A cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay ;
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.
I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

I walked with other souls in pain.
Within another ring.
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing.
When a voice behind me whispered low.
'The fellow's gut to *swing."*
Dear Christ ! the very prison walls
Suddenly seemed to reel.
And the sky above my head became
Like a casque of scorching Steel :
And. though I was a soul in pain.
My pain I could not feel.
I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step. and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye :
The man had killed the thing he loved.
And so he had to die.

***

Yet each man kills the thing he loves.
By each let this be heard.
Some do it with a bitter look.
Some with a flattering word.
The coward does it with a kiss.
The brave man with a sword !

Some fall their love when they are young.
And some when they are did :
Some strangle with the hands of Lust.
Some with the hands of Gold :
The kindest use a knife. because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little. some too long.
Some sell. and others buy ;
Some do the deed with many tears.
And some without a sigh :
For each man kills the thing he loves.
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame
On a day of dark disgrace,
Nor have a noose about his neck,
Nor a cloth upon his face,
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor
Into an empty space.

He does not sit with silent men
Who watch him night and day ;
Who watch him when he tries to weep.
And when he tries to pray :
Who watch him lest himself should rob
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see
Dread figures throng his room.
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,

The Sheriff stern with gloom,
And the Governor all in shiny black,
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste
To put on convict-clothes,
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes
Each new and nerve-twitched pose,
Fingering a watch whose little ticks
Are like horrible hammer-blows.
He does not feel that sickening thirst
That sands one's throat, before
The hangman with his gardener's gloves
Comes through the padded door,
And hinds one with three leathern thongs,
That the throat may thirst no more.
He does not bend his head to hear
The Burial Office read,
Nor, while the anguish of his soul
Tells him he is not dead,
Cross his own coffin, as he moves
Into the hideous shed.
He does not stare upon the air
Through a little roof of glass :
He does not pray with lips of clay
For his agony to pass ;
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek
The kiss of Caiaphas.

2

Six weeks the guardsman walked the yard,
In the suit of shabby grey :
His cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay,
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do
Those witless men who dare
To try to rear the changeling Hope
In the cave of black Despair :
He only looked upon the sun,
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,
Nor did he peek or pine,
But he drank the *air* as though it held
Some healthful anodyne;
With open mouth he drank the sun
As though it had been wine !
And I and all the souls in pain,

Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.
For strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look
So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

***

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
That in the spring-time shoot ;
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
With its adder-bitten root,
And, green or dry, a man must die
Before it bears its fruit !
The loftiest place is that seat of grace
For which all worldlings try :
But who would stand in hempen band
Upon a scaffold high,
And through a murderer's collar take
His last look at the sky ?

It is sweet to dance to violins
When Love and Life are fair :
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare :
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air !

So with curious eyes and *sick* surmise
We watched him day by day,
And wondered if each one of us
Would end the- self-same way,
For none can tell to what red Hell
His sightless soul may stray.
At last the dead man walked no more
Amongst the Trial Men,
And I knew that he was standing up
In the black dock's dreadful pen,
And that never would I see his face
For weal or woe again.
Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
We had crossed each other's way :
But we made no sign, we said no word,
We had no word to say :
For we did not meet in the holy night,
But in the shameful day.
A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men, we were :
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out His care :
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

In Debtor's Yard the stones are hard,
And the dripping wall is high,
So it was there he took the air
Beneath the leaden sky,
And by each side a Warder walked,
For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those who watched
His anguish night and day ;
Who watched him when he rose to weep,
And when he crouched to pray :
Who watched him lest himself should rub
Their scaffold of its prey.
The Governor was strong upon
The Regulations Act:
The Doctor said that Death was but
A scientific fact;
And twice a day the Chaplain called,
And left a little tract.
And twice a day he smoked his pipe,
And drank his quart of beer :
His soul was resolute, and held
No hiding-place for fear ;
He often said that he was glad
The hangman's day was near.
But why he said so strange a thing
No warder dared to ask :
For lie. to whom a watcher's doom
Is given as his task,
Must set a lock upon his lips,
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try
To comfort or console ;
And what should Human Pity do
Pent up in Murderers' Hole ?
What word of grace in such a place
Could help a brother's soul ?

With slouch and swing around the ring
We trod the Fools' Parade !
We did not care ; we knew we were
The Devil's Own Brigade :
And shaven head and feet of lead
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds
With blunt and bleeding nails ;
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors.
And cleaned the shining rails :
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill :
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill :

But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave :
And we forgot the bitter lot
That waits for fool and knave,
Till once, as we tramped in from work,
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole
Gaped for a living thing :
The very mud cried out for blood
To the thirsty asphalte ring .
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent
On Death and Dread and Doom :
The hangman, with his little bag,
Went shuffling through the gloom :
And I trembled as I groped my way
Into my numbered tomb.

***

That night the empty corridors
Were full of forms of Fear,
And up and down the iron town
Stole feet we could not hear,
And through the bars that hide the stars
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams
In a pleasant meadow-land.
The watchers watched him as he slept,
And could not understand
How one could sleep so sweet a sleep
With a hangman close at hand.
But there is no sleep when men must weep
Who never yet have wept :
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—
That endless vigil kept.
And through each brain on hands pain:
Another's terror crept.

Alas ! it is a fearful thing
To Feel another's guilt !
For, right within, the Sword of Sin
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,
And as molten lead were the tears we shed
For the blood we had not spilt.

The warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed.
Mad mourners of a corse !
The troubled plumes of midnight were
The plumes upon a hearse :
And bitter wine upon a sponge
Was the savour of Remorse.

***

The grey cock crew, the red cock crew,
But never came the day :
And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,
In the corners where we lay :
And each evil sprite that walks by night
Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast,
Like travellers through a mist :
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon
Of delicate turn and twist,
And with formal pace and loathsome grace
The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,
Slim shadows hand in hand :
About, about, in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband :
And the damned grotesques made arabesques
Like the wind upon the sand !

With the pirouettes of marionettes,
They tripped on pointed tread :
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,
As their grisly masque they led,
And loud they sang, and long they sang.
For they sang to wake the dead.

"*Oho!*" they cried, "*The world is wide,*
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to *throw the dice*
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the secret House of Shame."

No things of air these antics were,
That frolicked with such glee :
To men whose lives were held in gyves,
And whose feet might not go free,
Ah! ' wounds of Christ ! they were living things
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound ;
Some wheeled in smirking pairs ;
With the mincing step of a demirep
Some sidled up the stairs :
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,
Each helped us at our prayers.
The morning wind began to moan,

But still the night went on :
Through its giant loom the web of gloom
Crept till each thread was spun :
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round
The weeping prison-wall:
Till like a wheel of turning steel
We felt the minutes crawl :
O moaning wind ! what had we done
To have such a seneschal ?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,
Like a lattice wrought in lead,
Move right across the whitewashed wall
That faced my three-plank bed,
And I knew that somewhere in the world
God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,
At seven all was still,
But the sough, and swing of a mighty wing
The prison seemed to fill,
For- the Lord of Death with icy breath
Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,
Nor ride a moon-white steed.
Three yards of cord and a sliding board
Are all the gallows' need :
So with rope of shame the Herald came
To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a ten
Of filthy darkness grope :
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
Or to give our anguish scope :
Something was dead in each of us,
And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,
And will not swerve aside :
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
It has a deadly stride :
With iron heel it slays the strong,
The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight :
Each tongue was thick with thirst :
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate
That makes a man accursed,
And Fate will use a running noose
For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,
Save to wait for the sign to come :
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,
Quiet we sat and dumb :

But each man's heart beat thick and quick,
Like a madman on a drum !

With sudden shock the prison-clock
Smote on the shivering air,
And from all the gaol rose up a wail
Of impotent despair,
Like the sound that frightened marshes hear
From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things
In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hempen rope
Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so
That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats
None knew so well as I :
For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die.

4

There is no chapel on the day
On which they hang a man :
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
Or his face is far too wan,
Or there is that written in his eyes
Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,
And then they rang the bell,
And the warders with their jingling keys
Opened each listening cell,
And down the iron stair we tramped,
Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
We prisoners called the sky,
And at every happy cloud that passed
In such strange freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
Who walked with downcast head,
And knew that, had each got his due,
They should have died instead :
He had but killed a thing that lived,
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted shroud,
And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
And makes it bleed in vain !

***

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalte yard ;
Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.

***

The warders strutted up and down,
And watched their herd of brutes,
Their uniforms were spick and span,
And they wore their Sunday suits,
But we knew the work they had been at,
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide
There was no grave at all :
Only a stretch of mud and sand
By the hideous prison-wall,
And a little heap of burning lime,
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,
Such as few men can claim :
Deep down below a prison-yard,
Naked for greater shame,
He lies, with fetters on each foot,
Wrapt in a sheet of flame !

And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bone by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart alway.

***

For three long years they will not sow
Or root or seedling there :

For three long years the unblessed spot
Will sterile be and bare.
And look upon the wondering sky
Wite anreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint.
Each simple seed they sow,
It is not true ! God's kindly earth
Is kindlier than men know,
And the red rose would but blow more red,
The white rose whiter blow.
Out of his mouth a red, red rose !
Out of his heart a white !
For who can say by what strange way,
Christ brings His will to light,
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight ?

But neither milk-white rose nor red
May bloom in prison-air ;
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,
Are what they give us there :
For flowers have been known to heal
A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,
Petal by petal, fall
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies
By the hideous prison-wall,
To tell the men who tramp the yard
That God's Son died for all.

Yet though the hideous prison-wall
Still hems him round and round,
And a spirit may not walk by night
That is with fetters bound,
And a spirit may but weep that lies
In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—
At peace, or will be soon :
There is no thing to make him mad,
Nor does Terror walk at noon,
For the lampless Earth in which he lies
Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged !
They did not even toll
A requiem that might have brought
Rest to his startled soul,
But hurriedly they took him out,
And hid him in a hole.

The warders stripped him of his clothes,
And gave him to the flies :
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes :
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which the convict lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray
By his dishonoured grave :
Nor mark it with that blessed Cross
That Christ for sinners gave,
Because the man was one of those
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well ; he has but passed
To Life's appointed bourne :
And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn

5

I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong ;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong ;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men hath made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise It were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun :
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor son of Man
Ever should look upon !

***

The vilest deeds like poison, weeds,
Bloom well in prison-air :
It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there :
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night arid day :
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

***

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
Like asp with adder fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,
And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word :
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard :
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain
Degraded and alone:
And some men curse, and some men weep
And some men make no moan ;
But God's eternal Laws are kind
And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah ! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win !
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

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***

And he of the swollen purple throat.
And the stark and staring eyes.
Waits for the holy hands that took
The Thief to Paradise :
And a broken and a contrite heart
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law
Gave him three weeks of life,
Three little weeks in which to heal
His soul of his soul's strife,
And cleanse from every blot of blood
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
The hand that held the steel :
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal :
And the crimson stain that was of Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

In Reading gaol by Reading town
There is a pit of shame,
And in it lies a wretched man
Eaten by teeth of flame,
In a burning winding-sheet he lies,
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,
In silence let him lie :
No need to waste the foolish tear,
Or heave the windy sigh :
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword !

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

1
THE POETRY OF BARBARISM
GEORGE SANTAYANA

If we would do justice to Browning's work as a human document, and at the same time perceive its relation to the rational ideals of the imagination and to that poetry which passes into religion, we must keep, as in the case of Whitman, two things in mind. One is the genuineness of the achievement, the sterling quality of the vision and inspiration: these are their own justification when we approach them from below and regard them as manifesting a more direct or impassioned grasp of experience than is given to mildly blatant, convention-ridden minds. The other thing to remember is the short distance to which this comprehension is carried, its failure to approach any finality or to achieve a recognition even of the traditional ideals of poetry and religion.

In the case of Walt Whitman such a failure will be generally felt; it is obvious that both his music and his philosophy are those of a barbarian, nay, almost of a savage. Accordingly there is need of dwelling rather on the veracity and simple dignity of his thought and art, on their expression of an order of ideas latent in all better experience. But in the case of Browning it is the success that is obvious to most people. Apart from a certain superficial grotesqueness to which we are soon accustomed, he easily arouses and engages the reader by the pithiness of his phrase, the volume of his passion, the vigour of his moral judgment, the liveliness of his historical fancy. It is obvious that we are in the presence of a great writer, of a great imaginative force, of a master in the expression of emotion. What is perhaps not so obvious, but no less true, is that we are in the presence of a barbaric genius, of a truncated imagination, of a thought and an art inchoate and ill-digested, of a volcanic eruption that tosses itself quite blindly and ineffectually into the sky.

The points of comparsion by which this becomes clear are perhaps not in every one's mind, although they are merely the elements of traditional culture, aesthetic and moral. Yet even without reference to ultimate ideals, one may notice in Browning many superficial signs of that deepest of all failures, the failure in rationality and the indifference to perfection. Such a sign is the turgid style weighty without nobility, pointed without naturalness or precision. Another sign is the "realism" of the personages, who, quite like men and women in actual life, are always displaying traits of character and never attaining character as a whole. Other hints might be found in the structure of the poems, where the dramatic substance does not achieve a dramatic form; in the metaphysical discussion, with its confused prolixity and absence of result; in the moral ideal, where all energies figure without their ultimate purposes; in the religion, which breaks off the expression of this life in the middle, and finds in that suspense an argument for immortality. In all this, and much more that might be recalled, a person coming to Browning with the habits of a cultivated mind might see evidence of some profound incapacity in the poet; but more careful reflection is necessary to understand the nature of this incapacity, its cause, and the peculiar accent which its presence gives to those ideas and impulses which Browning stimulates in us.

There is the more reason for developing this criticism (which might seem needlessly hostile and which time and posterity will doubtless make in their own quiet and decisive fashion) in that Browning did not keep within the sphere of drama and analysis, where he was strong, but allowed his own temperament and opinions to vitiate his representation of life, so that he sometimes turned the expression of a violent passion into the last word of what he thought a religion. He had a didactic vein, a habit of judging the spectacle he evoked and of loading the passions he depicted with his visible sympathy or scorn.

Now a chief support of Browning's popularity is that he is, for many, an initiator into the deeper mysteries of passion, a means of escaping from the moral poverty of their own lives and of feeling the rhythm and compulsion of the general striving. He figures, therefore, distinctly as a prophet, as a bearer of glad tidings, and it is easy for those who hail him as such to imagine that, knowing the labour of life so well, he must know something also of its fruits, and that in giving us the feeling of existence, he is also giving us its meaning. There is serious danger that a mind gathering from his pages the raw materials of truth, the unthreshed harvest of reality, may take him for a philosopher, for a rationalizer of what he describes. Awakening may be mistaken for enlightenment, and the galvanizing of torpid sensations and impulses for wisdom.

Against such fatuity reason should raise her voice. The vital and historic forces that produce illusions of this sort in large groups of men are indeed beyond the control of criticism. The ideas of passion are more vivid than those of memory, until they become memories in turn. They must be allowed to fight out their desperate battle against the laws of Nature and reason. But it is worthwhile in the meantime, for the sake of the truth and of a just philosophy, to meet the varying though perpetual charlatanism of the world with a steady protest. As soon as Browning is proposed to us as a leader, as soon as we are asked to be not the occasional patrons of his art, but the pupils of his philosophy, we have a right to express the radical dissatisfaction which we must feel, if we are rational, with his whole attitude and temper of mind.

The great dramatists have seldom dealt with perfectly virtuous characters. The great poets have seldom represented mythologies that would bear scientific criticism. But by an instict which constituted their greatness they have cast these mixed materials furnished by life into forms congenial to the specific principles of their art, and by this transformation they have made acceptable in the aesthetic sphere things that in the sphere of reality were evil or imperfect: in a word, their works have been beautiful as works of art. Or, if their genius exceeded that of the technical poet and rose to prophetic intuition, they have known how to create ideal characters, not possessed, perhaps, of every virtue accidentally needed in this world, but possessed of what is ideally better, of internal greatness and perfection. They have also known how to select and reconstruct their mythology so as to make it a true interpretation of moral life. When we read the maxims of Iago, Falstaff, or Hamlet, we are delighted if the thought strikes us as true, but we are not less delighted if it strikes us as false. These characters are not presented to us in order to enlarge our capacities of passion nor in order to justify themselves as processes of redemption; they are there, clothed in poetry and imbedded in plot, to entertain us with their imaginable feelings and their interesting errors. The poet, without being especially a philosopher, stands by virtue of his superlative genius on the plane of universal reason, far above the passionate experience which he overlooks and on which he reflects; and he raises us for the moment to his own level, to send us back again, if not better endowed for practical life, at least not unacquainted with speculation.

With Browning the case is essentially different. When his heroes are blinded by passion and warped by circumstance, as they almost always are, he does not describe the fact from the vantage-ground of the intellect and invite us to look at it from that point of view. On the contrary, his art is all self-expression or satire. For the most part his hero, like Whitman's, is himself; not appearing, as in the case of the American bard, *in puris naturalibus*, but masked in all sorts of historical and romantic finery. Sometimes, however, the personage, like Guido in *The Ring and the Book* or the "frustrate ghosts" of other poems, is merely a Marsyas shown flayed and quivering to the greater glory of the poet's ideal Apollo. The impulsive utterances and the crudities of most of the speakers are passionately adopted by the poet as his own. He thus perverts what might have been a triumph of imagination into a failure of reason.

This circumstance has much to do with the fact that Browning, in spite of his extraordinary gift for expression emotion, has hardly produced works purely and unconditionally delightful. They not only portray passion, which is interesting, but they betray is, which is odious. His art was still in the service of the will. He had not attained, in studying the beauty of things, that detachment of the phenomenon, that love of the form for its own sake, which is the secret of contemplative satisfaction. Therefore, the lamentable accidents of his personality and opinions, in themselves no worse than those of other mortals, passed into his art. He did not seek to elude them: he had no free speculative faculty to dominate them by. Or, to put the same thing differently, he was too much in earnest in his fictions, he threw himself too unreservedly into his creations. His imagination, like the imagination we have in dreams; was merely a vent for personal preoccupations. His art was inspired by purposes less simple and universal than the ends of imagination itself. His play of mind consequently could not be free or pure. The creative impulse could not reach its goal or manifest in any notable degree its own organic ideal.

We may illustrate these assertions by considering Browning's treatment of the passion of love, a passion which he given great prominence and in which he finds the highest significance.

Love is depicted by Browning with truth, with vehemence, and with the constant conviction that it is the supreme thing in life. The great variety of occasions in which it appears in his pages and the different degrees of elaboration it receives, leave it always of the same quality – the quality of passion. It never sinks into sensuality: in spite of its frequent extreme crudeness, it is always, in Browning's hands, a passion of the imagination; it is always love. On the other hand it never rises into contemplation: mingled as it may be with friendship, with religion, or with various forms of natural tenderness, it always remains a passion, it always remains a personal impulse, a hypnotization, with another person for its object or its cause. Kept within these limits it is represented, in a series of powerful sketches, which are for most readers the gems of the Browning gallery, as the last word of experience, the highest phase of human life.

> The woman yonder, there's no use in life
> But just to obtain her! Heap earth's woes in one
> And bear them-make a pile of all earth's joys
> And spurn them, as they help or help not this:
> Only, obtain her!
>
> When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
> Either hand
> On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
> Of my face,
> Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
> Each on each....
> O heart, O blood that freezes, blood that b rns!
> Earth's returns
> For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin—
> Shut them in—
> With their triumphs and their follies and the rest.
> Love is best.

In the piece called "In a Gondola" the lady says to her lover:-

> Heart to heart
> And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
> Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art.

And he, after being surprised and stabbed in her arms, replies:-

> 'It was ordained to be so, sweet! – and best
> Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
> Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards: care
> Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
> My blood will hurt! The Three I do not scorn
> To death, because they never lived, but I
> Have lived indeed, and so-(yet one more kiss) -can die.

We are not allowed to regard these expressions as the cries of souls blinded by the agony of passion and lust. Browning unmistakably adopts them as expressing his own highest intuitions. He so much admires the strength of this weakness that he does not admit that it is a weakness at all. It is with the strut of self-satisfaction, with the sensation, almost, of muscular Christianity, that he boasts of it through the mouth of one of his heroes, who is explaining to his mistress the motive of his faithful services as a minister of the queen:-

> She thinks there was more cause
> In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
> Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
> Chasing such shades...
> I worked because I want you with my soul.

Readers need not be reminded of the contrast which this method of understanding love offers to that adopted by the real masters of passion and imagination. They began with that crude emotion with which Browning ends: they lived it down, they exalted it by thought, they extracted the pure gold of it in a long purgation of discipline and suffering. The fierce paroxysm which for him is heaven, was for them the proof that heaven cannot be found on earth, that the value of experience is not in experience itself but in the ideals which it reveals. The intense, voluminous emotion, the sudden, overwhelming self-surrender in which he rests was for them the starting-point of a life of rational worship, of an austere and impersonal religion, by which the fire of love, kindled for a moment by the sight of some creature, was put, as it were, into a censer, to burn incense before every image of the Highest Good. Thus love ceased to be a passion and became the energy of contemplation: it diffused over the universe, natural and ideal, that light of tenderness and that faculty of worship which the passion of love often is first to quicken in a man's breast.

Of this art, recommended by Plato and practised in the Christian Church by all adepts of the spiritual life, Browning knew absolutely nothing. About the object of love he had no misgivings. What could the object be except somebody of other? The important thing was to love intensely and to love often. He remained in the phenomenal sphere: he was a lover of experience; the ideal did not exist for him. No conception could be farther from his thought than the essential conception of any rational philosophy, namely, that feeling is to be treated as raw material for thought, and that the destiny of emotion is to pass into objects which shall contain all its value while losing all its formlessness. This transformation of sense and emotion into objects agreeable to the intellect, into clear ideas and beautiful things, is the natural work of reason; when it has been accomplished very imperfectly, or not at all, we have a barbarous mind, a mind full of chaotic sensations, objectless passions, and undigested ideas. Such a mind Browning's was, to a degree remarkable in one with so rich a heritage of civilization.

The nineteenth century, as we have already said, has nourished the hope of abolishing the past as a force while it studies it as an object; and Browning, with his fondness for a historical stage setting and for the gossip of history, rebelled equally against the Pagan and the Christian discipline. The "Soul" which he trusted in was the barbarous soul, the "Spontaneous Me" of his half-brother Whitman. It was a restless personal

impulse, conscious of obscure depths within itself which it fancied to be infinite, and of a certain vague sympathy with wind and cloud and with the universal mutation. It was the soul that might have animated Attila and Alaric when they came down into Italy, a soul not incurious of the tawdriness and corruption of the strange civilization it beheld, but incapable of understanding its original spirit: a soul maintaining in the presence of that noble, unappreciated ruin all its own lordliness and energy, and all its native vulgarity.

Browning, who had not had the education traditional in his own country, used to say that Italy had been his university. But it was a school for which he was ill-prepared, and he did not sit under its best teacher. For the superficial ferment, the worldly passions, and the crimes of the Italian Renaissance he had a keen interest and intelligence. But Italy has been always a civilized country, and beneath the trappings and suits of civilization which at that particular time it flaunted so gayly, it preserved a civilized heart to which Browning's insight could never penetrate. There subsisted in the best minds a trained imagination and a cogent ideal of virtue. Italy had a religion, and that religion permeated all its life, and was the background without which even its secular art and secular passions would not be truly intelligible. The most commanding and representative, the deepest and most appealing of Italian natures are permeated with this religious inspiration. A Saint Francis, a Dante, a Michael Angelo, breathe hardly anything else. Yet for Browning these men and what they represented may be said not to have existed. He saw, he studied, and he painted a decapitated Italy. His vision could not mount so high as her head.

One of the elements of that higher tradition which Browning was not prepared to imbibe was the idealization of love. The passion he represents is lava hot from the crater, in no way moulded, smelted, or refined. He had no thought of subjugating impulses into the harmony of reason. He did not master life, but was mastered by it. Accordingly the love he describes has no wings: it issues in nothing. His lovers "extinguish sight and speech, each on each": sense, as he says elsewhere, drowning soul. The man in the gondola may well boast that he can die: it is the only thing he can properly do. Death is the only solution of a love that is tied to its individual object and inseparable from the alloy of passion and illusion within itself. Browning's hero, because he has love intensely, says that he has lived; he would be right, if the significance of life were to be measured by the intensity of the feeling it contained, and if intelligence were not the highest form of vitality. But had that hero known how to love better and had he had enough spirit to dominate his love, he might perhaps have been able to carry away the better part of it and to say that he could not die; for one half of himself and of his love would have been dead already and the other half would have been eternal, having fed—

On death, that feeds on men:
And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

The irrationality of the passions which Browning glorifies, making them the crown of life, is so gross that at times he cannot help perceiving it.

How perplexed
Grows belief! Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next? Is it God?

Yes, he will tell us. These passions and follies, however desperate in themselves and however vain for the individual, are excellent as parts of the dispensation of Providence:-

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan,
Each living his own to boot.

If we doubt, then, the value of our own experience, even perhaps of our experience of love, we may appeal to the interdependence of goods and evils in the world to assure ourselves that, in view of its consequences elsewhere, this experience was great and important after all. We need not stop to consider this supposed solution, which bristles with contradictions; it would not satisfy Browning himself, if he did not back it up with something more to his purpose, something nearer to warm and transitive feeling. The compensation for our defeats, the answer to our doubts, is not to be found merely in a proof of the essential necessity and perfection of the universe; that would be cold comfort, especially to so uncontemplative a mind. No: that answer, and compensation are to come very soon and very vividly to every private bosom. There is another life, a series of other lives, for this to happen in. Death will come, and –

I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new,
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to endue.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices that rave
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again
And with God be the rest!

Into the conception of continued life Browning has put, as a collection of further passages might easily show, all the items furnished by fancy or tradition which at the moment satisfied his imagination-new adventures, reunion with friends, and even, after a severe strain and for a short while, a little peace and quiet. The gist of the matter is that we are to live indefinitely, that all our faults can be turned to good, all our unfinished business settled, and that therefore there is time for anything we like in this world and for all we need in the other. It is in spirit the direct opposite of the philosophic maxim of regarding the end, of taking care to leave a finished life and a perfect character behind us. It is the opposite, also, of the religious *memento mori*, of the warning that the time is short before we go to our account. According to Browning, there is no account: we have an infinite credit. With an unconscious and characteristic mixture of heathen instinct with Christian doctrine, he thinks of the other world as heaven, but of the life to be led there as of the life of Nature.

Aristotle observes that we do not think the business of life worthy of the gods, to whom we can only attribute contemplation; if Browning had had the idea of perfecting and rationalizing this life rather than of continuing it indefinitely, he would have followed Aristotle and the Church in the matter. But he had no idea of anything eternal; and so he gave, as he would probably have said, a filling to the empty Christian immortality by making every man busy in it about many things. And to the irrational man, to the boy, it is no unpleasant idea to have an infinite number of days to live through, an infinite number of dinners to eat, with an infinity of fresh fights and new love-affairs, and no end of last rides together.

But it is a mere euphemism to call this perpetual vagrancy a development of the soul. A development means the unfolding of a definite nature, the gradual manifestation of a known idea. A series of phases, like the successive leaps of a water-fall, is no development. And Browning has no idea of an intelligible good which the phases of life might approach and with reference to which they might constitute a progress. His

notion is simply that the game of life, the exhilaration of action, is inexhaustible. You may set up your tenpins again after you have bowled them over, and you may keep up the sport for ever. The point is to bring them down as often as possible with a master-stroke and a big bang. That will tend to invigorate in you that self-confidence which in this system passes for faith. But it is unmeaning to call such an exercise heaven, or to talk of being "with God" in such a life, in any sense in which we are not with God already and under all circumstances. Our destiny would rather be, as Browning himself expresses it in a phrase which Attila or Alaric might have composed, "bound dizzily to the wheel of change to slake the thirst of God."

Such an optimism and such a doctrine of immortality can give no justification to experience which it does not already have in its detached parts. Indeed, those dogmas are not the basis of Browning's attitude, not conditions of his satisfaction in living, but rather overflowings of that satisfaction. The present life is presumably a fair average of the whole series of "adventures brave and new" which fall to each man's share; were it not found delightful in itself, there would be no motive for imagining and asserting that it is reproduced *in infinitum*. So too if we did not think that the evil in experience is actually utilized and visibly swallowed up in its good effects, we should hardly venture to think that God could have regarded as a good something which has evil for its condition and which is for that reason profoundly sad and equivocal. But Browning's philosophy of life and habit of imagination do not require the support of any metaphysical theory. His temperament is perfectly self-sufficient and primary; what doctrines he has are suggested by it and are too loose to give it more than a hesitant expression; they are quite powerless to give it any justification which it might lack on its face.

It is the temperament, then, that speaks; we may brush aside as unsubstantial, and even as distorting, the web of arguments and theories which it has spun out of itself. And what does the temperament say? That life is an adventure, not a discipline; that the exercise of energy is the absolute good, irrespective of motives or of consequences. These are the maxims of a frank barbarism; nothing could express better the lust of life, the dogged unwillingness to learn from experience, the contempt for rationality, the carelessness about perfection, the admiration for mere force, in which barbarism always betrays itself. The vague religion which seeks to justify this attitude is really only another outburst of the same irrational impulse.

In Browning this religion takes the name of Christianity, and identifies itself with one or two Christian ideas arbitrarily selected; but at heart it has far more affinity to the worship of Thor or of Odin than to the religion of the Cross. The zest of life becomes a cosmic emotion; we lump the whole together and cry, "Hurrah for the Universe!" A faith which is thus a pure matter of lustiness and inebriation rises and falls, attracts or repels, with the ebb and flow of the mood from which it springs. It is invincible because unseizable; it is as safe from refutation as it is rebellious to embodiment. But it cannot enlighten or correct the passions on which it feeds. Like a servile priest, it flatters them in the name of Heaven. It cloaks irrationality in sanctimony; and its admiration for every bluff folly, being thus justified by a theory, becomes a positive fanaticism, eager to defend any wayward impulse.

Such barbarism of temper and thought could hardly, in a man of Browning's Independence and spontaneity, be without its counterpart in his art. When a man's personal religion is passive, as Shakespeare's seems to have been, and is adopted without question or particular interest from the society around him, we may not observe any analogy between it and the free creations of that man's mind. Not so when the religion is created afresh by the private imagination; it is then merely one among many personal works of art, and will naturally bear a family likeness to the others. The same individual temperament, with its limitations and its bias, will appear in the art which has appeared in the religion. And such is the case with Browning. His limitations as a poet are the counterpart of his limitations as a moralist and theologian; only in the poet they are not so regrettable. Philosophy and

religion are nothing if not ultimate; it is their business to deal with general principles and final aims. Now it is in the conception of things fundamental and ultimate that Browning is weak; he is strong in the conception of things immediate. The pulse of the emotion, the bobbing up of the thought, the streaming of the reveries – these he can note down with picturesque force or imagine with admirable fecundity.

Yet the limits of such excellence are narrow, for no man can safely go far without the guidance of reason. His long poems have no structure – for that name cannot be given to the singular mechanical division of *The Ring and the Book*. Even his short poems have no completeness, no limpidity. They are little torsos made broken so as to stimulate the reader to the restoration of their missing legs and arms. What is admirable in them is pregnancy of phrase, vividness of passion and sentiment, heaped-up scraps of observation, occasional flashes of light, occasional beauties of versification,— all like

the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match.

There is never anything largely composed in the spirit of pure beauty, nothing devotedly finished, nothing simple and truly just. The poet's mind cannot reach equilibrium; at best he oscillates between opposed extravagances; his final word is still a *boutade*, still an explosion. He has no sustained nobility of style. He affects with the reader a confidential and vulgar manner, so as to be more sincere and to feel more at home. Even in the poems where the effort at impersonality is most successful, the dramatic disguise is usually thrown off in a preface, epilogue or parenthesis. The author likes to remind us of himself by some confidential wink or genial poke in the ribs, by some little interlarded sneer. We get in these tricks of manner a taste of that essential vulgarity, that indifference to purity and distinction, which is latent but pervasive in all the products of this mind. The same disdain of perfection which appears in his ethics appears here in his verse, and impairs its beauty by allowing it to remain too often obscure, affected, and grotesque.

Such a correspondence is natural: for the same powers of conception and expression are needed in fiction, which, if turned to reflection, would produce a good philosophy. Reason is necessary to the perception of high beauty. Discipline is indispensable to art. Work from which these qualities are absent must be barbaric: it can have no ideal form and must appeal to us only through the sensuousness and profusion of its materials. We are invited by it to lapse into a miscellaneous appreciativeness, into a subservience to every detached impression. And yet, if we would only reflect even on these disordered beauties, we should see that the principle by which they delight us is a principle by which an ideal, an image of perfection, is inevitably evoked. We can have no pleasure or pain, nor any preference whatsoever, without implicitly setting up a standard of excellence, an ideal of what would satisfy us there. To make these implicit ideals explicit, to catch their hint, to work out their theme, and express clearly to ourselves and to the world what they are demanding in the place of the actual — that is the labour of reason and the task of genius. The two cannot be divided. Clarification of ideas and disentanglement of values are as essential to aesthetic activity as to intelligence. A failure of reason is a failure of art and taste.

The limits of Browning's art, like the limits of Whitman's can therefore be understood by considering his mental habit. Both poets had powerful imaginations, but the type of their imaginations was low. In Whitman imagination was limited to marshalling sensations in single file; the embroideries he made around that central line were simple and insignificant. His energy was concentrated on that somewhat animal form of contemplation, of which, for the rest, he was a great, perhaps an unequalled master. Browning rose above that level; with him sensation is usually in the background; he is not particularly a poet of the senses or of ocular vision. His favourite subject-matter is rather the stream of thought and feeling in the mind; he is

the poet of soliloquy. Nature and life as they really are, rather than as they may appear to the ignorant and passionate participant in them, lie beyond his range. Even in his best dramas, like *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon or Colombe's Birthday*, the interest remains in the experience of the several persons as they explain it to us. The same is the case in *The Ring and the Book*, the conception of which, in twelve monstrous soliloquies, is a striking evidence of the poet's predilection for this form.

The method is, to penetrate by sympathy rather than to portray by intelligence. The most authoritative insight is not the poet's or the spectator's aroused and enlightened by the spectacle, but the various heroes' own, in the moment of intensest passion. We therefore miss the tragic relief and exaltation, and come away instead with the uncomfortable feeling that an obstinate folly is apparently the most glorious and choiceworthy thing in the world. This is evidently the poet's own illusion, and those who do not happen to share it must feel that if life were really as irrational as he thinks it, it would be not only profoundly discouraging, which it often is, but profoundly disgusting, which it surely is not; for at least it reveals the ideal which it fails to attain.

This ideal Browning never disentangles. For him the crude experience is the only end, the endless struggle the only ideal, and the perturbed "Soul" the only organon of truth. The arrest of his intelligence at this point, before it has envisaged any rational object, explains the arrest of his dramatic art at soliloquy. His immersion in the forms of self-consciousness prevents him from dramatizing the real relations of men and their thinking to one another, to Nature, and to destiny. For in order to do so he would have had to view his characters from above (as Cervantes did, for instance), and to see them not merely as they appeared to themselves, but as they appear to reason. This higher attitude, however, was not only beyond Browning's scope, it was positively contrary to his inspiration. Had he reached it, he would no longer have seen the universe through the "Soul," but through the intellect, and he would not have been able to cry, "How the world is made for each one of us!" On the contrary, the "Soul" would have figured only in its true conditions, in all its ignorance and dependence, and also in its essential teachableness, a point against which Browning's barbaric wilfulness particularly rebelled. Rooted in his persuasion that the soul is essentially omnipotent and that to live hard can never be to live wrong, he remained fascinated by the march and method of self-consciousness, and never allowed himself to be weaned from that romantic fatuity by the energy of rational imagination, which prompts us not to regard our ideas as mere filling of a dream, but rather to build on them the conception of permanent objects and overruling principles, such as Nature, society, and the other ideals of reason. A full-grown imagination deals with these things, which do not obey the laws of psychological progression, and cannot be described by the methods of soliloquy.

We thus see that Browning's sphere, though more subtle and complex than Whitman's, was still elementary. It lay far below the spheres of social and historical reality in which Shakespeare moved; far below the comprehensive and cosmic sphere of every great epic poet. Browning did not even reach the intellectual plane of such contemporary poets as Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, who, whatever may be thought of their powers, did not study consciousness for itself, but for the sake of its meaning and of the objects which it revealed. The best things that come into a man's consciousness are the things that take him out of it – the rational things that are independent of his personal perception and of his personal existence. These he approaches with his reason, and they, in the same measure, endow him with their immortality. But precisely these things — the objects of science and of the constructive imagination — Browning always saw askance, in the outskirts of his field of vision, for his eye was fixed and riveted on the soliloquizing Soul. And this Soul being, to his apprehension, irrational, did not give itself over to those permanent objects which might otherwise have occupied it, but ruminated on its own accidental emotions, on its love-affairs, and on its hopes of going on so ruminating for ever.

The pathology of the human mind — for the normal, too, is pathological when it is not referred to the ideal — the pathology of the human mind is a very interesting subject, demanding great gifts and great ingenuity in its treatment. Browning ministers to this interest, and possesses this ingenuity and these gifts. More than any other poet he keeps a kind of speculation alive in the now large body of sentimental, eager-minded people, who no longer can find in a definite religion a form and language for their imaginative life. That this service is greatly appreciated speaks well for the meradicable tendency in man to study himself and his destiny. We do not deny the achievement when we point out its nature and limitations. It does not cease to be something because it is taken to be more than it is.

In every imaginative sphere the nineteenth century has been an era of chaos, as it has been an era of order and growing organization in the spheres of science and of industry. An ancient doctrine of the philosophers asserts that to chaos the world must ultimately return. And what is perhaps true of the cycles of cosmic change is certainly true of the revolutions of culture. Nothing lasts for ever: languages, arts, and religions disintegrate with time. Yet the perfecting of such forms is the only criterion of progress; the destruction of them the chief evidence of decay. Perhaps fate intends that we should have, in our imaginative decadence, the consolation of fancying that we are still progressing, and that the disintegration of religion and the arts is bringing us nearer to the protoplasm of sensation and passion. If energy and actuality are all that we care for, chaos is as good as order, and barbarism as good as discipline — better, perhaps, since impulse is not then restrained within any bounds of reason or beauty. But if the powers of the human mind are at any time adequate to the task of digesting experience, clearness and order inevitably supervene. The moulds of thought are imposed upon Nature, and the conviction of a definite truth arises together with the vision of a supreme perfection. It is only at such periods that the human animal vindicates his title of rational. If such an epoch should return, people will no doubt retrace our present gropings with interest and see in them gradual approaches to their own achievement. Whitman and Browning might well figure then as representatives of our time. For the merit of being representative cannot be denied them. The mind of our age, like theirs, is choked with materials, emotional, and inconclusive. They merely aggravate our characteristics, and their success with us is due partly to their own absolute strength and partly to our common weakness. If once, however, this imaginative weakness could be overcome, and a form found for the crude matter of experience, men might look back from the height of a new religion and a new poetry upon the present troubles of the spirit; and perhaps even these things might then be pleasant to remember.

2
BROWNING
G.K.CHESTERTON

The absurd notion that Browning had no sense of melody in verse is only possible to people who think that there is no melody in verse which is not an imitation of Swinburne. To give a satisfactory idea of Browning's rhythmic originality would be impossible without quotations more copious than entertaining. But the essential point has been suggested.

> "They were purple of raiment and golden,
> Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,
> Thy lovers in haunts unbeholden,
> In marvellous chambers of thine,"

is beautiful language, but not the only sort of beautiful language. This, for instance, has also a tune in it:-

> "I-'next poet,' No, my hearties,
> I nor am, nor fain would be!

Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,
Not one soul revolt to me!

Which of you did I enable
Once to slip inside my breast,
There to catalogue and label
What I like least, what love best,
Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
Seek and shun, respect, deride,
Who has right to make a rout of
Rarities he found inside?"

This quick, gallantly stepping measure also has its own kind of music, and the man who cannot feel it can never have enjoyed the sound of soldiers marching by. This, then, roughly is the main fact to remember about Browning's poetical method, or about any one's poetical method—that the question is not whether that method is the best in the world, but the question whether there are not certain things which can only be conveyed by that method. It is perfectly true, for instance, that a really lofty an lucid line of Tennyson, such as:-

"Thou art the highest, and most human too"
and
"We needs must love the highest when we see it"

would really be made the worse for being translated into Browning. It would probably become

"High's human; man loves best, best visible,"

and would lose its peculiar clarity and dignity and courtly plainness. But it is quite equally true that any really characteristic fragment of Browning, if it were only the tempestuous scolding of the organist in
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha:-

"Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?"

-it is quite equally true that this outrageous gallop of rhymes ending with a frantic astronomical image would lose in energy and spirit if it were written in a conventional and classical style, and ran:-

"What must I deem then that thou dreamest to find
Disjected bones adrift upon the stair
Thou sweepest clean, or that thou deemest that I
Pouch in my wallet the vice-regal sun?"

Is it not obvious that this statelier version might be excellent poetry of its kind, and yet would be bad exactly in so far as it was good; that it would lose all the swing, the rush, the energy of the preposterous and grotesque original? In fact, we may see how unmanageable is this classical treatment of the essentially absurd in Tennyson himself. The humorous passages in *The Princess*, though often really humorous in themselves, always appear forced and feeble because they have to be restrained by a certain metrical dignity, and the mere idea of such restraint is incompatible with humour. If Browning had written the passage which opens *The Princess*, descriptive

of the "larking" of the villagers in the magnate's park, he would have spared us nothing; he would not have spared us the shrill uneducated voices and the unburried bottles of ginger beer. He would have crammed the poem with uncouth similes; he would have changed the metre a hundred times; he would have broken into doggerel and into rhapsody; but he would have left, when all is said and done, as he leaves in that paltry fragment of the grumbling organist, the impression of a certain eternal human energy. Energy and joy, the father and the mother of the grotesque, would have ruled the poem. We should have felt of that rowdy gathering little but the sensation of which Mr. Henley writes:-

"Praise the generous gods for giving,
In this world of sin and strife,
With some little time for living,
Unto each the joy of life,"

The thought that every wise man has when looking at a Bank Holiday crowd at Margate.

To ask why Browning enjoyed this perverse and fantastic style most would be to go very deep into his spirit indeed, probably a great deal deeper than it is possible to go. But it is worth while to suggest tentatively the general function of the grotesque in art generally and in his art in particular. There is one very curious idea into which we have been hypnotised by the more eloquent poets, and that is that nature in the sense of what is ordinarily called the country is a thing entirely stately and beautiful as those terms are commonly understood. The whole world of the fantastic, all things top-heavy, lop-sided, and nonsensical are conceived as the work of man, gargoyles, German jugs, Chinese pots, political caricatures, burlesque epics, the pictures of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley and the puns of Robert Browning. But in truth a part, and a very large part, of the sanity and power of nature lies in the fact that out of her comes all this instinct of caricature. Nature may present itself to the poet too often as consisting of stars and lilies; but these are not poets who live in the country; they are men who go to the country for inspiration and could no more live in the country than they could go to bed in Westminster Abbey. Men who live in the heart of nature, farmers and peasants, know that nature means cows and pigs, and creatures more humorous than can be found in a whole sketch-book of Callot. And the element of the grotesque in art, like the element of the grotesque in nature, means, in the main, energy, the energy which takes its own forms and goes its own way. Browning's verse, in so far as it is grotesque, is not complex or artificial; it is natural and in the legitimate tradition of nature. The verse sprawls like the trees, dances like the dust: it is ragged like the thunder-cloud, it is top-heavy like the toadstool. Energy which disregards the standard of classical art is in Nature as it is in Browning. The same sense of the uproarious force in things which makes Browning dwell in the oddity of a fungus or a jellyfish makes him dwell on the oddity of a philosophical idea. Here, for example, we have a random instance from *The Englishman in Italy* of the way in which Browning, when he was most Browning, regarded physical nature.

"And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at."

Nature might mean flowers to Wordsworth and grass to Walt Whitman, but to Browning it really meant such things as these, the monstrosities and living mysteries of the sea. And just as these strange things meant to Browning energy in the physical world, so strange thoughts and strange images meant to him energy in he mental world. When, in one of his later poems, the professional mystic is seeking in a

supreme moment of sincerity to explain that small things may be filled with God as well as great, he uses the very same kind of image, the image of a shapeless sea-beast, to embody that noble conception.

"The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,
The simplest of creations, just a sac
That's mouth, heart, legs, and belly at once, yet
lives
And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,
If simplified still further one degree."
(SLUDGE)

These bulbous, indescribable sea-goblins are the first thing on which the eye of the poet lights in looking on a landscape, and the last in the significance of which he trusts in demonstrating the mercy of the Everlasting.

There is another and but slightly different use of the grotesque, but which is definitely valuable in Browning's poetry, and indeed in all poetry. To present a matter in a grotesque manner does certainly tend to touch the nerve of surprise and thus to draw attention to the intrinsically miraculous character of the object itself. It is difficult to give examples of the proper use of grotesqueness without becoming too grotesque. But we should all agree that if St. Paul's Cathedral were suddenly presented to us upside down we should, for the moment, be more surprised at it, and look at it more than we have done all the centuries during which it has rested on its foundations. Now it is the supreme function of the philosopher of the grotesque to make the world stand on its head that people may look at it. If we say "a man is a man" we awaken no sense of the fantastic, however much we ought to, but if we say, in the language of the old satirist, "that man is a two-legged bird, without feathers," the phrase does, for a moment, make us look at man from the outside and gives us a thrill in his presence. When the author of the Book of Job insists upon the huge, half-witted, apparently unmeaning magnificence and might of Behemoth, the hippopotamus, he is appealing precisely to this sense of wonder provoked by the grotesque. "Canst thou play with him as with a bird, canst thou bind him for thy maidens?" he says in an admirable passage. The notion of the hippopotamus as a household pet is curiously in the spirit of the humour of Browning.

But when it is clearly understood that Browning;'s love of the fantastic in style was a perfectly serious artistic love, when we understand that he enjoyed working in that style, as a Chinese potter might enjoy making dragons, or a medieval mason making devils, there yet remains something definite which must be laid to his account as a fault. He certainly had a capacity for becoming perfectly childish in his indulgence in ingenuities that have nothing to do with poetry at all, such as puns, and rhymes, and grammatical structures that only just fit into each other like a Chinese puzzle. Probably it was only one of the marks of his singular vitality, curiosity, and interest in details. He was certainly one of those somewhat rare men who are fierily ambitious both in large things and in small. He prided himself on having written *The Ring and the Book*, and he also prided himself on knowing good wine when he tasted it. He prided himself on re-establishing optimism on a new foundation, and it is to be presumed, though it is somewhat difficult to imagine, that he prided himself on such rhymes as the following in *Pacchiarotto:-*

"The wolf, fox, bear, and monkey,
By piping advice in one key-
That his pipe should play a prelude
To something heaven-tinged not hell-hued,
Something not harsh but docile,
Man-liquid, not man-fossil."

This writing, considered as writing, can only be regarded as a kind of joke, and most probably Browning considered it so himself. It has nothing at all to do with that powerful and symbolic use of the grotesque which may be found in such admirable passages as this from *Holy Cross Day*:-

> "Give your first groan-compunction's at work:
> And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
> Lo, Micah—the self-same beard on chin
> He was four times already converted in!"

This is the serious use of the grotesque. Through it passion and philosophy are as well expressed as through any other medium. But the rhyming frenzy of Browning has no particular relation even to the poems in which it occurs. It is not a dance to any measure; it can only be called the horse-play of literature. It may be noted, for example, as a rather curious fact, that the ingenious rhymes are generally only mathematical triumphs, not triumphs of any kind of assonance. *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, a poem written for children, and bound in general to be lucid and readable, ends with a rhyme which it is physically impossible for any one to say:-

> "And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or
> from mice,
> If we've promised them aught, let us keep our
> promise!"

This queer trait in Browning, his inability to keep a kind of demented ingenuity even out of poems in which it was quite inappropriate, is a thing which must be recognised, and recognised all the more because as a whole he was a very perfect artist, and a particularly perfect artist in the use of the grotesque. But everywhere when we go a little below the surface in Browning we find that there was something in him perverse and unusual despite all his working normality and simplicity. His mind was perfectly wholesome, but it was not made exactly like the ordinary mind. It was like a piece of strong wood with a knot in it.

The quality of what can only be called buffoonery which is under discussion is indeed one of the many things in which Browning was more of an Elizabethan than a Victorian. He was like the Elizabethans in their belief in the normal man, in there gorgeous and over-loaded language, above all in their feeling for learning as an enjoyment and almost a frivolity. But there was nothing in which he was so thoroughly Elizabethan, and even Shakespearian, as in this fact, that when he felt inclined to write a page of quite uninteresting nonsense, he immediately did so. Many great writers have contrived to be tedious, and apparently aimless, while expounding some thought which they believed to be grave and profitable; but this frivolous stupidity had not been found in any great writer since the time of Rabelais and the time of the Elizabethans. In many of the comic scenes of Shakespeare we have precisely this elephantine ingenuity, this hunting of a pun to death through three pages. In the Elizabethan dramatists and in Browning it is no doubt to a certain extent the mark of a real hilarity. People must be very happy to be so easily amused.

In the case of what is called Browning's obscurity, the question is somewhat more difficult to handle. Many people have supposed Browning to be profound because he was obscure, and many other people, hardly less mistaken, have supposed him to be obscure because he was profound. He was frequently profound, he was occasionally obscure, but as a matter of fact the two have little or nothing to do with each other. Browning's dark and elliptical mode of speech, like his love of the grotesque, was simply a characteristic of his, a trick of his temperament, and had little or nothing to do with whether what he was expressing was profound or superficial. Suppose, for example, that a person well read in English poetry but unacquainted with Browning's style were earnestly invited to consider the following verse:-

"Hobbs hints blue-straight he turtle eats.
Nobbs prints blue—claret crowns his cup.
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?"

The individual so confronted would say without hesitation that it must indeed be an abstruse and indescribable thought which could only be conveyed by remarks so completely disconnected. But the point of the matter is that the thought contained in this amazing verse is not abstruse or philosophical at all, but is a perfectly ordinary and straightforward comment, which any one might have made upon an obvious fact of life. The whole verse of course begins to explain itself, if we know the meaning of the word "murex" which is the name of a sea-shell, out of which was made the celebrated blue dye of Tyre. The poet takes this blue dye as a simile for a new fashion in literature, and points out that Hobbs, Nobbs, etc., obtain fame and comfort by merely using the dye from the shell; and adds the perfectly natural comment:-

"... Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?"

So that the verse is not subtle, and was not meant to be subtle, but is a perfectly casual piece of sentiment at the end of a light poem. Browning is not obscure because he has such deep things to say, any more than he is grotesque because he has such new things to say. He is both of these things primarily, because he likes to express himself in a particular manner. The manner is as natural to him as a man's physical voice, and it is abrupt, sketchy, allusive, and full of gaps. Here comes in the fundamental difference between Browning and such a writer as George Meredith, with whom the Philistine satirist would so often in the matter of complexity class him. The works of George Meredith are, as it were, obscure even when we know what they mean. They deal with nameless emotions, fugitive sensations, subconscious certainties and uncertainties, and it really requires a somewhat curious and unfamiliar mode of speech to indicate the presence of these. But the great part of Browning's actual sentiments, and almost all the finest and most literary of them, are perfectly plain and popular and eternal sentiments. Meredith is really a singer producing strange notes and cadences difficult to follow because of the delicate rhythm of the song he sings. Browning is simply a great demagogue, with an impediment in his speech. Or rather, to speak more strictly, Browning is a man whose excitement for the glory of the obvious is so great that his speech becomes disjointed and precipitate: he becomes eccentric through his advocacy of the ordinary, and goes mad for the love of sanity.

If Browning and George Meredith were each describing the same act, they might both be obscure, but their obscurities would be entirely different. Suppose, for instance, they were describing even so prosaic and material an act as a man being knocked downstairs by another man to whom he had given he lie, Meredith's description would refer to something which an ordinary observer would not see, or at least could not describe. It might be a sudden sense of anarchy in the brain of the assaulter, or a stupefaction and stunned serenity in that of the object of the assault. He might write, "Wainwood's 'Men vary in veracity,' brought the baronet's arm up. He felt the doors of his brain burst, and Wainwood a swift rushing of himself through air accompanied with a clarity as of the annihilated." Meredith, in other words, would speak queerly because he was describing queer mental experiences. But Browning might simply be describing the material incident of the man being knocked downstairs, and his description would run:-

"What then? 'You lie' and doormat below stairs Takes bump from back."

This is not subtlety, but merely a kind of insane swiftness. Browning s not like Meredith, anxious to pause and examine the sensations of the combatants, nor does

he become obscure through this anxiety. He is only so anxious to get his man to the bottom of the stairs quickly that he leaves out about half the story.

Many who could understand that ruggedness might be an artistic quality, would decisively, and in most cases rightly, deny that obscurity could under any conceivable circumstances be an artistic quality. But here again Browning's work requires a somewhat more cautious and sympathetic analysis. There is a certain kind of fascination, a strictly artistic fascination, which arises from a matter being hinted at in such a way as to leave a certain tormenting uncertainty even at the end. It is well sometimes to half understand a poem in the same manner that we half understand the world. One of the deepest and strangest of all human moods is the mood which will suddenly strike us perhaps in a garden at night, or deep in sloping meadows, the feeling that every flower and leaf has just uttered something stupendously direct and important, and that we have by a prodigy of imbecility not heard or understood it. There is a certain poetic value, and that a genuine one, in his sense of having missed the full meaning of things. There is beauty, not only in wisdom, but in this dazed and dramatic ignorance.

But in truth it is very difficult to keep pace with all the strange and unclassified artistic merits of Browning. He was always trying experiments; sometimes he failed, producing clumsy and irritating metres, top-heavy and over-concentrated thought. Far more often he triumphed, producing a crowd of boldly designed poems, every one of which taken separately might have founded an artistic school. But whether successful or unsuccessful, he never ceased from his fierce hunt after poetic novelty. He never became a conservative. The last book he published in his life-time, *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, was a new poem, and more revolutionary than *Paracelsus*. This is the true light in which to regard Browning as an artist. He had determined to leave no spot of the cosmos unadorned by his poetry which he could find it possible to adorn. An admirable example can be found in that splendid poem *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came*. It is the hint of an entirely new and curious type of poetry, the poetry of the shabby and hungry aspect of the earth itself. Daring poets who wished to escape from conventional gardens and orchards had long been in the habit of celebrating the poetry of rugged and gloomy landscapes, but Browning is not content with this. He insists upon celebrating the poetry of mean landscapes. That sense of scrubbiness in Nature, as of a man unshaved, had never been conveyed with this enthusiasm and primeval gusto before.

"If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk
All hopes of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents."

This is a perfect realisation of that eerie sentiment which comes upon us, not so often among mountains and water-falls, as it does on some half-starved common at twilight, or in walking down some grey mean street. It is the song of the beauty of refuse; and Browning was the first to sing it. Oddly enough it has been one of the poems about which most of those pedantic and trivial questions have been asked, which are asked invariably by those who treat Browning as a science instead of a poet, "What does the poem of *Childe Roland* mean?" The only genuine answer to this is, "What does anything mean?" Does the earth mean nothing? Do grey skies and wastes covered with thistles mean nothing? Does an old horse turned out to graze mean nothing? If it does, there is but one further truth to be added –that everything means nothing.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF ROBERT BROWNING

RICHARD D. ALTICK

Only a few of those who knew Robert Browning in the 1870's and 1880's as an immensely healthy, masculine, vigorous, white-maned gentleman, always on hand at fashionable London soires, teas, concerts, and exhibitions, seem to have sensed any incongruity in the fact that this voluble, affable man was also a great poet. And of the few who did sense an incongruity, only Henry James felt impelled to invent a legend to explain it.

It was not easy to meet him and know him without some resort to the supposition that he had literally mastered the secret of dividing the personal consciousness into a pair of independent compartments. The man of the world — the man who was good enough for the world, such as it was - walked abroad, showed himself, talked, right reasonably, abounded, multiplied his contacts and did his duty; the man of [the poems] ...., this inscrutable personage sat at home and knew as well as he might in what quarters of *that* sphere to look for suitable company. The poet and the "member of society" were, in a word, dissociated in him as they can rarely elsewhere have been.

Such a *donne'e* could not be wasted, and in time James "dramatized" it in his story, "The Private Life," in which Browning was the model for the novelist Clare Vawdrey, a "loud, sound, normal, hearty presence, all so assertive and so whole, all bristling with prompt responses and expected opinions and usual views," who led one to wonder "what lodgement, on such premises, the rich proud genius one adored could....ever have contrived." The explanation, as James put it in a later preface, was that "our delightful inconceivable celebrity was *double*, constructed in two quite distinct and 'water-tight' compartments - one of these figured by the gentleman who sat at a table all alone, silent and unseen, and wrote admirably deep and brave and intricate things; while the gentleman who regularly came forth to sit at a quite different table and substantially and promiscuously and multitudinously dine stood for its companion.

...It was amusing to think of the real great man as a presence known, in the late London days, all and only to himself — unseen of other human eye and converted into his perfectly positive, but quite secondary, *alter ego* by any approach to a social contact."

James, then, recognized that the public Robert Browning was not the whole Browning and, indeed, quite possibly, not the true Browning at all. But he seems never to have wondered *why* Browning was a double being, or what that other self was like who never emerged from the study where he meditated and wrote poetry. So the mystery of Robert Browning persists, to disturb those readers who cannot reconcile the outward man with the poetry signed with his name, and who are unsatisfied with the description of Browning's inner being which the commentators have customarily inferred from his writings.

The truth can be got at only with difficulty, for the man who replaced the public Browning when he shut the door upon the world after a dinner party was careful not to leave intimate personal data behind. While the known facts of his life and the tendencies of his poetry allow us to hazard certain conclusions, it is always with the knowledge that, had we more abundant biographical evidence, we might well discover more significant elements in his inner history than any which the available record suggests.

The much admired "healthiness" of Browning the man — his abounding physical resources, his bouncing animal spirits, his confidence, his masculinity — has always

been said to be a chief characteristic of his poetry as well. Although some critics have been aware of the darker undertones in some of his verse, especially in his remarkably frequent preoccupation with moral evil, the first and probably the most lasting impression most readers have is that of his tireless vigor, his embracing of life and the promise of an agreeable hereafter. But we, more conscious than our grandparents were that outward appearance may belie the inner man, are disturbed by what has commonly been called (one of the most mischievous labels ever pasted on a poet) his "optimism." It is not simply that his brand, or any brand for that matter, of affirmation is unfashionable in an age of endless anxiety. However misguided we may feel other great poets have been in their confidence in the goodness of life and the wisdom of God, we seldom question the genuineness of their feelings. But with Browning the case is signally different: the poet doth protest too much. His "healthiness" seems actually unhealthy; a feverish flush on the cheeks, a fantastic cheerfulness of view, may betray a serious malady within. We can grant to any poet a normal degree of satisfaction with the smooth flow of his endocrines, but in Browning's poetry there persists a palpable excess of health.

One who first suspects this false note in the poetry finds much to feed his doubts in scattered hints left by the people who knew him. His famous geniality and social energy offended few, but to those few it shaded unpleasantly off into sheer noisiness, self-assertiveness. Mary Gladstone complained that "he talks everybody down with his dreadful voice, and always places his person in such disagreeable proximity with yours and puffs and blows and spits in your face." One of his most sympathetic friends, Mrs. Sutherland Orr, noted symptoms of "nervous excitability." Strange to say, considering his bottomless well of conversation, he had a pathological fear of speaking in public; the mere prospect of having to do so prostrated him. And another biographer, Hall Griffin, remarked upon the "violent explosions of wrath," totally out of proportion to their occasion, which punctuated the usually serene course of Browning's later decades. His outward confidence, so pervasive, so blatant, was accompanied by persistent suggestions of insecurity.

Browning's reticence about himself is probably the most remarkable, as it is the most significant, aspect of his personality. His biographers are not to be blamed if we put down their books unsatisfied. He took great pains that it should be so. We have far less really meaningful information about him than about any other great literary man of his age. His letters are singularly devoid of the sort of material we need if we are to understand a man's true character; we cannot possibly reconstruct from them, as we can from, say, those of Keats, the history of a poet's mind. And what is true of his letters is true of his conversation. He was a courteous, affectionate gentleman who seemed to be interested in the affairs of everyone but himself. He was full of gossip, but the gossip was never about Robert Browning.

No part of this general reticence is more striking than Browning's reluctance to discuss his own poetry. His letters seldom give us anything more than clues to when a poem was written or to the incident or literary source which contributed to it. We are rarely told what he was brooding about at the time, what train of thought, what emotional mood formed the inspiration and background for a particular poem. As Griffin very carefully phrased it, "He seemed, in general society, anxious not to be reminded, or to remind others, that he was a poet so it was delighted, on the contrary, to be mistaken for a successful financier. And when with the advent of the Browning cult in the 1880's, the poet was plagued with inquiries from earnest explicators of his text, although his innate courtesy forbade turning the inquirers away, he confined himself to clarifying the meaning of an allusion or of a hazy line or two. When it came to discussing the meaning of a whole poem, he preferred to approve an interpretation that was brought to him rather than to offer one of his own. He seemed grateful to have words put into his mouth. When someone asked if the meaning of "Childe Roland" might be summarized by the phrase, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," he answered (with relief?), "Yes, just about that." No matter if there were obvious difficulties in the way of reading the poem in such a fashion: the

question had been answered, and the subject could be dropped. Time after time, most conspicuously in the case of Mrs. Orr, he gave his blessing to the publication of facts about his life and poems, and interpretations of the text, which simply are wrong. He never cared to set the record straight. His only concern was to dispose as quickly as possible of matters which, for some reason, it was extremely distasteful for him to discuss.

Here, it seems to me, we have the key to Browning's inner life. Paradoxical though it may seem, in the light of his enormous productivity, he had come in time to regard his role of poet as a burden. He had found that, for various reasons, he could not possibly do what, in his youth, he had dedicated his life to trying to achieve. Before he was twenty his reading of Shelley had determined his ambition: to be a seer-poet. He had a vocation as passionate, as ineradicable, as that of Milton or Tennyson. And so firmly set was this ambition that success in any other way of poetry, a success which, as it happened, was surely his in his middle phase, could not possibly atone for failure to achieve the one goal he had chosen. He was one of those men to whom maturity does not bring the power cheerfully to abandon adolescent ambitions as being impossible of realization. Throughout his life, the reproachful memory of his early confident hopes burdened him like the Old Man of the Sea. There is much more than meets the eye in Edmund Gosse's report that Browning, in the last year of his life, said that he "marvelled, as he looked back, at the audacious obstinacy which had made him, when a youth, determine to be a poet and nothing but a poet."

Doubtless one reason for his marvelling at his early resolution was that curious verbal inadequacy which critics have remarked in him. His gifts of language was insufficient for the messages he wished to deliver. Perhaps part of his trouble was that he did not understand clearly enough what he desired to communicate, but it is more certain that when he tried to communicate, his reach proved to exceed his grasp. "Language," he confessed to Miss Barrett, "is an organ that never studded this heavy head of mine."

Not only was his mastery of language inadequate for the task of "putting the infinite within the finite," which he told Ruskin was the proper business of the poet; but his lack of mental discipline, which prevented his reducing to coherence the teeming store of his brain, and perhaps above all his extraordinarily swift faculty of association, militated against the successful communication which he so much desired to achieve. In the period of his best work, it is true, he resolved the dilemma by abandoning the subjects which baffled him, by cultivating a colloquial style, and by adopting the congenial form of the dramatic monologue. But even in these poems the familiar knottiness appears, and the difficulty of his later verse amply proves that his old trouble revisited him and indeed was intensified.

It is by no means accidental that Andrea del Sarto, the frustrated artist, is the most profoundly and poignantly realized of all Browning's character. No one who had not himself known the ashen flavor of failure could have written that moving poem, so filled with rationalizations which give but momentary solace. "All is as God over-rules"- that is well enough, but Andrea, like Browning cannot take much comfort from it. The fault is within himself, and nothing can long alleviate the pain of eternally frustrated ambition, not even the satisfaction of possessing a flawless technique. Yet, hollow though Andrea's rationalizations may be in this poem, Browning repeatedly uses them elsewhere *in propria persona*. His fervent celebration of the glories of the incomplete, the imperfect, as being part of God's inscrutable but unquestionable plan for men, is far less the manifestation of an intellectual conviction than it is the result of Browning's growing need to salve his awareness of failure.

Conscious though he was of his own handicaps, he nevertheless was always nettled by the reluctance or the inability of his readers to meet him halfway. "You ought, I think," he wrote Ruskin in 1855, "to keep pace with the thought tripping from ledge to ledge of my 'glaciers,' as you call them, not stand poking your alpenstock into the holes, and demonstrating that no foot could have stood there; suppose it sprang over

there?" Later in his life, when he beheld the labors of the Browning Society nurturing afresh the popular view that his poetry was unintelligible, he tartly remarked that he had never intended to write for the tired businessman. His annoyance was in part justified, of course; but it sprang also from an abiding sense of failure. He would have been happy enough to find tired businessmen liking his verse.

Beyond question, he was deeply hurt by the long critical and popular indifference to his work. Usually he tried to joke about it; but one detects in his remarks a rankling grievance which went beyond mere ruefulness. He could never forget the bright ambitions which he had expressed in his letters to Miss Barrett. That they had been thwarted was the fault of a stupid and lazy audience. Had he been a conscious innovator, he would doubtless have found consolation in the belief that eventually the poetry-reading public would catch up with him; but, having little sense of the degree to which his own poetic method was at variance with the conventions of the age, he assumed that the public *was* fully capable of understanding and valuing him, but simply perverse. His attitude towards his audience after his early dreams of fame were dashed, an attitude marked by asperity and impatience, is a revealing measure of his sense of isolation. The underlying bitterness of his address to the "British Public, ye who like me not" marks the poet whose dream of ministering to the new age has been consistently frustrated — not so much, as he increasingly persuaded himself, through, his own incapacity as through the wilful indifference of those whom he had considered himself destined to speak to.

Psychologically, then, Browning was doomed never to reach the particular heights to which he had aspired as a result of his early immersion in Shelley and the more visionary of the seventeenth-century poets. He may have had moments of ecstatic experience, and at all events it is certain that his inner life was so intense that he was driven by an almost demoniac compulsion to attempt to project it in language; but there were tragic barriers in the way. Perhaps even more formidable than those I have mentioned was that which led to his sudden assumption of the dramatic mask in his poetry. It is usually said that John Stuart Mill's comments on *Pauline* converted the young poet permanently to the "dramatic" rather than the deeply personal form of utterance, and unquestionably Browning's accidental encounter with those comments was a profound shock to him. But Mill's criticism would not have shaken the purpose of a Shelley. With Browning it was another matter: his whole upbringing in a highly conventional milieu had stressed decorum. One of his class did not pour out his innermost feelings with unrestrained candor, as he had done in *Pauline*. A youth might, indeed, go through a Shelleyan phase, as a youth of an earlier generation went through a Wertherian, and no harm done-unless he were to make public confession of his romantic passions. But Browning had made such a public confession, and he heeded Mill's voice, not alone as that of a respected critic but as that of a society whose standards of personal reticence and abhorrence of "morbidity" affected Browning more deeply than he knew.

And so, though deeply hurt, he made his decision. It is true that for the time being, despite his rejection of the first person singular, he clung to his great aspiration. In 1845 he was till sure that eventually he would write "R.B.-a poem," that sublime work of philosophical revelation which would place him with Shelley. But it never saw the light. Only in occasional poems, like "One Word More," "La Saisiaz," and the Epilogue to *Dramatis Personae*, does he emerge from behind his self-imposed mask and speak with unmistakable sincerity and passion in his own person.

The remarkable thing about that decision is that it was based, not upon a realization of the true quality of his genius and a determination to use it to the fullest, but upon the extraneous element of personal decorum. Browning, curiously, seems never to have analyzed correctly the peculiar character of his gifts. That he put them nevertheless to such magnificent use, in the two decades stretching from *Bells and Pomegranates* to *The Ring and the Book*, was the result of his being driven, not consciously attracted, to the dramatic form of utterance. What he hoped to do was to

accomplish his Shelleyan mission in the mode of a Shakespeare: he wanted to be simultaneously a seer and a dramatist, to eat his cake and have it too. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that his success as a writer of dramatic monologues left him unsatisfied. They were good of their kind, perhaps, but they were not what he had dedicated his life to doing. He was stifled by his mask, yet to write "R.B. – a poem" meant to speak out, and he could not allow himself to speak out, not even in the privacy of his letters to Miss Barrett (which are most revealing in their recurrent suggestion of all that went unrevealed), far less in the publicity of print. The compromise he chose, therefore, resulted inevitably in a deep-seated conflict, which he could have resolved only by doing one of two things-abandoning his first ambition and single-mindedly cultivating his talents for psychological analysis through the dramatic monologue, or casting aside the mask and speaking out, fearlessly and unashamedly, in the person of Robert Browning. And he could do neither.

That the second alternative was as impossible as the first is suggested by all that we know of his reticence. "You can know but little of me," he told the woman he loved. "For every poor speck of a Vesuvius or a Stromboli in my microcosm there are huge layers of ice and pits of black cold water ..... I am utterly unused, of these late years particularly, to dream of communicating anything about *that* to another person." Even in the intimacy of their marriage, the reticence remained. He appears seldom to have discussed his poetic plans with his wife, and only infrequently showed the results to her before they were finished. Already he had sealed off the poet in a separate, almost impenetrable, compartment of his being, to which no one was to be given access except through the agency of cold type.

Yet, since the Shelley in him never died, there was still the fatal necessity of putting into words at least some portion of his inner experience, despite the inhibition which hardened through the years. No wonder, then, that the act of poetic creation, especially in retrospect, was shadowed by the torment of unfulfilled longings. No wonder that Browning not only was reluctant to talk about his own writing but had an active dislike for revision. If he had, as F.L.Lucas once remarked, the artistic conscience of a pavement artist, it was because once the act of creation was over, urgent though it had been, he would not relive it.

This picture of the private Browning as a disappointed idealist, a man whose fear of betraying his own heart drove him to the perpetually unsatisfactory device of speaking obscurely through the mouths of others, scarcely accords with his friends' untroubled assumption that he was the definition of self-assurance. But the truth seems to be — and it goes a long way towards explaining his abnormal reticence – that he was basically a most insecure man. In childhood he was protected to an unwholesome degree from the bruising contact with the world which brings emotional and social maturity. Except for three or four preadolescent years at a school from which he returned over weekends, and a disastrous interlude at the University of London, he stayed at home with his mother and his father's inexhaustible library. As an adolescent he seems to have delighted most in the company of two semi-intellectual young ladies, the adopted daughters of W.J.Fox. The woman he married was six years older than he, a fact which even those with the least possible tinge of Freudianism may find relevant. And when, after fifteen years, that marriage was ended by death, he found solace among women for the rest of his long life. Not that he actually shunned the company of men; he did have many male friends, and there is no evidence that they had any but the sincerest respect and affection for him. Yet his preference undoubtedly was for the softer companionship of women. And though, when he made his astonishingly gauche proposal to Lady Ashburton, he told her that he wished only to acquire a new mother for Pen and specifically disclaimed his need of a wife in the usual sense, one wonders whether he was not feeling, however unconsciously, another need. In any case, as we review the way in which his life was spent principally with women, the masculinity which all the books tell us is so conspicuous a quality of both the poet and the man seems in fact to have been a sort of overcompensation.

Yet most readers of Browning would object that if any proof is needed that the poet was emotionally secure, it can be found in his religious verse. Does not all received opinion exalt him as the great confident Voice of Faith? Yes-but received opinion is almost surely misleading. The burly assurance in his voice had no counterpart in his inner being. On the contrary, his famous positiveness in religious matters is a telling clue to his underlying insecurity.

Though we know little about the origin and development of his beliefs, it is plain that he had a thoroughly pious upbringing, in which emotion played a great part and intellectual conviction little or none. Such an upbringing could not possibly equip a man to face and conquer the stern challenges offered both by the backwash of eighteenth century skepticism and by the rationalism of the new era.

Nor did Browning's native equipment atone for what his environment failed to give him. In his late teens, his reading of the unorthodox authors he found in his father's library and then his momentous discovery of Shelley converted him briefly to atheism. Superficially, this short-lived aberration had no lasting effect upon him. When it ended, he returned to the very same principles in which he had been reared, and which he was to assert in poetry throughout life: above all, to a reliance upon faith, faith alone, together with a deep, almost morbid distrust of whatever operations of the mind would cast doubt upon the truths which faith established. In returning to his first beliefs, however, Browning left behind a piece of unfinished business He had failed to lay the ghost of Voltairian-Shelleyan anti-religion. He had learned that there were other answers to the great questions than those which comfortable nonconformity provided, answers from which, once his joy in adolescent rebellion had cooled, he flinched. In confusion he fled back to piety, because there alone his need for certainty, a need too insistent to await his working things out, could be gratified. But ironically, by his precipitance he made it impossible for himself ever to enjoy the luxury of certainty. Having lost the first battle by default, he was in no position to meet the new challenges to faith which were to roll in upon him, in wave after wave, as the Victorian age wore on.

For although a whole dismal shelf of treatises has been published on Browning as a thinker, actually he was not a thinker at all, either by native gift or by training. His reading in the classics of Western philosophy was unsystematic and spotty. Neo-Platonism he was well acquainted with-witness "Abt Vogler," one of the most Neo-Platonic poems of recent centuries-but he blandly admitted to Mrs. Orr that "he knew neither the German philosophers nor their reflection in Coleridge." What he read, he did not always understand; he ludicrously misinterpreted Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees." Compared with Tennyson or Arnold or Newman, he was philosophically illiterate, and he probably knew it. In social conversation he always shied away from serious subjects. The historian Oscar Browning, contrasting the poet's talk with that of George Eliot, commented, "She was always serious, always gave you of her best. Browning rarely discussed serious topics, philosophical, literary or artistic; his talk was that of a man of the world." Henry James had the same thing in mind when he wrote of Clare Vawdrey that "I never heard him utter a paradox or express a shade or play with an idea." We need not marvel, as some have done, that Browning, who as a poet exhibited intellectual powers that dazzled the undiscerning, as a man shunned the Metaphysical Society and fled to the undemanding precincts of fashion. Removed from his study, where he might consider knotty problems at leisure, he shrank from exposing the inadequacies of his knowledge or the possible frailty of his conclusions

If he lacked grounding in the history of philosophy and the ability to understand it fully, his acquaintance with contemporary tendencies was equally sketchy. Yet, like thousands of mid-Victorians who were in no sense formal thinkers but simply educated readers, he knew enough about the trend of thought in his own time to be horrified by it. He read Strauss and Renan and immediately lashed out against the higher criticism of the Bible and the historical study of Jesus. The poems he wrote

show that he by no means fully comprehended what Strauss and Renan were all about: was his reaction an honest failure of his intellect, or a stubborn refusal to recognize all the implications of what he read? In either case, it took no deep study but merely a normal sensitivity to the currents of popular thought eddying about him to make him realize that all liberalism, all rationalism, all science was leading mankind in a direction in which Robert Browning, the child of sincere and devoted dissenters, could not possibly go.

But unlike some of those who held high the banners of the traditional Christian faith, Browning, did not, except in a few poems like "A Death in the Desert," specifically attack the movers and shakers. (And when he did, he failed, through either ignorance or choice, to meet the enemy on its own ground.) Instead, he retreated to his own citadel and, loftily disdaining to combat the powerful arguments of his adversaries, insisted upon his one cherished principle of faith-the faith that men hold, intuitively, even mystically, the knowledge of God and His love which is impossible to anyone who relies upon the deceptive charms of reason. The more he became aware, as the years passed, of the swelling tide of rationalism and agnosticism, the more passionately he insisted that divinely granted intuition was the only means to truth. He could not live without that supreme assurance, and therefore much of his life was occupied in reiterating it, as if in an attempt at self-hypnosis: "I believe....I believe .....I believe .....of course I believe."

But he dared not relax his vigilance. Notwithstanding the formidable opposition of his will, a small ugly hint of doubt, bred by his adolescent experience of skepticism and now persistently fed by the intellectual tendencies if the age, kept cropping up. The frequency with which the subject of doubt recurs in his poetry suggests that it was not a merley abstract problem: Browning wrote so much about doubt simply because he was himself never free form its temptations. Characteristically, he rationalized it. Doubt, too, was part of the divine plan, for it required one to shadowbox and thus to strengthen the fibres of belief; it was the "snake 'neath Michael's foot/ Who stands calm jut because he feels it writhe." Having put doubt into its place, he triumphantly dismissed it; it was no more serious a threat to faith than a pebble tossed at an elephant's flank. Yet, time after time, Browning felt obliged to put it *back* into its place.

The usual vehemence of Browning's assertion of his faith, then, is not, as most commentators have easily assumed it to be, a sign of his own inner confidence. Far from it; his unrelenting, sometimes hysterical insistence upon faith, his return to the theme over many years, suggests that he was obliged to keep talking down the intrusive devils of doubt. His poems on religion seem often like exorcization rituals.

As Paul de Reul has observed, "If he persuades us, it is through his attempt to persuade himself, by contagious emotion rather than logical demonstration."

How much easier it would have been for Browning had he been devoid of intellectual gifts and endowed simply with a fervent emotional life! But his predicament was complicated by an ironic twist of his makeup which endowed him with a natural faculty for a certain kind of mental operation. Although he was temperamentally unfitted to be a systematic philosopher, he had an almost abnormal mental agility, which found delight in taking an idea and following it, indeed pushing it, through all the convolutions and perversions that logic affords. His famous and seldom read casuistical poems, "Mr. Sludge, 'the Medium,' " *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, "Bishop Blougram's Apology," *Fifine at the Fair*, doubtless were intended to expose the hollowness and futility of mere mental gymnastics; but it is impossible to read them without feeling that Browning experienced an unholy joy in writing them. His acrobatic mind revelled in such exercises. And when he came to the end of such a poem, he realized that he had done his job too thoroughly, for, as Professor Hoxie N. Fairchild has pointed out, he hastened to tack on a "giveaway" to warn the reader that all that had gone before, despite its often attractive appearance, was sophistry pure

and simple, and that the truth lay elsewhere: not in the head but in the unsophisticated heart that responded only to the promptings of God. He was a born dialectician, yet he was bidden by his deeper self to deny the efficacy of all reason. He admired the workings of the rationalizing mind, but since the results of reasoning seemed bound to work against the convictions his soul required, the only purpose to which he could devote his superb argumentative gift was to expose the futility of argumentation. He was obliged to load the dice against every speaker in his poems who chose to vindicate himself by reason rather than by intuition.

Browning's intellect, within its limits, was keen, but, as the structure of his poems proves, disorderly. And incapacity was the father of distrust. His intellectual myopia, which made him so aware of the details of an edifice of thought but prevented him from viewing it in its totality, led him to reject formal thought and to concentrate upon its antithesis – pure intuition, impulse — as the only possible way to truth, because it was the only way available to Robert Browning. It is somewhat surprising that a believer in the all-embracing benevolence of God should have placed so low a valuation upon reason, which is as much God's gift as the ability to receive irrational impulses from above; but he naturally valued highest what he himself could best depend on.

Browning was the victim of a tragic ambivalence. He wanted to be a philosopher-poet, but his genius dictated that he fulfill himself in quite another way. He wanted to address a wide audience, but he was cursed with verbal impotence when he tried to say the things he most needed to say. He wanted to speak out, loud and clear, in his own person, but a sense of inadequacy, a lack of self-confidence, bred an unconquerable reticence. He wanted to be firm in his Christian faith, but as an extraordinarily accomplished logician, he could not wholly protect himself from the blandishments of reason. Nature had lavished gifts and aspirations upon him, but they were so mixed and contradictory that only by a fortunate miracle did some of them conjoin to produce the rich poetry by which he is remembered.

That Browning was conscious of much inner malaise, especially in later life, is doubtful; the process of his spiritual recovery after Mrs. Browning's death may well have included the achievement of a *modus vivendi*, so that we cannot envision the other self of James's fancy brooding over his many sorrows. He probably never doubted that his mind was in the best of health. But he was not the best judge of his own condition. In Venice, a month or two before his death, he met at dinner a Dr. Bird, to whom, in the words of Edward Dowden, he "expressed confident satisfaction as to his state of health, and held out his wrist that his words might be confirmed by the regularity and vigor of his pulse. The physician became at once aware that Browning's confidence was far from receiving the warrant in which he believed." The man's gesture is admirably symbolic of his poetry: in it, he was always exposing his wrist, almost as an act of bravado, to demonstrate the perfect health of his mental as well as his physical organism. But some readers at least, like Dr. Bird, find that the pulse beat tells another story.

BROWNING AND VICTORIAN POETRY OF SEXUAL LOVE

ISOBEL ARMSTRONG

Sexual love becomes an important poetic subject in the Victorian period in a way that it had not been for the Romantic poets or, indeed, for poets of the eighteenth century. And this is so in spite of the taboo on overt sexual reference, or sexual explanations of behaviour, in nineteenth = century literature. Or perhaps the sensible view in that sexual love is a subject simply *because* overt reference was so difficult. The need to write about experience which were so hedged round with confusions and featrs must have been immense. At any rate, the taboo too easily persuades people to assume that in Victorian poetry sexual symbols will be naïïvely concealed (Russell M. Goldfarb seizes upon rowing, for instance) or else that the writers were deeply unconscious of what was happening to them when they used sexual imagery, exploiting it in an unknowingly euphemistic underground way.[1] I think this is a poor way of putting it. The Victorian produced some really great pieces of erotic writing. One thinks of the hurtful tension, the bursting fruit, flaming skies and heavy scents in the chapter of Rochester's proposal in *Jane Eyre*, or the heared, febrile brilliance and intensity of some of the poems in *Maud*. There is something about the intuitive discovery of sexual imagery in *Jane Eyre* and *Maud* which enables their writers to use their discoveries with extraordinary richness and energy. What is moving about them is their openness, an almost painful frankness of commitment to feeling and passion which would be impossible now, in a more knowing and sexually self-conscious period. Of course the Victorians did not have our post-Freudian schemata, vocabulary or knowingness. They were not knowing, but they did know. When they succeed, they write of sexual experience out of a free erotic innocence, not naïïveté. In fact, for me the greatest difficulties come when they write in open rebellion against the conventions, like Swinburne in 'Laus Veneris', where the ostentatious picking of excitingly deliquescent forbidden fruits is embarrassing because it is all worked-up morbidly factitious naughtiness. Meredith creates the same difficulties for me. It is here that the blocks and contortions are most obvious.

We must assume an understanding, intuitive or not, of the *pervadingness* of sexual feeling in Victorian literature, felt the more strongly because it was less lucidly defined than now. The very absence of an acknowledged vocabulary leads to subtlety. The pervadingness of sexual feeling is described by Mrs. Gaskell in *Ruth*, significantly, as a 'brooding spirit with no definite form or shape', as a thing strongly sensed rather than defined. Ruth was too young when her mother died to have received any cautions or words of advice respecting the subject of a woman's life—if, indeed, wise parents ever directly speak of what, in its depth and power, cannot be put into words—which is a brooding spirit with no definite form or shape that men should know it, but which is there, and present before we have recognised and realised its existence.

This is no Victorian euphemism, but an attempt to account for the unrealised strength of sexual feeling.

Browning's poetry has a more than usually strongly felt awareness of sexuality, an awareness which Barbara Melchiori explores in general Freudian terms in her *Browning's poetry of Reticence* (1968). His love poetry has the kind of confident erotic intensity, the openness of which I have been speaking. This is partly because he draws with freedom on sexual imagery, and partly because the thrusting, kinaesthetic movement of his verse, and his way of making a poem look as if it is spilling over unmediated sense-impressions with a kind of still wet perceptual freshness, makes the poetry a peculiarly sensitive register of physical feeling. 'Meeting at Night' is an extraordinary poem. Its movement is frankly—and happily—orgasmic, from the pushing prow' of the boat quenched in the 'slushy sand' to the blue spurt of flame and the two hearts beating, each to each'. And yet to say

that it is a poem about anr orgasm is not to exhaust its meaning. It is a poem about living in sexual time, timelessly long *and* momentary. The pressure of the poem is all to the final intensity of its ending, and yet it does not hurry to its end. Included in the ending is the whole experience of the poem, which is the long, serenely steady journey, with its purposive, physically relaxed movement, the soft mutedness of colour and leisurely openness to sweet sensory detail—'Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach'. The poem is minute, and yet its space and time is huge. It narrows from a coastline on the horizon to the physical closeness of two people, and the time of the journey is almost endless. 'Parting at Morning', the sequel and once part of the same poem, is also contained in the ending of 'Meeting at Night'. It is not an ironical rejection of 'Meeting at Night'. It charts the inevitable movement away from the moment of intensity. The rising sun reestablished the quotidian time of the 'world of men', which is simply qualitatively different from the time of the first poem. And so the poem is about its own immediacy. Anticipatory time and desire is different from remembered time and desire. The acceptance of this, as the sun makes its path of gold, is a curious mixture of content, curt brutality, and pain.

'By the Fire-side' is another poem in which sensory detail felt with a special awareness defines erotic feeling. It accumulates a series of sharp, jagged, discontinuous visual detail which suggests thwarted, uncentred sexual feeling and aggression. The spear-head rocks of the alps 'charge' the insubstantial sky: small ferns fit / Their teeth to the polished block' and the chestnut shells are 'thorny balls'. There is a painful sense of destructive sexual energy both suppressed *and* out of control as the poem moves in stabs and surprising jerks of sensation. The visual disproportion, and the sudden, involuntary starting-out of sensory detail here, all suggest tension and defensiveness. November hours draw blood:

> That crimson the creeper's leaf across
> *Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,*
> *O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,*
> *And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped*
> Elf-needled mat of moss...

I used to feel that the stanza describing the bulging nipples of the mushrooms, peeped at by the 'indulged' toadstools, was a gross failure of tact; now, knowing Browning better. I feel that it succeeds in mining rank, restless, rapidly growing sexual feeling which can find no direct expression and so becomes lewd and burdensome to itself.

> By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
> *Last evening—nay, in today's first dew*
> *Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,*
> *Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew*
> *Of toadstools peep indulged.*

The sensory details of this landscape encompass an amazing of feeling pain—rank desire, and aggression, a double lyric nostalgia for the decay of things (for this is a *remember* desire), to the sheer dead emptiness of feeling implied by the husk of the church to which the lovers walk.

What, then, was Browning trying to achieve through his exploration of erotic feeling? For one could call it this; the proportion of poems on sexual love in *Men and Women* and in *Dramatis Personae* is very high. What he was *not* doing is perfectly clear. Throughout his marriage and up to the time of *The Ring and the Book* Browning seems to have been completely unconlerned with the image of a action kind of woman very familiar to us—familiar to us as a cultural stereotype, although her relationship to Victorian reality will always be problematical—which dominated other Victorian love poetry and which was constantly inspected, whether favourably or unfavourably. Favourably regarded, this is the figure that come surrounded by a haze of mild mysticism and milder sex in Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House*.

She is the figure of Tennyson's domestic idylls, part of the domestic scene at the end of 'The Two Voices', the reformed Princess Ida. Unfavourably regarded, found out, as it were she is the subject of Meredith's sexual sulks in *Modern Love* and, as Guinevere, the object of Tennyson's compassion in the *Idylls of the King*. Clough's struggles with the idea of marriage come, I think from the idea of marrying *this* figure. Browning continued to ignore the type until the late sixties, but after this time, most notably in *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), he gives an astonishing account of the fantasies and confusions which go to the making of it, an account which is set directly in a contemporary environment and which amounts to an examination of the assumptions behind contemporary sexual myths! He realized that the myth of the pure woman is a strangely ambiguous thing. If you accept it you struggle with contradictions, for an impossible female docility can only be given ultimate credence when it is seen as the product of artfulness or duplicity. Hence even in the most ingenuous of Victorians poets, such as Patmore, the pure woman is contemplated with an odd mixture of adulation and anger. From poet to poet the same-pattern—docility, duplicity, anger—the same configuration of feeling, is struggled with, with varying kinds of self = consciousness and insight. I want first to set this struggle with a female stereotype against the concerns of Browning's earlier poetry, and to explain why he was so uninvolved with it. Then I shall suggest the reasons for his change of direction.

I shall start with Coventry Patmore, because *Angel in the House* is so very nearly inadvertently a subtle poem, but I want first to glance briefly aside at an influential medical treatise, Thomas Laycock's *Treatise on the Nervous Disorders of Women* (1840). I do not want to use Laycock to show that the literary stereotype was a cultural reality—all writers, whether they are poets or not, struggle with images. We know very little about the relationship between a stereotype and historical reality (these subtle and indirect connections were not fully recognized. I think, in a recent *Victorian Studies* special issue on Victorian Woman[2]. But what Laycock does show is that a coercive model of womanhood as pure and weak leads to an equally coercive notion of woman as cunning and artful.

Laycock's treatise is fact extremely kind and well-meaning and very bold in its diagnosis of the origins of psychological disorders. He believed that a great many of the illnesses of middle-class women (labouring women did not suffer in the same way) were not physical, but psychological in origin, and his book was written to prevent the damaging continuance of false diagnoses and treatment. Moreover, he argued unequivocally for the *sexual* basis of all nervous disorders in women. 'Lastly it may be remarked that the whole nervous system is excited by the sexual stimulus, as much as by opium or other powerful nervine alternatives[2]. The whole being and senses of women during their reproductive life are shaped by sexual feeling. Poor women, they can suffer from nervous diseases of the kidneys, bladder, intestines, stomach, pharynx, tonsils salivary glands, circulation, respiration. But Laycock is most interesting when he come to the varieties of hysteria under the head of 'Mental Affections', which includes such things as 'Fidgets', 'Timidity', and 'Insane Cunning' as categories. Saddest of all is 'Erotomania', extreme disappointment after an unsuccessful love affair (all the Bronté heroines must suffer from this), but the most important category for my purposes is 'Insane Cunning'.

Earlier he had remarked on the extreme weakness of women, and assumed that women compensate for their lack of strength and aggression by high intelligence or 'artfulness'.

> One of the most remarkable of the faculties developed during the generative nisus, and peculiar to the females of the higher class of animals, is their artfulness; and this seems to be given them in place of those weapons of offence and defence with which the males are so generally provided. Indeed the less muscular power, want of defensive weapons, and exalted perceptive faculties of females

> would *naturally* [my italics] excite into action timidity and cunning This is strikingly obvious in the human female in general: their sagacity and acuteness being usually remarkable. when well informed...

Hence the pathological category of insane cunning. 'There is not much ground for surprise at the grotesque forms which cunning assumes in the hysterical female', he writes, and when this occurs, 'it is as much a symptom of hysteria as any corporal affection whatever. It is true monomania, and is most likely to occur in the female who is hysterical from excess of sexual development,—one possessing the utmost modesty of deportment, and grace of figure and movement: for the modesty itself springs our of that .....to which I have alluded. Laycock means here that the more *feminine* a woman is, the more she is likely to be a victim of insane cunning. A good-tempered writer, he permits himself a moment of irritation at the 'astonishing' way in which a hysterical female will behave, stuffing her vagina with stones playing havoc with nurses and parents, dominating those around her with 'the almost incredible acuteness of sense, and of cunning, developed in hysterical girls.' The transition from tenderness to cunning is writ large in Laycock's work because he is dealing with pathology, but the paradox puts him in difficulties. The same paradox reappears in the work of the poets, and when the Victorian poet writes of sexual love we see him writing in difficulties.

Hopkins accused Patmore's later poetry of 'telling secrets', but the secrets his poetry betrays are never quite the ones he intended to tell. The ambivalences come out clearly because he never realized that they might need covering up. He has a pleasant belief in the importance of physical love—'Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow/To spirits whose vital heat is hell' (Book i, Canto III ii), but his view of women is full of contradictions. Woman, with her temple-like repose and countenance angelical, elevates man. She is the softener, soother and stabilizer. She is pure and chaste and yet she is a matron and a mother: she is 'infantine', childlike, and yet in order to prserve this child-likeness she has to resort to sexual cunning; she is totally submissive, and yet she maintains this at the cost of subverting any possibility of reciprocity. Here, of course, is a banal figure which seems to justify all banal views of Victorianism. What is remarkable is the blandness of Patmore's acceptance of the contradictions. His playfulness, the combination of tea on the lawn and the vocabulary of love subsumed under religions language, thrills over stolen gloves, and mystical feelings, would be merely trivially venial if it were not for the inadvertent ruthlessness of some of his observations. He observes that the courted woman *knows* that she should preserve a proper innocence or ignorance of sexual realities, and does so at the expense of the man, who takes the active, and therefore blameable role. I underline the significant lines.

> His words, which still instruct, but so
> *That this applause seems still implied*
> *How wise in all she ought to know,*
> *'How ignorant of all beside!*
> *His skilful suit, which leaves her free,*
> *Gives nothing for the world to name,*
> *And keeps her conscience safe, while he,*
> *With half the bliss, takes all the blame;*
> (Book 2, Canto II, i)

The woman has to *exact* reverence and respect from the man. She can determine to be thoroughly submissive to him only if she exacts this reverence. Patmore sees this as a real dilemma, but he is so certain that the woman will submit to 'her lord' that he can afford to feel sympathetic. There is a tone of benevolence here, and a certain pride in the lover's capacity to create this dilemma through the power to excite disturbing sexual feeling.

A touch, her hand press'd lightly, she
Stands dizzied, shock'd, and flush'd, like one
Set sudden neck-deep in the sea;
And, though her bond for endless time
To his good pleasure gives her o'er,
The slightest favour seems a crime,
Because it makes her love him more.
But that she ne'er will let him know;
For what were love should reverence cease?
A thought which makes her reason so
Inscrutable, it seems caprice.
With her, as with a desperate town,
Too weak to stand, too proud to treat,
The conqueror, though the walls are down,
Has still to capture street by street;
(Book 2, Canto II, i)

Again, I have underlined the important lines. Patmore writes as if the ultimate submissiveness has to be a steely act of will on the part of the woman because she has no *choice*.

And she's to changed allegiance true;
And prizing what she can't prevent
(Right wisdom often wisdom'd whim,)
Her will's indomitably bent
Om mere submissiveness to him:
(Book 2, Canto II, i)

Ostensibly Patmore colludes with a view of woman as both child-like and knowing. The woman lives in a 'rapture of submission' to her 'dear despot.' She dies 'back to the babe' in his love and 'prattles like a child at play'. But the childlikeness is a ruse to disguise a cunning manipulation of the male, and Patmore can denigrate women for being simultaneously childish *and* clever. The appalling account of female cunning here, in which the women thinks of her own attractions while the didactic husband reads her the news of a disastrous battle, the imagery of cunning snake and predatory trapper, associated with the girl's innocent in keeping the husband devout 'against his nature', is a dreadfully coy self-betrayal.

Perchance, when all her praise is said,
He tells the news, a battle won,
On either side ten thousand dead.
'Alas! she says; but if twere known,
She thinks, 'He's looking on my face!
'I am his joy; what' ere I do,
He sees such time-contenting grace
In that, he'd have me always so!
And, evermore, for either's sake,
To the sweet folly of the dove,
She joins the cunning of the snake,
To river and exalt his love;
Her mode of candour is deceit;
And what she thinks from what she'll say,
(Although I'll never call her cheat.)
Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.
Without his knowledge he was won:
Against his nature kept devout;
She'll never tell him how twas done,
And he will never find it out.
If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,

And hears her forging chain and trap.
And look, she sits in simple smiles,
Her two hands lying in her lap.
(Book 2, Canto VIII.i)

Perhaps Patmore is too ingenuous to be taken seriously, but he is important because his naïveté hits upon the consequences of this dove-snake manipulating submissiveness: of course, even Patmore sees through it, and so it is self-defeating, and brings upon the woman only anger and rage:

Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired
He wickedly provokes her tears,
And when she weeps, as he desired,
Falls slain with ecstasies of fears,
He blames her, though she has no fault...
(Book 2, Canto. VI, i)

In the later 'Eros and Psyche', Psyche begs Eros to punish her, take his revenge on her as a way of squaring her guilt about enjoying sexual love. Her words are a wild invitation to sadistic feeling.

Shouldst thou me tell
Out of thy warm caress to go
And roll my body in the biting snow,
My very body's joy were but increased;
More pleasant 'tis to please thee than be pleased,
Thy love has conquer'd me; do with me as thou wilt,
And use me as a chattel that is thine!
Kiss, tread me underfoot, cherish or beat,
Sheathe in my heart sharp pain up to the hilt,
Invent what else were most perversely sweet;

Patmore understood without realizing it an invitation to sexual rage involved in the relationship he describe between men and women, and this makes *Angel in the House* a disturbing work. Anger is at the heart of *Modern Love*, published in 1862, the year of the last book of *Angel in the House*. Understood, but not kept under control, it emerges again and again as sadistic petulance. The wife, in love with someone else in spite of herself, is a witch, has eyes which are 'poison-cups'.

But still he spared. Once 'Have you no fear?'
He said; twas dusk; she in his grasp!; none near.
She laughed: 'No, surely' am I not with you?'
And uttering that soft starry 'you', she leaned
Her gentle body near him, looking up;
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,
He drank until the flittering eyelids screened.
Devilish malignant with! and oh, young beam
Of heaven's circle-glory! Here they shape
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape-
I might, and yet thou goest safe, supreme.
(IX)

I find the appeal of *Modern Love* for some recent critics very difficult to understand (John Lucas, for instance, in Ian Fletcher's *Meredith Now: some critical essays*,1971). I can find no honest human engagement, either with the woman of the poem, or the man. Compared with the spring and resilience of the novels, it is a nasty piece of work.

The Confusion of Meredith's speaker, who sees his past self as the puppet of a dream of loyalty, is reflected in the constant ambiguity of syntactic concord in the poem. in Spite to the contrary, the self-pity never introspects, never blames itself.

Now as then, the grace
Of heaven seems holoding earth in its embrance
Nor eyes, nor heart, has she to feel if strange
Look, woman in the West. There will thou see
An amber cradle near the sun's decline:
Within it featured even in death divine,
Is lying a dead infant, slain by thee.

(XI)

The imagery is extraordinarily self-betraying: the generalized erotic-religious **language**—the 'grace' of heaven embracing earth—slides to an identification of the **wife as** mother, guilty of child murder, having killed the husband's love and, by **extension, the husband too. Meredith is more subtle, though no more likeable, than Patmore** in his understanding of the aggression and competitiveness in sexual feeling.

Just heaven! can it be true that jealousy
Has decked the woman thus, and does her head
Swim somewhat for possessions forfeited
Madam, you teach me many things that be
I open an old book, and there I find
That 'Women still may love whom they deceive
Such love I prize not, madadm : by your leave
The game you play at is not to my mind

(XIV)

Of course, in other poems Meredith struggled against the notions which he cannot **help** letting loose in *Modern Love*. In *The Sage Enamoured and the Honest Lady*, he **attempts** to strip away the religious language of sex.

Had he not wits to pierce the mask he wooed?
All wisdom's armoury this man could wield;
And if the cynic in the sage it pleased,
Traverse her woman's curtain and poor shield.
For new example of a world diseased;
Showing her shrineless, not a temple, bare;
A curtain ripped to tatters by the blast.
Yet she most surely to this man stood fair:
He worshipped like the young enthusiast,
Named simpleton or peot.

modern Love is merely Angle in the House turned upside down, for all its apparent ophistication. One comes away from these poems with the sickened feeling of **having** looked into the wretchedness of the contradictions involved in the **domestication** of a thinly platonized femininity. I seem, at this point, to be moving in **the** same direction as Stephen Marcus, in his *The Other Victorians*(1966). It is true **that some** Victorian pornography seems to be written out of a miserable rage with **women, yet I** have strong reservations about his approach to Victorian view of **sexuality**, which I shall mention when I discuss Browning's *Fifine at the Fair*[4]. For **one moment**, I shall complete my present discussion by looking at Tennyson and ugh

these poets the same configuration of feeling is being struggled with- female acility creating female duplicity, and male fury. Tennyson, the poet derstood the contradictions at a deeper level perhaps than anyone. Clough the

more intelligent poet, analyses them with an awareness and subtle honesty not to be found until Browning turned to the problem in the late sixties. All of Clough's long poems, of course, 'study the question of sex', and particularly of marriage. Women, 'so loving, and so exacting', whether they are the 'pink-paper comfits of Philip's immaturity in *The Bothie*, or patient, sensible, and genuinely stabilizing, like Elspie or Mary Trevellyn in *Amours de Voyage* (it is not Mary's fault that Claude is engaged in eroding the concept of stability as a virtue), are at the centre of his poetry. They and what is due to them are a constant puzzle, a constant at irritant, but it is in the clear-minded satire of *Dipsychus* that Clough confronts the problem most sharply. This is achieved by separating out ambivalent, contradictory feeling and personifying the oppositions in the characters of Dipsychus and the Spirit. Dipsychus hopes women are pure: the Spirit knows they are cunning. Dipsychus is amazed and threatened when the finds that he cannot reconcile his views of chastity and marriage with an over-powering sexual curiosity for the Venetian prostitutes.

> *Why, why in wisdom and in grace's name,*
> *And in the name of saints and saintly thoughts,*
> *Of mothers, and of sisters, and chaste wives,*
> *And angel woman-faces we have seen,*
> *And angel woman-spirits we have guessed,*
> *And innocent sweet children, and pure love,*
> *Why did ever one brief moment's space*
> *To this insidious lewdness lend chaste ears,*
> *Or parley with this filthy Belial?*
>
> (Sc. IIA, ll. 3-11)

The Spirit holds the nullifying, mean-minded view of sex and women held unconsciously by Patmore and discovered with such chagrin by Meredith. He interprets the idealism which Dipsychus struggles to maintain as mere high-minded timidity prurience disguised as mystical feeling. Sex is no 'revelation' and the sexual wiles of women cannot sustain you through 'the emptiness of things' Clough shows that this diminution of human feeling is as extreme as the sentimental idealism of Dipsychus, although, of course, Dipsychus *needs* this sense. The Oxford editors omit some passages which slightly amplify scene IIA. After 1.41 Dipsychus asks whether sexual relief frees one from sexual desire. If only he could believe that women enjoyed sexual experience, taking pleasure as an equal with men, then the situation would be different, and he might take a prostitute. However, his argument is not a Blake-like one of mutual sexual health and freedom, as one might expect: he could take the prostitute because if she were his equal he would not be *morally* responsible for her fall.

> *Could I believe, as of a man I might,*
> *So a good girl from weary worked hours*
> *And from the long monotony of toil*
> *Might safely purchase these wild intervals,*
> *And from that banquet rise refreshed, and wake*
> *And shake her locks and as before go forth*
> *Invigorated, unvitiate to the task*
> *But no it is not so.*

But he knows this cannot be the case. He would be morally responsible for the 'coy girl' who 'turns to the flagrant woman of the street'. The Spirit's comments show clearly enough how self-regarding moral doubleness is the result of a pernicious differentiation between men's and women's responsibility, who ultimately *self*-gratifying it is to see women as totally 'innocent', because Dipsychus can see himself as morally superior.

Stuft'
The women like it: that's enough.

and

That is the high moral way of talking
I'm well aware about street-walking.

It is easy enough to wish not to be corrupted by corrupting a woman and easier still to blame *her* for being corrupt when you have done so. Dipsychus does both things without knowing it. The Spirit is always partly right. Yet his own answer is in terms of thin practical economics, haunted by Malthusian fears of over-population, in spite of its pose of earthy wit. Virginity, the 'once rent hymenis membrana', is a technical, not a moral matter: prostitution solves a practical problem.

it needs consideration
By what more moral occupation
To support this vast population?

Dipsychus sees marriage with its corollory in the 'prattle' of children, as the only way of lessening the shame of sex. It is clear that this is no moral victory: the falling cadences betray that it is the resigned acceptance of timidity, as only half-wanted weary compromise.

O welcome then, the sweet domestic bonds...
And permanence and habit, that transmute
Grossness itself to crystal.

(Sc. IIA, ll. 80-5)

The comic inter-action of ironies, turning simultaneously against Dipsychus and against the Spirit, takes place with elastic rapidity in this poem. There is a brilliant, tough lucidity about Clough's way of showing that Dipsychus and the Spirit are not the opposites but the complements of one another in their different kinds of self-regarding feeling. It is a toughness which has the discipline to be both unkind and charitable to the appallingy muddled goodness of Dipsychus, to acknowledge and to undermine the sense of the Spirit. It is strange indeed that the much later 'Clergyman's Second Tale' in *Mari Magno* should be so guilty of treating prostitution with the self-regarding dishonesty Clough exposed in *Dipsychus*. I think that Robindra Biswas is quite right to see it as an extraordinary self-betrayal, in which Clough is transmuted into a Tennysonian poet without any of Tennyson's virtues.[5] Edward in 'The Clergyman's Second Tale', is so anxious not to fall a second time when he sees that he is followed home by the girl who first tempted him, now a wretchedly emaciated woman of the streets, that he has no humane feeling to spare for her. Neither, so far as I can see, has Clough. Her badness sets off Edward's moral restoration.

If Clough's intelligence preserved him from a discharge of bemused anger against women's duplicity in *Dipsychus*, his tenderness preserved him from it in *Mari Magno*. This is not so with Tennyson: we see everywhere of course his desperate need or keep to the sweet domestic simplicities and his struggle to accommodate himself to a more complicated reality from 'The Lover's Tale', through *The Princess* to *Enoch Arden*, and to poor Guinevere's confession that she found Arthur too good For her. Yet Tennyson understood sexual anger to its very sources. In *Maud* he saw that fury was near the centre of the speaker's erotic feeling. In this frightening lyric of passion, just controlled by the tenuous lullaby form, of the idea of reddening, the clush of colour, associated earlier with the flow of the blood and the speaker's destructive feeling, is transferred to his passion, the 'cruel madness of love', as he has earlier called it, until the whole world glows in a lurid dawn-sunset of savage colour. The lullaby movement accelerates to a hectic beat.

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Pass and blush the news
Over glowing ships:
Over blowing seas,
Over seas at rest,
Pass the happy news,
Blush it through the West;
Till the red man dance
By his red cedar-tree,
And the red man's babe
Leap, beyond the sea.
Blush from West to East,
Blush from East to West.
Till the West is East,
Blush it through the West.

(XVII,II. 581-94)

The speaker thinks that his former aggression and fear of Maud's coldness and cunning—'She meant to weave me a snare/ Of some coquettish deceit' (V), has dissolved and is directed towards her brother alone, but this lyric suggests his judgment is vulnerably wrong. According to Christopher Ricks, this lyric was originally intended for *The Princess*. Was it removed because of its inappropriate violence?

I turn now to Browning: what made him so immune to the configuration of feeling that I have been describing? True, he is aware of a pattern of neurotic emotion governing relationships, but it is a different pattern, and he asks different questions about men and women. The most dramatic way of showing what his concerns were is to begin with the startlingly intense non sequitur of the second stanza of an early poem. 'The Lost Mistress'.

All's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!
And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, today:
One day more bursts them open fully
-You know the red turns grey.

This statement about the end of a relationship is suddenly followed by a wonderfully minute observation which would be almost Tennysonian but for the clotted sensory way lit falls on the page. The key to the second stanza is the initial elliptical 'And' for 'and' implies continuance and sequence, that this is part of a *series* of observations which has a self-perpetuating life of its own. The description of the vine is made with the peculiar awareness that only an intense state of feeling can bring. Once generated, the feeling runs on in spite of events. Against the mechanical understanding that the love affair is over it sets the full weight of involuntary, living and continuing feeling which cannot be abolished by the woman's edict. The whole poem is an astonished, unbelieving statement of the poet's inability to deal alone with his feelings. He has been coerced into a painful privacy with them. The 'I noticed that, today', with its emphasis on the solitary 'I', and the implied contrast between 'today', and 'yesterday', makes it plain that he exists in self-aware loneliness with his feelings. The implied metaphor of the visual detail, too, has a painful associative life of its own, as if the speaker cannot help acknowledging his condition, because it becomes a dual metaphor of growth and destruction. The bud 'bursts', burst open, on shattered, by growth: the fresh blush of young colour turns; 'grey' as it matures. There is a tight, tense economy about this poem, as with all the poems in attenuated stanzaic forms.

The meaning of the second stanza leads one to the heart of Browning's exploration of love, because the speaker is forced into solipsistic communion with his feelings when the affair is over. He is appalled by their vivid, solitary life. Browning's love poetry is about the tragic solipsism and privacy of love, with its corollary in fantasy and morbid erotic feeling. It examines and erodes the great human myth of continuing love, and the high Romantic myth of a continuing, stable identity with which it supports itself, exploring the wilful strains and conflations of past with present selves that go into the creating of a belief in continuity and stability. Though they combine a kind of virtuoso intelligence with sensuality. Browning's most obtrusively manipulating manner is absent from these love lyrics and so they have a special quality of passion among his poems. Yet they often have a double movement of seriousness and mockery or puzzlement. They are self-undermining, swerving into a counter-movement of irony against passion, or into passion against mockery.

They twist and turn in order to display the complicatedness and vulnerability of any *beliefs* about loving, any formulations about feeling. If in the end they return to and celebrate the great Romantic myths, they only do so at the cost of an immense agnostic undermining of them. The affirmation is a Pyrrhic victory, and Browning means it to be so. Lawrence was quite right to make Birkin see 'Love Among the Ruins' as an apocalyptic poem set in a disintegrating society when he quotes it to Gerald in *Women in Love*. The girl waiting for the lover in the empty landscape of 'undistinguished grey', trying to pour all her energies into a single, solitary relationship, waits in the ruins made by a once vivid, aggressive and expansive society. It was a crude society but the energy of the dead, historical past makes itself felt in the cross-cutting rhythms of vigour which alternate with the muted languor of the descriptions of the present. Love *is* best, surely, but Browning's point, I think, is that we should not have to see the question as a choice at all. It should not be necessary to make a choice between love and society. The speaker talks as if there is no society, now, only him and the girl. How can a love relationship placed in an extra-historical, extra-social emptiness be made to bear the whole weight of meaning and value, the total significance of being? As if to enforce this point, 'A Lover's Quarrel!' followed 'Love Among the Ruins', which was the first poem in *Men and Women* (1855), a measure of its significance to Browning.

Browning's love lyrics turn out to be passionately about intertwined emotional-epistemological problems, and this puts him directly inside the Romantic tradition. His concerns are the concerns, transmuted by his dazzling sensory intelligence, of his great Romantic precursors –solipsism, fantasy, identity, the action and reaction of past with present. He is the most directly Romantic of all the Victorian poets, and so his response to sexual love is coloured by Romantic ideas, rather than the problems with which his contemporaries are concerned. And, of course, he continued to be a Romantic poet until the sixties, for his marriage shut him away from the immediate concerns of Victorian society. At the same time it confronted him immediately with the puzzles of sexual love. When he returned to England he became a Victorian poet and began to scrutinize his society and its sexual myths at closer quarters.

There is only one poem in the earlier period which touches upon the rage of men with women so apparent in the poets I have discussed. This is 'A Pretty Woman' (from *Men and Women*), which is a dancing, satirical, social lyric about the way in which men use women as commodities, as vehicles for sexual fantasies. Male fantasies trap women in conventional roles, and men take revenge upon women when they do not react to conventional expectations: 'Shall we burn up, tread that face at once, Into tinder?' when a girl refuses to respond to the sexual demands made of her? There is a quick-silver play of good humour and mordant feeling here, and in all Browning's best poems there is a complex play of qualifying, doubling back feeling. But this gay poem is an exception, and we are in a different medium of feeling in Browning's other love poems.

MAEN-106/475

As with so much of Browning's poetry, *Sordello* is the source of most of the worries underlying the love poems and I want to extract four interconnected ideas from that poem and use them as a way of confronting the love poems. In the first place, Sordello is a Romantic poet, whose esemplastic imagination creates his own world in a triumphant fusion of self and externality. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge would have recognized in Sordello the poet who half perceives and half creates, in whose life alone Nature lives.

> *they are fain invest*
> *The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,*
> *Availing it to purpose, to control,*
> *To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy*
> *And separate interests....*

Browning seems to have believed that there were two alternatives for the poet. Some poets become, as it were, swallowed up by the external world, the 'blend with each external charm', 'Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,- /In something not themselves. Others reverse the process and take the external world into themselves and make it 'their own' – 'so, homage, other souls direct / Without turns inward .....' This swallowing up or internalizing of the world is Sordello's way. He is able to exist in the isolation of his fecund imaginative world where 'fancies' 'wreathed / Luxuriantly', and his way of learning about reality is in terms of self-created myths and fictions. He has to construct possible actions, roles, people, to enact a drama within himself. Browning is unambiguous about the corrupting possibilities of this pattern and later in the love poems he recurs constantly to the possibility that the other , the loved person, is a solipsist creation of the lover, trapped by the role created for him or for her. Browning talks of the whole creative process as 'love' –'exceeding love / Becomes an aching weight.....'if it is not allowed to flow out and invest the external world with its energy: the nineteenth century liked to think of love as outward-going, the highest form of empathy, a flood of imaginative energy directed towards the other. One thinks of the lover of 'The Lost Mis—trees', painfully experiencing the aching weight of love which has no outlet. But when the poet or the lover, is of the sort whose energy 'turns inward', internalizing all phenomena, the possibility of his being unburdened from the aching weight of feeling is small. What is constantly required from Sordello, and later of Browning's lovers, is a stronger sense of externality. Sordello fails to communicate with his audience and his poetic life is a long struggle with communication. This struggle to see himself in active relationship with the world is extended from aesthetic to social and political questions. Sordello wants, but fails, to see himself in meaningful relationship with his society. He wants, another high Romantic wish, to be inside society, inside history, not inorganically isolated from it in the way that Browning describes Sordello's arbitrary creative life—like a spider at the centre of its 'waving mesh', making random connections with its 'festooning' threads. Sordello wants to see his being as a connected and continuous whole, but this is finally denied him because he has to make a moral choice between Guelf and Ghibellino which seems to fracture his connections between his past moral life and his present, and he cannot contain the contradictions. Similarly, Browning's lovers look for continuity through love, which seems a way of consolidating their identity. As in *Sordello* Browning is more than agnostic about the possibility of retrieving wholeness in this way.

The privacy of fantasy the nature of role-playing, the struggle for communication and the struggle for continuity, these emerge as connected puzzles in *Sordello* and in the best of the love poems all four concerns are bound together. I want to look at some of the ways these patterns occur and then particularly at 'A Lover's Quarrel' and 'Two in the Campagna' (both from *Men and Women, 1855)* before I discuss the later poetry.

A very frequent setting for Browning s love poems is a uaikenou, often underground place. The speaker of 'Mesmerism' begins his conjuring 'at night, when doors are shut: the lover of 'Evelyn Hope' soliloquizes in a room where

The shutters are shut; no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

The woman in 'Any Wife to Any Husband' envisages herself going into her husband's tomb, and the speaker of 'A Lover's Quarrel' wishes that he and his lover could be trapped in a crypt together, in order to perpetuate their love. Interestingly enough, the source of Sordello's corrupt imaginative life is seen as a font in a darkened crypt of the palace of Goito. This is always a sign that Browning is dealing with morbid, inward-turning feeling. In 'Mesmerism', the fact is obvious: the speaker's obscene conjuring up of the image and then the physical reality of his lover is clearly a monstrous act of the compelling will, a fantasy of total power. I am not sure that this is a good poem, simply because Browning's hatred for the act makes it so violent and invests it with a self-conscious creepiness. 'Evelyn Hope' is different. The morbidity is less on the surface because it looks like an exercise in gentle nostalgia. But the nostalgic feeling is both genuine and deceptive. Death should close up possibilities because it closes up action and the future. But instead Evelyn Hope's death liberates the speaker into a world of possibilities. Its very finality makes a self-gratifying fantasy about their union easier, more possible rather than less, now that he is not inhibited by the obstinate living presence of the girl's lack of interest in him. This poem, with its typical combination of kindness and cruelty of insight, looks forward to 'Too Late' in *Dramatis Personae*, with its curious combination of fond, warm, longing for the dead woman, and necrophilia. ' Too Late' ends with the speaker imagining himself almost literally taking the woman into himself, swallowing her up, and Browning has a whole range of poems, particularly poems, where the lover is compelled to destroy the autonomy of his lover and cannot bear to contemplate her or his separate existence. In *Pippa Passes (1841)* Giles the sculptor attempts to reshape Phene so that she becomes virtually his human work of art. *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), contains ' My Last Duchess' and 'Porphyria's Lover', both poems where the lover has found a woman's living existence unbearable, either because she is independent of him, or because her continued life would mean a falling away from the moment of perfection. The duke thinks that the picture of his wife is easier to control than her reality because it has turned her into an object. He does not reckon, of course, for the living continuance of his own hatreds.

Extremes of neurotic feeling interested Browning up to *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845) where 'The Laboratory' and 'Cristina' continue the earlier themes. After this the interest is fainter, but up to this point he seems to have made a fairly systematic attempt to examine many kinds of neurotic or insane behaviour, and in particular the pathology of sexual feeling.

I confess that these poems, like 'Mesmerism', puzzle me. They are wonderfully intelligent, written with all Browning's confident yet controlled flourish and display 'Porphyria's Lover' in particular has the puzzling virtuosity of many of the best monologues. We do not know whether Porphyria's provocative behaviour, baring her shoulder to entice the man from his withdrawn, almost catatonic state, was really an ordinary or a monstrous act, because her behaviour is being described by a man who is mad. These renderings of psychosis may be full of profound insight in one way, but because they explore states far beyond the dangerous edge of things, they seem to me lurid and inaccessible. I shall not say much about them here, except to say that I think they were written deliberately to challenge, shock and test the responses of the unthinking reader. I think Browning found better and more subtle ways to do this in the love lyrics proper.

Browning explores another way of limiting the autonomy of the person you love, which is to create an image which is offered to the loved one as a possible way of

being, a possible role. Of course, all love requires and lives upon this act of imagination. Browning looks mostly at the vulnerability of this creative act of will, but he acknowledges the human need to create and recreate a person in the imagination, the need to make consistent wholes out of people. The serio-comic 'In a Gondola', an early poem, is concerned with the morbid extremes that go on in the acting out of roles. The lovers sadistic fantasy is fortunately perfectly matched, and they make their huge gestures of self-conscious passion in a kind of erotic vacuum, acting each one to themselves and secondarily to one another. ' A Woman's Last Word' is another poem which traps a lover in a false role. Like 'A Pretty Woman' it is in a sparing, tense stanzaic form which Browning is so good at making both lyric and self-mocking. This one has a lullaby movement, deceptively soothing. The woman attempts to reconcile a quarrel by persuading the man to sleep, to give up words and analysis, which are destructive—'Hush and hide the talking, / Cheek on cheek!' Sometimes, she says, it is necessary to turn away from the truth, the ominous predatory 'creature', which is waiting to destroy them while they quarrel, because the truth is sometimes unbearable. The advice in the first four stanzas is sentimental and unrealistic, but innocuous. It is hardly possible to say 'All be as before', when the very fact of the quarrel has altered and modified the nature of that 'before'. But in the fifth stanza it becomes clear that her conciliatory advice is in reality a deep rejection of the man: don't pluck the apple from the tree of knowledge 'Lest we lose our Edens'. The 'we' here should mean the man and herself and the line break encourages these expectations, but she says, selfishly, 'Eve and I'. As the poem proceeds with offers of self-abasement and the sinking of her identity in his, she asks continually that they take the roles of clod and pebble, the strong and the weak, and the role-making carries a hidden reproach: 'Be a man and fold me /With thine arm!' —why haven't you been a 'man' before? Even this imposed role does not carry conviction, for she maintains her right to reserve her identity beneath it—'That shall be tomorrow / Not tonight....' Browning's virtuosity with metre here persuades the lullaby rhythms to move with a cruel, energetic stabbing motion, and one might feel, perhaps, that this is another of Browning's cruel, virtuoso ironies. This could be so, except that the poem's greatest virtuosity is to make one feel as a haunting after-image, the man's pain, anxiety and exasperation.

Browning's exploration of role-playing and role-creating in love acknowledges the paradox of the act of imagination: it is a necessary fiction; it actually nourishes and sustains, continually bringing the loved one into being with fresh splendour: 'So life's night gives my lady birth / And my eyes hold her!' Such re-creations in the imagination are proof against change, says the speaker of "In Three Days'. At the same time it is the damaging, illusory element in dishonest love. Having to create the other person brings Browning against the appalling unknowableness of the other: the woman of 'In a Year's asks

Was it something said,
Something done
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:

The greatest of his love poems are those which are full of fear that the other will continue to vanish before even the most passionate efforts of the lover's creating imagination. Even the confident, marvellously inarticulate hyperboles of 'Song' (an early poem published in 1845), based on Donne's hyperbole, Every thy hair is much too much for love to work upon, falls back on astounded repetition—'Aught like this tress, see, and this tress.....Above this tress, and this.....'. The mingled grudging, and elegaic, distrustfulness of 'Any Wife to Any Husband' springs from the knowledge that the man's imagination will not sustain a living memory of her when she dies. The speaker of 'By the Fire-side' builds a whole permanence on only a single moment of reciprocity. *James Lee's Wife*, in *Dramatic Personae*. 1864.

charts the drying up of the generous acts of imagination between man and wife which sustained the original impulse of feeling, which was a miraculously arbitrary event, like a brilliant butterfly on bare rock. Perhaps the most concise expression of the strenuous imaginative search for the lover is 'Love in a Life'.

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together

The speaker hunts through ever-receding empty spaces. Rooms enclose space and only seem to define the emptiness, more and the search is a repeated greeting of emptiness, of contentless experience. No wonder the poet has to importune each alcove. It is a beautiful image both of loss and absence and the vacant constructs of the mind. Only Browning could talk of importuning an alcove and make the act have a yearning, endless lyric reverberation.

To end my account of Browning's Romantic treatment of love I have chosen a poem which is not very much discussed. 'A Lover's Quarrel', and 'Two in the Campagna' because they seem to me to be microcosms of his concerns. In spite of being a poem of disappointment. 'A Lover's Quarrel' is written with gaiety and daring zestfulness. It opens with an energetic sensory response to spring, which ought to be in ironic contrast to the lover's mood, but it is not. He *seems* brisk and cheerful, as if still in the excitement of the experience he has lost. The winter world of the lovers was 'blocked up' with snow, withdrawn and barricaded, and inside it they played high-spirited, absurdly childish games. The point about these games is not that they were silly, creating factitious thrills, but that every one of them is a model of the continual, free, unabashed creating of one another that goes on between two people. They draw one another—'Free on each other's flaws'—they create images of olence for one another (the rearing horse on the Pampas' sheen), they try mesmerism together, a type of the willing and colluding imagination, they account mock crises. The man exclaims while he creates the image of femininity before him—'See, how she looks now, dressed/In a sledging-cap and vest!' Finally, they boldly exchange *sexual* roles. Maleness and femaleness are mutually created and mutually exchangeable. The lovers invent each other's sexuality. There is a strange mixture of flagrant music-hall drag, here, with tender androgynous feelings.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan!

A fine touch is the reference to the newspaper report of the Emperor Napoleon's marriage, an old man and a young bride in Stanzav. News from the outside, other people's love, always seems ridiculous, or even faintly obscene, to people not involved with it. The lovers are to Napoleon what the readers of the poem are to them,. 'I was you all the happy past', the man says when the woman has left him, and in the sense that the love was a mutual act of liberated imaginative invention this is perfectly true. They did invent one another.

The ideas of withdrawal and fantasy come together in the image of the mesmerizer snow in stanza XI, but the image is not an explanation of the ending of the affair: the experience of the lovers is allowed to stand up to the end of the poem with an energetic resilience. There is and can be no explanation for the failure. The lover is left 'aghast' in the privacy of his memories, to beg for explanation and to try to recreate the mood of the winter. If there is an explanation it is as subtle and minute as the faintest sound which can 'Scratch'—a very precise word for this infinitesimal

and damaging thing—'the brain's coat of curd!' (XIV). The recreation of glee and delight is strained as the man imagines the girl's impossible return. There is something sad and thin about the imaginary crypt where, in retreat from the world, they will be forced to cling together for protection. It suggests death, and there is a hollow satirical note in the reminiscence of *Romeo and Juliet*, which is typical of Browning's way of twisting from lyric to irony. Always in this poem the tripping rhythmical pattern asserts itself almost jokingly against the smooth, easy resolution of feeling which both speaker and reader *want*.

This poem is remarkable for its honesty to all the phases of feeling in the episode. However thin, the man's fantasizing is not diminished by its failure to match the life of the reality but shown as of the nature of our experience. Not all the love poems succeed as well. The mockery and the seriousness sometimes overbalance one another. 'Two in the Campagna', however, is another completely satisfying poem. I have written of this work elsewhere.[6] But It should like to add to what I said by comparing it to 'By the Fire-side.' Like 'By the Fire-side', 'Two in the Campagna' is built upon a rapid sensory recreation of an associative process—'I touched a thought.....' and the process is rendered in terms of the physical objects over which the speaker's consciousness is moving. Similarly, the memories which bud out of the speaker's mind in 'By the Fire-side' attach themselves, with broad movements from height to depth, to the mountain scene. But the difference between the two poems comes from the fact that what the poet in 'By the Fire-side' is describing is all in the past. True, the past is altered by the very fact of successive memories of it, but the moment of union which is the climax of the poem has a safety guaranteed by its narrative terms. It is trapped, and the triumphant risk of building upon a moment fully acknowledged as dangerously fragile, arising out of intense anxiety and a kind of swollen, destructive irritability, is justified by the future which spreads out from that moment to the speaker's present. In 'Two in the Campagna' the narrative is forward not backward, and the poem is entirely open. It begins, as I have said, with the speaker caught in a mesh of tenses, with the puzzlement stretching back into his life and forward in the continuous present—'I wonder do you feel today/ As I have felt since.....' The beauty of the achieved 'good minute' and the poignancy of its disappearance have made people see this poem as an elegy on the evanescence of such experience. But the rendering of evanescence carries with it a further undermining statement of the *involuntariness* of passion, and this is what seems ultimately to deprive it of value. The associative process lights upon things which are both growing and dying—'The yellow fennel, run to seed.....' —a fine mimesis of evanescence, the quick life and quicker fading of random thought. More important, the thought process is a model for experience in the poem because it is not here coexisting with the conscious will—'Help me to hold it!' It goes on in spite of itself, as the consciousness does, escaping control and definition. This leads to the central question of the poem: 'How is it under our control/to love or not to love?' The good minute and its disappearance, the central action of the poem, follows, dramatizing in large climactic emotional terms the failures that the random thought processes and the questions have suggested. Necessarily, the whole ramifying process of thought-spinning and thought-seeking then begins again—'Off again!' The poem stops in the middle of the act of searching. Browning has turned a great nineteenth-century metaphor against itself here. Some Victorians saw the associative process hopefully as the means by which human beings are connected with their past and with each other. The outgoing tissue of thought makes organic 'threads of connection', in George Eliot's phrase, between us. Here the speaker spins his threads in isolation like the spider described at the beginning of the poem, the same image used of Sordello's solipsist thought. Yet the poem contains a negative vindication of the involuntary moment: these moments can never be 'primal'/in the way of nature' instinctual easy life (stanza VI), for they are invested with value by the human energy and imagination poured into them. They cannot be controlled by the conscious will but they can be apprehended by it. The play of puzzlement and yearning is itself their justification, but the celebration is shot through with loss and defeat.

Only I discern
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

The great love poems do not continue after *Men and Women*. The poems of *Dramatis Personae* are written out of void and emptiness after the death of Browning's wife, but they do not build further on the strange affirmations and ironies of the earlier lyrics. I shall turn now to *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), where there seems to be a great disjunction between the earlier love lyrics, dominated by Romantic ideas and idioms, and this new Victorian poetry, dominated by immediate topical issues. The difference, it seems to me, is fairly superficial, for Browning's long dialogue with the Romantic tradition equipped him to deal with Victorian problems, in particular the question of sex, in a way quite different from his contemporaries.

The tone of *Fifine* is muted in comparison with the virtuoso flourishes of the earlier monologues. The speaking voice is understated, naturalistic, subtly reflecting class idioms and assumptions. It is such a convincing rendering of a voice which speaks intelligently, sophisticatedly and authoritatively to itself that the temptation is to believe in Don Juan's good faith and to accept the terms of the problem-solving exercise he sets himself, which is to demonstrate that both Elvire, his chaste middle-class wife, and Fifine, the wanton circus acrobat, are necessary to him, necessary without incompatibility and without loss of real virtue on his part. He gives the confident impression of being able to resolve a paradox, but his stance is deceptively confident. It is easy enough to see the origin of Guido's sexual hate in *The Ring and the Book* when he tells Pomplia to occupy your private patch of snow'; he is infuriated by her recoil from him and angry that his fantasy of fulfilment with a child-wife has been baulked by the fact that she is really a child in experience. It is far less easy to see what Browning is doing in Don Juan's knowing analysis of Fifine. Don Juan sees her as one of the raggle-taggle outsiders who give' society the slip'. She is carelessly promiscuous, returning again to the ogrehusband, the strong man who will beat her, 'Brute-beast-face', the man she prefers sexually to any of he upper-class lovers-'Oh she prefers sheer strength to ineffective grace'(XXV). But Don Juan's amusement at class refinements and hypocrisy—'You draw back skirts from filth like her.....'(XXIV) disguises an only gradually revealed sentimentality about Fifine and her class: he *needs* to see Fifine as a liberated rejecter of society rather than a social outcast: he needs to see her as rejecting him sexually, because thereby he reduces any human claim she might have on him, and he is able to dwell with self-titillating indulgence on the brute, atavistic sexual appetite of the lower classes. He talks as if Fifine is part of the class realities he understands, but she is surely sheer fantasy, the creation both of simplifying sexual desire and sexual fear. It is a brilliant demonstration on Browning's part of a way class, sex and fantasy can be all indivisibly smelted together in a person's consciousness. By the same token the respectable, insipid, but exactingly jealous Elvire is also the creation of fear and fantasy: her cold chastity justifies Don Juan's interest in the vivid sexual slut he makes of Fifine, and yet it also enables him to condemn and diminish "Finine. Don Juan polarizes his women into whore and virtuous matron because this sexual dualism makes possible a subtle denigration of both women. He feels in control of the situation. They have the vices of each other's virtues. One is cold but faithful: the other is satisfying but unfaithful.

Don Juan, of course, could be seen as one of Stephen Marcus's other Victorians, but I have not found it helpful to use Marcus here or at any point in this essay because in spite of himself Marcus writes as if pornography explodes rather than reflects fears and hypocrisies: too often he writes as if pornography exposes a truth which the official literature refuses to contemplate. His model is the Freudian unconscious. He celebrates Victorian pornography as an underworld literature, as if it acts like a kind of unconscious to the collective official society, turning up truth-telling reality time and again. He makes gestures toward a more subtle notion, but in general he loses

sight of the fact that pornography is as much, if not more, likely to reflect cultural fantasy as any form. What I find perceptive in *Fifine at the Fair* is the insight that the notion of the underworld is itself the result of fantasizing. But Browning's imagination went further than this because he saw that the polarization into whore and virtuous matron, one implying the other, both bolsters Don Juan's sense of his maleness and simultaneously erodes it. It is destructive in its simplistic falsity and destructive because it leads to emptiness and a sense of impotence. So instead of resolving the paradox Don Juan sets himself, the poem cracks open its contradictions: it replaces the paradox with another one: the dualism is necessary to Don Juan only because, as he half realizes, it is necessary to sustain his view of himself. And 'half realizes' is an important qualification, for this is a poem about a highly self-conscious man struggling to define himself. There is constantly a subtle movement towards honesty and then away from it, and the drama of this poem is that the argument is discovered by a man in intense difficulties with himself. The way Browning traces the movements of Don Juan's position is to use yet again the Romantic image of the lover-creator, whose imaginative act of creating the lover can be both life-giving or corrupt and debasing. The image slowly turns against itself as the poem moves along.

Don Juan's first description of Fifine is a tour de force, in its leisurely, insulting, and curiously sensitive appraisal (for Don Juan is an intelligent, corrupt poet) of her sexual being. It is also a taunting of Elvire, who is listening, because by implication it defines her sexual inadequacies and entices her to sexual jealousy. Don Juan's connoisseurship is intrigued by the tawdry costume, the teasing androgynous ambiguity of the spangled dress, and the sexual aggression of Fifine's response to him. Fifine is half immense nubile female, half homosexual boy.

> *And then, her neck! now, grant you had the power to deck,*
> *Just as your fancy pleased, the bistre-length of neck,*
> *Could lay, to shine against its shade, a moonlike row*
> *Of pearls, each round and white as bubble Cupids blow*
> *Big out of mother's milk,—what pearl-moon would surpass*
> *That string of mock-turquoise, those almandines of glass,*
> *Where girlhood terminates? for with breasts'-birth commence*
> *The boy, and page-costume, till pink and impudence*
> *End admirably all: complete the creature trips*
> *Our way now, brings sunshine upon her spangled hips,*
> *As here she fronts us full, with pose half-frank, half-fierce!*
>
> (XV)

The half-tender sensuality here is very slightly coarse—Pippa's beads are vulgarly bloated, but so is the hyperbolic simile for them. The discussion turns to a comparison between the two women, further goading Elvire. Fifine is the lily, sterile and poisonous, yet exciting, and liberated from moral standards—'self-sustainment made morality': Elvire is the respectable rose of English married love, 'no flavourous venom-bell', but plucked and put 'I' the proper loyal throne (XVIII) on breast where rose should be'. There is a wonderful assimilation of Swinburne's erotic language here to the muted sophistication of Don Juan's voice, and the slightly over-stated Swinburnian element enables Browning to be ironic about Don Juan's ironies. The inversion of the usual symbol is treated with mocking irony here, thoroughly enjoyed by Don Juan. Fifine is not the lily of purity: Elvire is not the rose of flaming passion which, placed alongside the daisy meek' and maiden violet' is made to seem insipid and without vitality. But later, on the evening walk they take together, Don Juan is sensually moved and puzzled by Elvire's coldness, teased by the 'silken thrill' of her eyelash (LXIV). He is haunted by her apartness from him, which calls out lyric feeling. Browning never forgets that however false the polarization between whore and pure woman may be, the difficulties the fantasy lands one with are real enough. Yet on the whole, the imagery always works against

Elvire: in another tortured sequence of explanation, she is the cumbersome, stable motherboat, and Fifine is the light skiff (LXXXI-LXXXII).

Don Juan constantly resorts to the notion of the lover as artist in order to convince Elvire of the power of love. In the early part of the poem these are confident assertions. By mythologizing you, creating you as ideal being, he says, I bring into being and make possible your sexual self, just as the gods made Helen's phantom bring into being the great events of Troy (XXVI-XXX). He celebrates the 'self-vindicating flash' (XXIX) which rescues and recreates each human being. In another long sequence about the lover-creator (XLIII-LX) life is 'stuff for transmuting'; the 'elemental flame' of love creates ' a new birth of life, the challenged soul's response / To ugliness and death' (LV), so that lovers release each other's self-hood (LIX). But this noble reciprocity does not last. Fifine's qualities, when dwelt upon in the imagination, only serve to accentuate Elvire's loyalty and goodness. When the lover-creator idea is reversed and transferred to Elvire, Don Juan says that she makes him feel *real*. Like Arion's porpoise, women 'bear—palpitating— / One proud humility of love', a man's selfhood (LXXVIII) – there are strong sexual overtones here. It is at this point that fear, self-disgust and desperation begin to rise against the confidence. Men respond only to hate and aggression (LXXIX). A woman is an 'Auxiliary' who 'Takes nothing and gives all': 'at least', he says 'convince unreasonable me /That I am. Anyhow, a truth' (LXXX). The desperation mounts again in the night terror of LXXXIV: 'Are you unterrified? / All false, all fleeting, too!' But such dependence for one's sense of identity on women beeds a counter-reaction of rage and fear. Earlier he has said that men destroy, 'take light and heat' from those they love, but 'Women rush into you, and there remain absorbed' (LXXI). Women are like headlong streams prepared to annihilate their identity, but in doing so they can swamp a man's maleness. The image is exactly like the account of the 'gentler' creating minds in *Sordello* who can 'Bury themselves' in 'something not themselves'. But now the image has turned sour: the female habit of swampy self-effacement must be countered by the male's assertion, and a further pattern of self-effacement (LXXVI). The most one can do is to *pretend* that this does not happen, to fabricate a relationship of respect and reverence. No wonder that, with an identity which is both damaged by women's self-interested effacingness and yet supported by their humility, men will go in search of Fifines in order to release themselves from this self-defeating paradox. The Fifines are the means for a kind of existential, free, testing out of the self through sex. The heroic voyage of self-discovery on a dangerous sea comes to Don Juan's mind as he explains that he needs to live in danger, 'trusting to sea' tracklessness' (LXXXII):

> *With those... .*
> *Who dreaded no degree of death, but, with dry eyes,*
> *Surveyed the turgid main and its monstrosities—*
> *And rendered futile so, the prudent Power's decree*
> *Of separate earth and dissacociating sea.*

Don Juan's self-mocking ironies attempt to qualify the heroics as he remembers the 'comfortable ode' of Horace to Virgil on a sea voyage. As usual the ironies are never quite directed aright: the sea and its 'monstrosities' is an analogue for *sexual* experience. And in Don Juan's image it is everything that is threatening and destructive. It hits at the core of his identity. It is a comparison full of fear and anxiety, fear of impotence, fear of emptiness.

Browning has here analyzed the self-gratifying but damaging myth of women as either Fifine's or Elvire's, whores or angels, with extra ordinarily subtle meticulousness. The sophisticated uncertainties of the argument get into the fractures of the form, the clogged syntax of the poem, with its constant feints at articulation. The convoluted, repeated arguments, the doubling in and out of feeling are a fine miming of the confusions of Don Juan. Other poems, such as *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and the *Parleying* with Fufini can claim to show Browning looking hard at

contempobrary sexual myths. But nowhere did he look harder, or more rigorously, than in *Fifine at the Fair*. The intelligence of his scrutiny transcends a merely journalistic, topical investigation of contemporary life. He was able to arrive at insights about the nature of a social fantasy by exploring it through the surprising and subtle applications of his old Romantic assumptions about the nature of the imagination. Browning continued to grow as a poet because he continued to explore and question with versatile scepticism the possibilities of his longest-held positions.

1. Russell M. Goldfarb, *Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature*, 1970

2. *VS*, 14 (September, 1970), 'The Victorian Woman. A Special Issue'. Two essays in this issue deal with the Victorian stereotypes of women: Jill Conway, 'Stereotypes of Femininity in a Theory of Sexual Evolution', 47-62: Kate Millett. 'The Debate over Women: Ruskin Versus Mill', 63-81. These essays amplify some of the suggestions I have explored in this paper, though neither deals directly with the question of female cunning.

3. Thomas Laycock, *A Treatise on the Nervous Disorders of Women*, 1840, 74.

4. H.S. Ashbee's catalogue of pornographic tales is particularly revealing from this point of view. One novel has a particularly fierce account of a husband's sadistic rage against his wife. See Ashbee's account of E. Sellon's *The Ups and Downs of Life*, 1867, in *Forbidden Books of the Victorians*, ed. Peter Fryer, London, 1970, 198-203.

5. Robindra Kumar Biswas, *Arthur Hugh Clough: Towards a Reconsideration*. Oxford, 1972, 469.

6. The Brownings', in *The Victorians*, ed. Arthur Pollard, Sphere History of Literature, vol.6, London, 1970.

5
BROWNING'S CHILDE ROLAND
HAROLD GOLDER

Nearly everyone knows that behind Browning's *Childe Roland* lies a vast contributory reservoir of chivalric romance. The hero of the poem is obviously engaged in a quest, drawn out through a number of years and attended by continual disappointments, a quest which he shares with a band of other adventurers who have been lost in their attempts to achieve. Roland's coming to the Tower, under these circumstances, while it may not be duplicated in any one romance, is patently a chivalric enterprise of a familiar type. Our recognition of this fact makes the poem ,much less the mystery that early commentators found it. And yet many puzzling details still remain to be explained.

One such puzzle exists in the establishment of a logical connection between Edgar's song in *Lear* and this chivalric background. Browning insisted,[1] with more than usual stubbornness, that the poem was wholly suggested by the lines:[2]

> Child Rowland to the dark tower came ;
> His word was still, - Fie, foh, and fum,
> I smell the blood of a British man.

This passage may be separated into three parts: the first line, which Shakespere possibly took verbatim from some lost ballad: the first half of the second line, which is plainly Edgar's own phrase, connecting the words before and behind it; and the final line and a half, which seems to be the vaunt of an Ogre, probably the occupant of the tower.[3] As regards *Childe Roland*, the significant parts of the song are the first line and the doggeral at the close. The former may be conceived of as indefinitely

suggestive of romantic material. The subject of the sentence recalls, through the famous nephew of Charlemagne, the names of many heroes; the complement is reminiscent of quests and adventures; the verb connotes valorous achievement. Yet these suggestions, real though they are, are still indefinite; for the adventures of Roland, even in late prose redactions and Italian elaborations, were never those of the Roland in Browning's poem. Still less suggestive of romances are the sanguinary words at the end of Edgar's song; if the first line is but vaguely connected with romance, the last lines do not seem to be connected with it at all. And yet they cannot be disregarded, for Browning made no distinction between one part of the passage and another in owning his obligation to the lines in *Lear*. The problem lies in establishing a subconscious connection between Edgar's maudlin words and the material from which Browning obviously drew; it consists in discovering some threads of association that will bind them to the great field of romance in so close a way that the poet would have been conscious of the song and not of the romances in a frank statement of his sources.

The problem is hardly solved by supposing popular ballads to have formed the connecting link. The Rev. J. Kirkman long ago suggested[4] that the probably spurious ballad of *Child Rowland and Burd Ellen* was a source for the poem. This critic obviously attached too much importance to the ballad. It cannot be a main source: Child Rowland seeks no Dark Tower here, for the stronghold of the king of Elfland is beneath a green hill in a pleasant countryside; the lost adventurers number only the hero's two brothers; the guide who directs his steps is a hen-wife, not a cripple. Yet the name of the hero and the "fi, fo, and fum" doggerel which it contains give the ballad some importance as a possible connecting link between Edgar's words and the richer field of romance lying beyond. That Browning knew the ballad, however, can hardly be proved. No definite evidence exists that Jamieson's *Northern Antiquities* was one of the 60,000 books in the elder Browning's library, or that Browning read it and associated it with Shakespere's words at so early an age that he would have been unconscious of this association in manhood.

A more plausible connecting link between *Lear* and the romances seems to lie in the domain of popular children's tales. A number of these tales contain the concluding words of Edgar's song. In *Hop-o'-my-Thumb, Jack and the Bean-stalk,* and *Jack the Giant-killer* the doggerel occurs: in the two former as a part of the common episode of the man-eating giant who smells the blood of a visitor whom his wife is hiding;[5] in the latter as the boast of an attacking foe. The "fie-foh-fum" passage is thus associated, not only with Jamieson's ballad, but even more intimately with the nursery tales because of its frequent occurrence. But, as cannot be positively asserted of the ballad, these tales were undoubtedly familiar to Browning,[6] and familiar from so early a period in his childhood that his mature mind held them far below the surface in a state of fusion. They would thus be grouped around Edgar's song so intimately that he would be hardly conscious of their presence or see any necessity for referring to them in citing the song as the germ of his poem.

That this fusion existed in Browning's mind and that it was of importance in the genesis of *Childe Roland* may be interestingly illustrated from lines in *A Lovers' Quarrel*:

> "I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
> Facing the castle glum
> And the giant's fee-faw-fum."

At first sight, it would seem that Browning was here thinking either of the English tale of *Tom Thumb* or of the French *Petit Poucet*, which translators rendered *Hop-o'-my-Thumb*; but as a matter of fact the former hero has but one adventure, and that an ignominious one, with a giant who swallows him, while the latter Thumb is in no sense a valiant character but trembles with all his force when, as a mere child, he falls into the clutches of an Ogre. Browning, in *A Lovers' Quarrel*, has obviously confused

these tales with others in which the main character is a fighting hero. Not the Thumbs, but the Jacks of children's lore seek out giants and laugh with nonchalant courage at their "fee-faw-fums." The title role in both *Jack and the Bean-stalk and Jack the Giant-killer* is played by a valiant hero who adventures worthily against a castle and gets the better of its lord.

The connection of the valiant Jack[7] with the valiant Thumb and of the castle glum with the Dark Tower gains significance in view of a similarity between the incidents of both these tales and those of *Childe Roland*. The hero of *Jack and the Bean-stalk* travels, as does Roland, through a desolate country on his way to the giant's castle. In most chap-book versions[8] this plain is described as "a desert, quite barren; not a tree, shrub, house, or living creature to be seen" ; but in some forms of the tale[9] this description is expanded to include "scattered fragments of stone; and at unequal distances, small heaps of earth..... loosely thrown together." Even moré interesting, in connection with Browning's poem, is the last episode in *Jack the Giant- killer*.[10] The hero comes at evening to the foot of a mountain, where he encounters a man "with a head as white as snow." This man guides him to a castle, shared by a giant and an enchanter, where a host of lost adventurers, who had previously essayed the conquest of the tower, lie imprisoned. On arriving before the gates, Jack finds a golden trumpet hanging suspended by a silver chain, under which is written:

> "Whoever can this trumpet blow,
> Shall soon the giant overthrow,
> And break the black enchantment straight,
> So all shall be in happy state."

Whereupon, "Jack had no sooner read this inscription, but be blew the trumpet."

It will be observed that in these two tales the main outlines of *Childe Roland* are suggested. The cripple at the outset of the journey, the desolate countryside, the mountains, the tower, the lost adventurers, and the slug-horn appear in one of the other. Both are logically connected with the *Lear* passage through the "fie-foh-fum" verse and, as the lines from *A Lovers' Quarrel* show, the Dark Tower. The relation of *Childe Roland* to Edgar's words is rather more comprehensible when the nature of this intermediary material is understood. But it is obvious that the nursery tale material is only intermediary; the larger background for the poem is still to be sought among the romances. The facts seem to indicate that many incidents from the children tales were grouped in Browning's mind about the *Lear* age, grouped about it very early in his youth and elaborated with fancies of his own;[11] but it is also probable that these tales were in turn connected with more developed chivalric stories until the ever-widening web enclosed a store of material into which his questing mind ranged far during the composition of the poem.[12]

Consequently, Roland's quest differs much from the relatively simple adventuring of the nursery tale heroes. His quest is purposeful; it has been long extended and encompassed by many difficulties; it has been shared, as was that for the Grail and for the lost Amadis,[13] with a number of other knights. And, most interesting of all, it is an example of that quest which has as its theme the failure of many and the triumph of one.[14] All of Roland's predecessors have fallen by the way or have met their doom at the Tower. Standing before the turret, he is acutely aware of the dark precedent his fellows have established; he remembers.

> " How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
> And such was fortunate, yet each of old
> Lost, loss ? one moment knelled the woe of years."

Yet, although the poem ends with no more than the glorious summoning of resolution, it must be imagined that Roland was predestined to victory, as the others were to defeat.

of only the quest as a whole, but the separate episodes in Roland's journey to the tower were influenced by common descriptions in the romances. The cripples at the outset of Roland's path is the familiar guide whom errant knights consulted at cross-roads, often an

> "- old old man, with beard as white as snow,
> That on his staffe his feeble steps did frame –"

such as he from whom Prince Arthur, in the *Faerie Queene*,[15] asks information concerning the prisoners of Orgoglio. Not always was information from such a source to be trusted, for the guides were sometimes rogues and often magicians.[16] Typical is Spenser's Archimago, that "conning architect of cancred guile." He was

> "An aged Sire, in long blake weedes yclad,
> His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray,-"[17]

But his appearance belied his nature,

> "For all he did was to deceive good knights,
> And draw them from pursuit of praise and fame." [18]

Such sources explain why Childe Roland, guided by a strange old man with a malicious eye, should have been somewhat distrustful of the information he received.[19]

Connected with the desolate country, around the path to the Tower, are many descriptions in the romances. The desolation of such landscapes is sometimes that of an uninhabited wilderness; sometimes that of a district laid waste by war. The fell cirque beyond the river in *Childe Roland* recalls the frightful battlefield of "Roncevaux, with which the name of Roland has a direct connection. Yet a supernatural tinge to Browning's description suggests more definitely those fields and moors in the romances which had fallen under some awesome spell of enchantment, as had the dragon-swamp of Siegfried and the mere of Grendel. The haunts of the sage Friston, in *Don Belianis of Greece*,[20] are typical of many such localities in romances of the kind. A damsel held there by enchantment describes it : "- it may rightly be termed the Desert of Death ; for all the Fields are blasted, and continual Mildews burn each plant, the Trees are bare, and on their naked tops, naught but Owls sit perching and Ravens building, no kindly Sunbeams shed their cheering Lustre, but all as melancholy as the Gloome of Death : here Ghosts do nightly Roam, and the infernal Spirits that obey the great Magitian."

The despair which pulls at Roland's heart is like wise a romantic despair out of which great resolution could come when the hero faced a crisis. Knowledge of chivalrous traditions thoughts of personal glory, and faith in a God who rejoiced in good sword-play braced the nerves of errant knights before the final combat. Roland's depression and sudden exaltation are fairly typical. If, however, he is to be regarded as a knight of chivalric story, the presence of the lost adventures ranged along the hillsides may be thought of as giving him an additional stimulus. An audience in the galleries above the lists, or in castle windows above the scenes of sterner conflicts, played fully as important a part in chivalric enterprises as in modern athletics.

The slug-horn[21] at the close of *Childe Roland* is another common romantic property. Some were used to sound a challenge to a foe, like that which Bradamante, in the *Orlando Furioso*,[22] sounds to call the enchanter from his impregnable tower to the plain below. For such a purpose, supposing an enemy within the Tower, Roland may have wound his horn. On the other hand, we may imagine the slug-horn having supernatural qualities.[23] A horn of this kind is interestingly described in the *Faerie Queene*.[24]

"Was never wight that heard that shrilling sownd,
But trembling feare did feel in every vaine:
Three miles it might be easy heard arownd,
And Ecchoes three aunswer'd it selfe againe:
No false enchauntment, nor deceiptfull traine,
Might once abide the terror of that blast,
But presently was void and wholly vaine:
No gate so strong, no looke so firm and fast,
But with that perceing noise flew open quite, or brast."

It is impossible to decide definitely just what type of horn Browning had in mind. The horns of faerie range in their materials from bone to gold; in their location, from the baldric of the hero to an especially constructed pillar before castles and towers; in their qualities, from the simple emission of sound to the razing of walls and the dispersion of enchantments. It is likewise impossible to know what Browning imagined as the sequel to Roland's blast, although it will always be fascinating to speculate.

These scattered resemblances of the poem to the general field of chivalric romance are enough to suggest how wide-flung was the web of associations in Browning's mind, connected probably by means of the nursery tales to the lines in *Lear*. As in the case of the children's tales, it seems true that the romantic material existed in the background of Browning's consciousness as a mass rather than in separate packets each labelled with an author's name. Two books, however, are perhaps more closely related to *Childe Roland* than any so far mentioned.[25]

The first is the *Renowned History if the Seven Champions of Christendom*, "written or compiled in the reign of James the first, by one Richard Johnson."[26] To mention all the instances of enchanted towers, weird landscapes, aged guides, magic horns, and lost adventurers which occur in this extraordinary, volume would be more than tiresome. Two episodes are, however, especially noteworthy. One of these describes St. George coming to the country of the Amazons and finding it desolate. The queen thus accounts for its lamentable conlition : "Osmond, a necromancer, wrought the destruction of this my realm and kingdom; for by his magic arts and damned charms, he raised from the earth a mighty tower, the mortar whereof he mingled with virgin's blood, wherein are such enchantments wrought, that the light of the sun and the brightness of the skies are quenched, and the earth blasted with a terrible vapour and black mist that ascended from the tower, whereby a general darkness overspread our land, the compass of twenty-four leagues, so this country is clean wasted and destroyed."[27] When St. George vows to overcome this enchantment, the queen demurs : "Most dangerous is the adventure, from whence as yet did never knight return, but if you be so resolute and noble-minded as to attempt the enterprize, then know that this tower lieth westward from hence about thirteen miles."[28] Through the darkness of the enchanted valley St. George rides the next day; he crosses a river as black as pitch, about his head fly monstrous birds, and in this dangerous manner he rides on, until he comes to the gates of the tower.[29] From the other episode in the *Seven Champions*, two sentences will suggest the more important connections with *Childe Roland*. They proceeded toward the island where the knight of the Black Castle had his residence, guided only by the direction of the old man." "The champions rode to the castle where they espied a pillar of beautiful jaspar stone, at which pillar hung a very costly silver trumpet, with certain letters carved about the same, which contained these words following :

"If any dare attempt this place to see,
By sounding this, the gate shall opened be.....

Which when St. George beheld, without any more tarrying, he set the silver trumpet to his mouth."

The second book is *Palmerin of England*, which, with *Amadis of Goal*. has been the best known of the Spanish romances in England. The events of the entire first volume are centered around a great quest called the adventure of Great Britain. The son of the king of England had been entrapped by a giant and his unlovely aunt, and by them confined in a remote tower. When his absence had become alarming, first a few and then well high all the knights of Christendom departed in search of him, so many, in fact, that the navies of the world had to be abandoned and the marches left without defense "For when the knights ..... were happened unto the unfortunate forest of Great Britain there were very few escaped, but for the most part were lost in that unfortunate search."[30] At length it became known, by means of a letter written by the Lady of the Lake to the Emperor of Greece, that the final victory was reserved for one man. "Many have and shall attempt, but he alone is ordained to finish this exploit." This man was Palmerin. He forthwith departed, going "strait on where it was said all adventurers were lost." At length, after some years, he came near the place. "Can you tell," he asked of a knight, "which way the fortress lies where all adventurers find their end ?"[31] and was answered, I know not, and believe nobody knows, but as it should seem, it cannot be far hence." After he had left the knight, "he had not travelled far along the valley, when, because it was night. and he knew not well which way to take, he alighted, sitting down at the foot of a tree, where he determined to sleep until morning ; but this he could not do, such was the grief he felt for his brother, with sundry other cogitations that troubled his mind[32] .... These troublous thoughts made him the more desirous to be at the castle, where he would prove his fortune, and make an end of the adventure or of himself, as so many others had done.[33] At length he entered the valley of Perdition, so called because of the lost adventurers, and saw ahead of him a tower, which his forebodings told him was the fortress of the giant."[34] When the foe came out for the combat, Palmerin, "seeing the battlement and the windows of the fortress full of his friends, and remembering that they were in captivity, and the confidence which they placed in him,[35] fought with such hardiness and hardihood, that by dint of blows he laid the giant at his feet."

Memories of such books, connected by radiating lines of association to the lines in *Lear*, were probably the chief store from which *Childe Roland* was evolved. But these threads extended also into memories of other sorts, coming not so much from the printed page as from English and Italian landscapes, boyhood rambles in the fields about Camberwell, evening strolls in Asolo, and all Browning's varied experience with the actual world. Two details from this wider background Browning himself recognized; he said that the horse came from one in Casa Guidi tapestry, and the squat turret from a tower in the Carrara mountains. The landscape in the poem suggests that these details are but two out of a number. The mood of the poem was andoubtedly a magnet that attracted many such memories; Roland's profound depression would suggest to Browning a variety of experiences which were clothed in his recollection with a similar atmosphere, Cockles, spurge, burrs, thistles, docks, crampled fields, torture engines, blotches, patches like boils, birds of Apollyon and ugly heights and and heaps, impressions from early and late in his experience, were fitted by their connotations to form the background for Roland's adventure. There was a surging of images in his brain on the crest of which were carried blind horses, iquat towers, hoary cripples, foaming streams, all bound together by a unified aura of feeling.

Not only was the mood of the poem a further associtative link to outlying provinces of experience, but also the theme. the theme of *Childe Roland* is a familiar on e to caders of Browning the peom expounds the philosophy of his early manhood his interest in the apparent failure of our mundane life, and its possibilites for future triumph. In *Childe Roland* chivatric romance illustrates the same conception that in other poems is illustrated by the musings of Abt Vogler or the researches of a Renaissance grammarian *Childe Roland*, therefore, naturally suggested to Browning the other poems that shared its theme, and it would not be strange to find him drawubg onconsciolusly from these other poems in dealing with a situation on that

formed with them so fundamental a parallel.[36] That such was the case may be best illustrated from *Paracelsus*, a poem with which *Childe Roland* has a special kinship that extends not only to incident, but also to imagery and phraseology. It would seem that Browning, imagining the crisis of his knight's career, recalled unconsciously what he had written about similar situations in the earlier poem. The lost adventurers who range themselves on the hillside to see how Roland meets his crucial test are spoken of in terms that suggest not only the lost poets who beckon to Aprile, but the sages who group themselves about the death-bed of Paracelsus. And also, when Browning imagined the cripple at the outset of Roland's journey, he gave him the expression and the impulses of Paracelsus' "leering dotards" who, he imagines, seek to mislead him with their lies. In a similar manner the description of the sterile and repugnant country through which led the path to the Tower, seems influenced by certain metaphors in *Paracelsus*, those mirror forth the barrenness of Paracelsus' life when subjugated to one all-absorbing aim and those that exhibit his heart "in slow despondency's eternal sigh."[37]

Each detail of the poem, consequently, is incredibly rich. Every character and incident is a composite from numberless sources. From the figure of the cripple (in whose picture can be seen vaguely blended the features of Italian beggars, palmers, hermits, guides, old knights, enchanters, and the malicious fares about Paracelsus' death bed) to the slug - horn at the close of the poem, every stanza drains wide areas of experience. The present analysis has undoubtedly only touched upon the material involved.

Yet, after future commentators have carried the study of Browning's sources farther, the poem will still be somewhat a mystery, and will remain so until the workings of the human mind are more clear than at present. For the poem seems the product of no ordinary process of composition. It is hard to imagine Browning seated at his desk in the full light of a winter's day, amid the commonplace surroundings of an apartment in Paris, deliberately evolving *Childe Roland* out of the *Lear* passage. Several considerations practically force one to the conclusion that Browning wrote *Childe Roland* in a manner fundamentally unlike that in which he wrote his other poems.

The difference between *Childe Roland* and the rest of Browning has caught the attention of must commentators.[38] From such studies as *Cristina* and *Any Wife to Any Husband*, in which the reader overhears the intimate thought revelations of a character during a crisis in his life, *Childe Roland* differs by virtue of its astonishing concreteness, its pictorial quality. He who reads *James Lee's Wife* must guess at the action which lies behind the self-communing of the speaker; in reading *Childe Roland* he sees the cripple standing cut sharply against the sunset, and feels the spray thrown up by the petulant little river moist in his face. Nor are these pictures connected, as in *How We Carried the Good News or the Ring and the Book*, by any consecutive scheme of narration. The highway was there - and then, it is gone. It was grey plain all around, and suddenly there is a horse. Nothing was in sight of hearing-then all at once hills crowd down, the Dark Tower in their midst, and the lost adventurers ranged along, a living frame for one more picture. Some scenes are lighted by a sunset, others are dark, and at the close the sun shines again. The poem is made up of separate tableaux, each with a new setting, a new effect of light and shade, connected with other scenes only by the figure of the main character and by a continuity of mood and theme. This mood, also, is different from the mood of other poems. The atmosphere is highly charged ; awe underlies Roland's despair, and a sense of supernatural opposition tightens his nerves as he faces the crisis. A phantom emotion, such as that which shrouds remembered dreams invests the indefinite outlines of the Tower with vague apprehensions of horror. No other poem of Browning's communicates an effect of the kind.

From Browning's other poemstel, this poem is differentiated also by the nature of the circumstances under which it was written. For *Childe Roland* Browning made no such preparations as for most of his literary work. He was far from his library at the

time. A snatch of song was its inspiration, instead of a connected story, a prolonged study of documents, of a theme, as in the typical cases of *Gold Hair, Sordello*, and Mr. *Sludge the Medium*. Although his composition of poetry was usually slow and deliberate, he wrote *Childe Roland* in one day, evidently in the full heat of powerful inspiration. And on the day before, he wrote *Women and Roses*, the only poem that remotely resembles *Childe Roland*, and that poem was the record of a vivid dream.

For these and other reasons it seems best to associate *Childe Roland* with such a poem as *Kubla Khan*. Browning himself called *Childe Roland* a "fantasy," a term which psychologists would use to designate Coleridge's vision. While this coincidence is hardly important, still the two poems, and the circumstances that surrounded their composition, are interestingly similar. Both are composed of pictures, individually vivid, mutually separated, and surcharged with a mysterious dream atmosphere. Both took their origin in a fragment of reading which the poems exceed in richness of detail and in far-flung associations with other reading and experience.[39] Both were quickly composed and regarded by their authors as changeling children for whose origin they could scarcely account. Coleridge, it is true, recorded the circumstances of his vision with true romantic frankness; Browning, on the other hand, referred but vaguely to a vision origin for his poem.[40] This fact would indicate that not an anodyne, nor hypnosis, nor any prolonged period of concentration such as produces the hallucinations of mystics and ascetics, was the incentive force for Browning's vision, but rather that the experience was entirely normal, a dream of deep sleep or a hypnagogic illusion, such as sometimes comes, either before or immediately after sleep, to all men whose imaginations are unusually active. That many works of literature and art have been so inspired is a familiar fact. From Caedmon through Poe, Stevenson, and Swinburne, English authors have frequently owned that they saw the action and setting for their poems and tales before writing them. That Browning made no such statement regarding the experience behind *Childe Roland* may have importance only as a further instance of his reticence in all matters relating to his poems.[41]

The best justification for thus connecting *Childe Roland* with the operations of the dream mind[42] lies in the number of perplexing problems it explains. Not only in the unusual nature of the poem and its composing less puzzling when Browning is thought of as having recorded a vivid mental experience seemingly enacted as a pageant outside his mind, but also the relation of the poem to its sources is more clear. How Browning, in any conscious process of composition, could have drawn upon so vast a store of material without having been aware of his obligations to it, is practically impossible to comprehend. But if the associative process were subliminal, if the details "rose before his mind as *things*" without conscious effort and without awareness of their source, of the pictures of the poem came spontaneously from forgotten material in his subconsciousness, then it is entirely possible to credit his statement regarding the relation of the poem to the *Lear* passage, and at the same time to recognize that his reading and his experiences were drawn upon widely and freely. His subconscious mind not only could have access to a wider and deeper mental store than could his mind in working hours, but he would have no knowledge of its industry. Upon a return to normal consciousness he would realize only, as did Coleridge under similar circumstances, that the vision was well worth recording and that it was intimately connected with the lines he had been reading or pondering upon immediately before. The lines thus assumed in Browning's mind an unusual importance ; from them came the title and the closing line : he referred to them in the initial note and cited them always as his entire inspiration. That these lines were the incentive factor for a vivid vision, a vision which Browning recorded, with more or less exactness and with much or little change, in the finished poem, seems to be the best explanation now possible for the peculiarities of *Childe Roland*.

Notes and References

1. For example, see his letter to Miss Irene Hardy. *Poet Lore*, 24:56.

2. Act III, Sc. IV, ll. 171-3

3. I owe this suggestion to Professor G. L. Kittredge

4. *Browning Society Papers*, Vol. I, p. 21* ff

5. Lang (In his edition of *Perrault's Popular Tales*, Introduction, p. civ f) cites ultimate sources for this incident.

6. In *The Ring and the Book* (Bk. I) there is a reference to *Jack and the Beanstalk* ; in *Pachiarotto* to *Hop-o'-my-Thumb*; in one of Browning's letters to Miss Barrett (Vol. II, p. 20) to *Jack the Giant-killer.*

7. *Valiant* was a stock epithet for Jack the giant-killer. On his belt appeared the words: "This is the valiant Cornishman Who killed the giant Comoran."

8. See, for example, that included in *John Cheap The Chapman's Library*, Glasgow, 1878, Vol.III.

9. See the version printed in Craik, *The Fairy Book*. Macmillan, London, 1868, p. 132ff.

10. I quote from the version, the usual one, in *Chap Books and Penny Histories (Ancient Literature of the Olden Times)*, Third Series.

11. In this imaginative elaboration Browning may have been aided by his father, whose skill with his drawing pencil was often employed in the illustration of familiar stories for his own and other children. See Griffin and Minchin, *Life of Robert Browning*, p. 20.

12. Browning's acquaintanceship with the romances seems to have dated from very early youth and to have been largely confined to that period. See Orr, *Life and Letters of Browning*, Revised ed. 1908,pp.144, 201, 232, 378f.; Griffin and Minchin, *Life of Browning*, p. 71ff., *Letters of R. B. and E. B. B.* Vol. I, pp. 40, 523, Vol. II, pp. 388, 555 ; *Letters of E. B. Browning*, ed. Kenyon, 1897, Vol. I., pp.420, 442.

13. Pt. II, cc. 15, 17.

14. For example, see Don *Belianis of Greece*, London, 1703, pt. III, c. 38: "This great Adventure cannot finish'd be, Unless by those to whom the Fates decree."

15. Bk. I, c. VIII, s. 30.

16. A "wicked mage" appears in *Easter-Day*, XIV, and one of the kinder sort i *James Lee's Wife*, V.

17. Bk. I, c. I, s. 29.

18. Bk. II, c. I, s. 23.

19. The third stanza of *Childe Roland*, which seems to indicate that the whereabouts of the Tower was common knowledge, has puzzled some commentators. These are, of course, not Roland's words, but the cripple's which Roland quotes indirectly and ironically. Such ellipsis is common in Browning. Another writer might have introduced, "if I am to believe the cripple, " in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

20. As above, Pt. II, c. 11.

21. The "slug-horn" is merely a horn Skeat and Murray note that Browing, following Chatteron, erred in his use the word. It is "really Md.Sc. slugorne,a corruption of slogan,"and means "a war-cry"

22. C. IV, ss. 15,16.

23. For typical examples see Orlando Furioso,c. XXX,s. 44;Faerie Queene,bk. V,c.VIII, s. 27;Morte d' Arthur(Everyman ed), Vol.I,P.203:Amadis of Gaul.bk.I,c.42L' admirable Histories du Chevalier du soleil,Vol.I,c.44; Don Belianis of Greece,Pt.II,c. 12 Note also the horns of Huon,Roland, Astolpho,andHelias (The Knight of the Swanne).

24. Bk.I,c.VIII,s.4. the quotations from the Faerie Queene may be taken as representative of the romances from which Spenser drew.

25. Yet it must be kept in mind that both of these romances, like the *Faerie Queene*, are synthetic. It is entirely possible that Browning drew not from them, but from their sources. What makes these two books especially significant is that they bring together many common details from the general field of romance and arrange them in an order resembling that we find in *Childe Roland*, and that their phraseology suggests Brownings in several instances. It must be added that one of the romances that Johnson used in compiling the *Seven Champions* was *Arthur of Lytle Brytayne*, known to English readers in Lord Berner's translation. Here occur (c. I, VIII) the dark river, the monstrous birds, and the prevailing gloom, just as Johnson describes them in the first passage I cite from the *Seven Champions*; the object of the hero's quest, moreover, is here called 'the Tenebrous, or Darke Tower' (c. LV). In other respects Johnson's account of the adventure is closer than Lord Berner's to Browning's poem.

26. Quoted from the preface to the 1824 edition. There were many black letter editions, and one good London edition of 1755, besides a host of chap-book abridgements which retain the main episodes. Coleridge, it will be remembered, was fond of acting out the incidents of this romance when a child.

27. This passage suggest that some association nay have existed in Browning's mind between the Tower and the darkness,as well as the "penury, inertness and grimace," about it.

28. That Roland travelled westward a and considerable distance Browning implies rather than distinctly states. The resemblance may easily be a coincidence.

29. Compare liner near the end of Pouline:-I seem, dying, as one going in the dark To fight a giant."-and in Strafford, Act.II, Sc. 2 : "I, soon to rush Alone upon a giant in the dark."-and: "-huge in the dark There's – Pym to face."-and "You need turn a pageof the romance to learn the Dreadful Giant's fate."

30. I use Southey's translation, London, 1807.

31. Roland may be imagined phrasing his question to the cripple in this way.

32. Compare Roland's despair and his memories of Giles and Cuthbert.

33. Compare *Childe Roland*, ss. 3-7

34. Compare s. 30.

35. Compare ss. 32-34

36. For example; the references to Giles and Cuthbert in *Childe Roland* suggest Browning's familiar attitude towards lost friends (see *Strafford*, Act I, *The Italian in England*, and *The Lost Leader*) ; the sunset that closes Childe Roland appears also at the end of *Sordello*, *Pippa Passes*, and the second book of *Paracelsus;* the corpse which Roland expects to find in the river has a parallel in *Sordello*, bk. IV; "frothy spume" is mentioned at the end of *Christmas-Eve*, and a "new tract of death, calcined to ashes" in *Easter-Day*. The corpse and the river are, by the way, probably connected with Wordsworth's *Peter Bell*.

37. Such facts imply that the desolate country, as well as the blast from Roland's horn, may be regarded as indefinitely symbolic.

38. For example, see Symons, *Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning*, 1 86, p. 103.

39. The richness of the background in *Kubla Khan* will be more apparent when Dr. J.L.Lowes' studies in Coleridge are published.

40. When he called it a "fantasy," he undoubtedly intended, in his usual manner, that the word should imply a great deal; but just what he meant it to imply we cannot be sure.

41. It may be that Browning, sharing somewhat in a Victorian reaction to the Romantic Movement, was actually ashamed to confess a vision origin for his poem.

42. The psychological background of this paper is of a very simple and fundamental sort, representing the consensus of modern opinion rather than any particular hypothesis. See, for example, such conservative texts as : Walsh, W.S., *The Phychology of Dreams*, N.Y. 1920, esp. pp. 17, 48, 55; Jastrow, J., *The Subconscious*, Houghton Mifflin, 1906, esp. pp. 138,. 179, 188, 223f. ; Long, C.E., *Collected Papers on the Phychology of Phantasy*, esp. pp. 20-24; Arnold-Forster, *Studies in Dreams*, Unwin, London, 1921, esp. pp. 20, 96, 121, 122, 168.

6
THE LIFE OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI, FLORENTINE PAINTER
[c. 1406-1469]

Fra Filippo di Tommaso Lippi, a Carmelite, was born in Florence in a main street called Ardiglione below the Canto alla Cuculia and behind the monastery of the Carmelite friars, and, after the death of his father Tommaso, at the age of two he was left in poverty without anyone to care for him, since his mother had also died not long after giving birth to him. Thus, he was raised by his aunt, Mona Lapaccia, the sister of his father Tommaso, who experienced great hardship in providing for him, and when she could no longer sustain the costs, and since he had already reached the age of eight, she made him a friar in the above-mentioned monastery at the Carmine Church.[1] There he showed himself as skilful and resourceful in manual labour as he was slow in his studies and ill-suited for letters; as a result, he never really tried to apply his mind to them and never felt any enthusiasm for them. This boy, who was called by his secular name, Filippo, was placed with the other novices under the guidance of the master who taught grammar in order to see what he might learn to do, and, rather than studying, he never did anything but mark up his books and those of his fellow novitiates with crudely drawn figures. Thus, the prior decided to give Filippo every opportunity and encouragement to learn how to paint.



Madonna and Child *by Fra Filippo Lippi*

In that time, Masaccio's chapel had just been painted in the Carmine Church, and because of its great beauty it pleased Fra Filippo very much, and so, as a pastime, he visited it every day; and he practised continuously in the company of many other young men who were always sketching there, so far surpassing the others in skill and knowledge that it was taken for granted he would certainly in time create marvellous things. But both in his youth and in his maturity, Fra Filippo produced so many praiseworthy works that it was a miracle. And before very long, he executed a painting in *terra verde* in the cloister near Masaccio's Consecration of a pope confirming the rule of the Carmelites;[2] on many of the walls of the church, Fra Filippo painted frescos in various places, in particular a Saint John the Baptist and some scenes from his life. And thus, his work grew better each day, and he had acquired Masaccio's touch to such an extent that his own works greatly resembled

those of Masaccio himself, and caused many people to say that Masaccio's spirit had entered Fra Filippo's body. On a pillar in the church near the organ, he painted the figure of Saint Martial, which brought him boundless fame, since it could be compared with the works that Masaccio had painted. Hearing himself highly praised by everyone, he boldly threw off his monk's habit at the age of seventeen.[3]

One day when he was in the March of Ancona amusing himself with some of his friends in a small boat on the ocean, they were all captured by the Moorish galleys that prowled in those waters, seized, and carried off to Barbary, where each one was placed in chains and held as a slave—and there Fra Filippo remained in great discomfort for eighteen months. But one day Filippo, who was familiar with his owner, decided to take the opportunity to draw his portrait, and so he took a burnt coal from the fire and sketched him full length in his Moorish clothing upon a white wall. The other slaves told their owner about this, for since neither design nor painting was employed in those parts they all thought it was a miracle, and this was the cause of his liberation from the chains which held him captive for so long. Truly, it is a glorious tribute to the great skill of painting that it caused someone with the legal authority to condemn and punish to do exactly the opposite and, instead of torture and death, he was led to bestow compassion and freedom.

Later, after he had done some works in colour for his owner, he was brought safely to Naples, where for King Alfonso, then Duke of Calabria, he painted a tempera panel in the chapel of the castle where the guard is now posted.[4] Afterwards, he had the desire to return to Florence, where he stayed for several months, and he worked for the nuns of Sant's Ambrogio on a most beautiful panel for the main altar, which won him the gratitude of Cosimo de' Medici, who became his very close friend.[5] He also did a panel painting in the chapter house of Santa Croce*, and another in which he depicted the Nativity of Christ was placed in the chapel in the Medici palace;[6] he also worked for Cosimo's wife on a panel with the same Nativity scene, along with the figures of Christ and Saint John and Baptist, which were to be placed in the hermitage of Camaldoli in one of the hermit's cells dedicated to Saint John the Baptist which she had decorated as an act of piety;[7] and finally, he did some scenes which Cosimo sent as a gift to Pope Eugenius IV of Venice,[8] a work which earned for Fra Filippo great favour with the pontiff.

It is said Filippo was so lustful that whenever he saw women she pleased him, he would give them all his possessions just to have them, and if he could not, as a middle course, he cooled the flames of his amorous passion by talking to himself while painting their portraits. He was so obsessed by this appetite that when he was in such a libidinous humor he paid little or no attention to the projects he had undertaken. On one such occasion, Casimo de' Midici, having commissioned him to do a work in his home, locked him inside so that he would not leave the house and waste time, but one evening after Filippo had remained there for two days, he was driven by his amorous—or rather, his bestial-desires—-to cut up some sheets from his bed into strips with a pair of scissors, and, once he had lowered himself out of a window, he pursued his pleasures for many days. And when he did not find him, Cosimo conducted a search for him and finally brought him back to work, and from that time on, he gave Filippo the freedom to come and go as he pleased, very much regretting having shut him up inside, considering Filippo's madness and the dangers he might encounter. Thus, in the future Cosimo always tried to restrain Filippo with acts of kindness, and he was accordingly served by Filippo with even greater readiness. And Cosimo always used to declared that rare geniuses are celestial forms and not beasts of burden.

Fra Filippo did a panel painting in the Church of Santa Maria Primerana on the piazza in Fiesole, in which he depicted the Annunciation of Our Lady with the greatest care and in which the figure of the angel is so beautiful that it truly seems to be a celestial being. For the nuns of the Murate, he did two panels; one of the Annunciation, placed on the main altar, and the other on an altar in the same church, which

contained scenes from the lives of Saint Benedict and Saint Bernard; and in the Palazzo della Signoria, he painted a panel of the Annunciation over a door as well as a panel of Saint Bernard over another door of the same palace; and in the Sacristy of Santo Spirito in Florence, he painted a –panel depicting Our Lady surrounded by angels with saints on the sides—-a rare work and one which has always been held in the highest veneration by our own masters today.[9]

In the chapel of the trustees of the Works Department of San Lorenzo, Fra Filippo did a panel with another Annunciation,[10] and in the Della Stufa Chapel, he left another which is incomplete. In a chapel in the Santi Apostoli Church of the same city, Fra Filippo painted a panel containing some figures grouped around a Madonna, and in Arezzo, for Messer Carlo Marsuppini, he did the panel in the Chapel of Saint Bernard at the monastery of Monte Oliveto depicting the Coronation of Our Lady with many saints surrounding Her, a work which has retained its freshness and seems only just now to have been finished by Fra Filippo.[11] When he was working on this panel, Messer Carlo warned him to take care when he painted the hands, since many of his works had been criticized for this reason. Thus, when Fra Filippo painted hands from that time on, he covered them up with draperies or some other invention in order to avoid such criticism. In this work, he did an actual portrait of Messer Carlo. For the nuns of the Annalena in Florence, he painted a panel of the Nativity,[12] and also in Padua some of his works can still be seen.[13] He sent to Rome two small scenes which he painted with tiny figures for Cardinal Barbo, both splendidly painted and carefully executed. Fra Filippo certainly painted with marvellous grace giving his works, the most exquisite finish and harmony, and, for this reason, he has always been celebrated with the highest praise by artisans of quality and by modern masters, and as long as the exquisite works to which his many labours gave birth survive the ravages of Time, he will be held in the highest esteem in every century.

In Prato near Florence, where he had some relatives, he remained for many months, working throughout the entire district on a number of projects along with Fra Diamante of the Carmine[14] who had been his companion when they were novices together. Then, the nuns of Santa Margherita gave him the project of painting the panel for the main altar, and one day while he was at work on it, he caught sight of the younger daughter of Francesco Buti, a Florentine citizen, who was living there either as a ward or as a nun. Once Fra Filippo cast his eye on Lucrezia (for that was the girl's name), who had the most beautiful grace and bearing, he was so persistent with the nuns that they allowed him to paint her portrait in order to use it in a figure of the Madonna for the work he was completing for them. This opportunity caused him to fall even more deeply in love, and he then made arrangements, using various means, to steal Lucrezia away from the nuns, leading her away from the convent the very day that she was going to see the showing of the Girdle of Our Lady, a relic greatly venerated in that town. As a result, the nuns fell into disgrace over the affair, and her father Francesco was never happy again and did everything he could to have her back. But either out of fear or some other reason, she never wanted to return, and, instead, she stayed with Filippo, for whom she bore a male child who was also called Filippo and later became like his father, a most excellent and famous painter.[15]

There are two of Fra Filippo's panel paintings in the church of San Domenico in Prato, as well as a Madonna in the choir screen of the church of San Francesco, which was removed from where it originally stood, and, so as not to ruin it, they cut it out of the wall upon which it had been painted, and then, bound to a wooden framework, it was transferred to an inner wall of the church, where it can still be seen today. And over a well in the courtyard of the Ceppo of Francesco di Marco, there is a little panel by Fra Filippo which contains a portrait of Francesco di Marco, who was the creator and founder of that pious institution.[16] In the parish church of the same town, he painted a small panel over the side door, on the way up the stairs, depicting the death of Saint Bernard, who is restoring to health a great many cripples as they touch his coffin; there are also friars who mourn their dead master, and it is a marvellous thing to see the skill and naturalness with which he rendered the beautiful

expressions on their faces in their sad lamentation. Some of the monks' cowls display the most beautiful folds and deserve endless praise for their fine design, colouring, composition, grace, and proportion, which are obviously the work of Fra Filippo's extremely delicate hand. In order to have a memorial of him, the trustees of the Works Department of the same parish church commissioned Fra Filippo to paint the chapel of the main altar; he exhibited so much of his talent in this work that besides its excellence and craftsmanship, there are garments and heads which are wholly admirable. In these frescos, he painted his figures larger than life, thus introducing modern artisans to the method of working on a large scale typical of the style of our own day. By clothing some of the figures in garments which were not customary in that period, he began to encourage others to abandon a simplicity that can more readily be termed old fashioned in keeping with the style of antiquity. In this work are scenes from the life of Saint Stephen, the titular saint of the parish church, painted in sections upon the wall on the right side, that is, the Disputation, the Stoning, and the Death of this first martyr. Fra Filippo showed such zeal and fervour in Saint Stephen's face as he disputes with the Jews that it is difficult to imagine it, much less express it, along with the hatred, contempt, and anger in the faces and poses of these Jews who see themselves vanquished by him; he made the bestiality and rage of those who murder him with stones even more obvious, showing some seizing large stones while others pick up smaller ones, with a horrible gnashing of teeth and gestures that are all cruel and violent. And none the less, during this terrible attack, Saint Stephen, confidently turning his face towards Heaven, is seen praying to the Eternal Father with the greatest charity and fervour for the very men who are killing him. There are certainly beautiful ideas which should make other painters realize the importance of invention and knowing how to express emotions in painting. Fra Filippo observed these things so well that the figures of the men who are burying Saint Stephen are depicted in such sorrowful poses and their faces so tormented by unrestrained weeping that it is hardly possible to gaze upon them without being moved.[17]

On the other side of the chaple, Fra Filippo painted scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist: the Birth, the Preaching in the Wilderness, the Baptism, the Feast of Herod, and the Beheading; the divine spirit is evident in Saint John's face as he preaches, while the various movements of the crowd listening to him—both men and women—express the joy and sorrow of all those caught up and absorbed by his teachings. Beauty and kindness can be seen in the Baptism, and in the Feast of Herod, the sumptuousness of the meal, the agility of Herodias, the amazement of the guests, and their immeasurable sorrow as the severed head is presented in a bowl are all apparent. Around the banquet table, countless figures can be seen in very beautiful poses with garments and facial expressions that are well executed, including a portrait of the artist clad in black in a priest's habit, done with the aid of a mirror, while in the scene where Saint Stephen is being mourned, Fra Filippo depicted his pupil Fra Diamante. And in truth, this painting is the most excellent of all his works, not only for the reasons mentioned above but also because he executed his figures somewhat larger than life. This encouraged those who came after him to paint on a larger scale. Fra Filippo was so highly esteemed for his good qualities that the many other blameworthy things he did were compensated for by his rare talent. In this same work, he also did a portrait of Messer Carlo, Cosimo de' Medici's natural son, who was at that time provost of the church, which received many gifts from him and his family.

After Fra Filippo had completed this work in the year 1463, he painted a tempera panel containing a most beautiful Annunciation in the church of San Jacopo of Pistoia for Messer Jacopo Bellucci, who is seen in this work in a very lively portrait. In the home of Pulidoro Bracciolini, there is a painting of the Nativity of the Madonna by his hand; in the Offices of the Eight in Florence, there is a lunette painted in tempera containing a Madonna with Child; in the home of Lodovico Caponi, in another painting, there is a very beautiful Madonna; and in the home of Bernardo Vecchietto—a Florentine gentleman whose virtue and goodness are so great that I

hardly know how to describe them—there is a beautiful little portrait of Saint Augustine in his study by Fra Filippo. But even better than this is the Saint Jerome in Penitence of the same size in Duke Cosimo's wardrobe.[18] And if Fra Filippo's paintings exhibit rare beauty, he surpassed even himself in his small pictures, for he painted them so gracefully and beautifully that they could not be better, as we can see in the predellas of all his panel paintings. In short, he was such a great painter that in his own day no one surpassed him and only a few have done so in our own times, and not only has Michelangelo always praised him, but he has even imitated him in many ways. He also did a panel for the church of San Domenico Vecchio in Perugia, portraying the Madonna, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Louis and Saint Anthony Abbot, which was later placed on the main alter.[19] Messer Alessandro degli Alessandri, then a knight and a friend of his, had him paint a panel for the church in his villa at Vincigliata on the hillside near Fiesole which depicts Saint Laurence and other saints and includes portraits of Alessandro and two of his sons.[20]

Fra Filippo always liked to befriend cheerful people and he always lived a happy life. He taught the art of painting to Fra Diamante, who did many pictures for the Carmine Church of Prato; by imitating Fra Filippo's style, Fra Diamante did himself great honour, for he reached the height of perfection. Those who studied with Fra Filippo in their youth include Sandro Botticelli; Pesello; Jacopo del Sellaio, the Florentine, who painted two panels in tempera for the church of San Frediano and one for the Carmine Church; and countless other masters to whom Fra Filippo lovingly taught this art.[21]

Fra Filippo lived honourably from his labours and spent exceptional amounts on his love affairs, which he continued to enjoy throughout his life up to the time of his death. Because of Cosimo de' Medici, he was asked by the community of Spoleto to do the chapel in the main church dedicated to Our Lady, on which he made good progress, working together with Fra Diamante, but before he could finish it, he was overtaken by death. It is said that as he was pursuing one of those blessed love affairs to which he was so inclined, some of the relatives of the woman with whom he was involved had him poisoned. Fra Filippo met his end in 1438,[22] and in his will he left his son Filippo in the care of Fra Diamante. His son, a boy of ten, learned the art of painting from Fra Diamante, with whom he returned to Florence. Fra Diamante took along with him the 300 ducats that the community still owed them, using it to purchase a number of things for himself but giving only a small portion to the young boy. Filippo was placed with Sandro Botticelli, at that time considered to be a very fine master. And the old painter was buried in a tomb of red and white marble erected by the people of Spoleto in the church where he had painted.

Fra Filippo's death grieved his many friends but most particularly Cosimo de' Medici and Pope Eugenius, who had hoped to give Fra Filippo a dispensation while he was still alive so that he could take Lucrezia di Francesco Buti as his legitimate wife.[23] But since Fra Filippo preferred to live and to pursue his appetites as he pleased, he did not accept the offer. While Pope Sixtus us IV was living, Lorenzo de' Medici, who had been made an ambassador of Florence, went to Spoleto to ask the community for the body of Fra Filippo in order to bury it at Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence. But they told him that Spoleto lacked any monuments of note, especially those to distinguished men, and asked Lorenzo as a favour to leave his body there in order to honour their town, adding that Florence had such an infinity of distinguished men, almost a superfluity, that they could manage to live without this one; and so Lorenzo did not obtain what he wanted. However, later on, since Lorenzo had resolved to honour Fra Filippo in the best way he could, he sent his son Filippino to Rome to paint a chapel for the Cardinal of Naples. On his way through Spoleto, Filippino, who had been commissioned by Lorenzo, erected a marble tomb for him under the organ over the sacristy, on which he spent one hundred gold ducats disbursed by Nofri Tornabuoni, director of the Medici bank...[24]

That Fra Filippo was a very fine draughtsman is evident in our book containing the drawings of the most famous painters, most especially in some sheets containing the design for the panel painting in Santo Spirito, as well as others for the chapel in Prato.

THE END OF THE LIFE OF FRA FILIPPO, FLORENTINE PAINTER

Notes:

1. -at the Carmine Church: Fra Filippo apparently took his vows in 1421
2. the rule of the Carmelitqies: the pope probably represented Eugenius IV who modified the rules of the order in 1432; Massaccio's fresco was whitewashed over, with fragments being discovered in 1860.
3. *at the age of seventeen*: Fra Filippo may have left the Florentine monastery by 1432, but he never renounced his vows or the wearing of his habit.
4. *the guard is now posted*: painted not in Naples but in Florence in 1457 and later sent to the king; the central panel has since been lost.
5. *his very close friend*: representing the Coronation of the Virgin, this work is now in the Uffizi Museum in Florence (dated 1441-7).
6. *chapter house of Santa Croce: c.* 1442-5, now in the Uffizi.
7. *in the Medici palace;* now in Berlin, this *Nativity* may be dated around 1459. the date Benozzo Gozzoli did the fresco cycle decorating the chapel.
8. *act of piety*: the work was actually commissioned by Lucrezia Tornabuoni, wife of Piero de' Medici, in 1463 and is now in the Uffizi.
9. *eugenius IV of Venice*: pope from 1431 to 1447.
10. *our own masters today*: commissioned in 1437; the main section of the panel is in the louvre, while the predella is in the Uffizi Museum.
11. *another Annunciation*: completed around 1440 and still in San Lorenzo.
12. *by Fra Filippo*: now in the Vatican Museum and datable around 1445.
13. *of the Nativity*: done around 1455 and now in the Uffizi.
14. *still be seen*: Fra Filippo was in Padua around 1434, but his frescos there have been lost.
15. *Fra Diamante of the Carmine*: Fra Diamante di Feo da Terranova Bracciolini (1430-c. 1439), another Carmelite monk who worked with Filippo in Prato and later in Spoleto.
16. *famous painter*: Lucrezia Buti (b. 1435) entered the convent in 1454 as a nun (not a ward) along with her sister Spinetta; she left with Filippo, accompanied by Spinetta and three other nuns, returning towards the end of 1458, but again leaving in 1461, once again with her sister. Her father Francesco died in 1450 and consequently could not even have known of this scandalous affair. Their son was Filippino Lippi (c. 1457-1504), whose life is treated in Vasari's complete *Lives.*
17. *that pious institution*: Francesco di Marco Datini (d. 1410), immortalized by Iris Origo as 'the merchant of Parto', was the town's foremost citizen and businessman. The Ceppo, a charitable trust taking its name from the log into which contributions were placed, is sill in existence today, and the painting – containing the Madonna and Child, Saints Stephen and John the Baptist. with the donor Francesco Datini and other men at their feets- is now in the Museo di Prato. Filippo was paid for this work in 1453.
18. without being moved: Fra Angelico was first asked to execute this fresco cycle, but when he refused, the choice fell on Fra Filippo, who began work in 1452. The scenes in Prato's Duomo represent the Four Evangelists and stories from the lives of Saint John and Saint Stephen.
19. *in Duke Cosimo's wardrobe*: Vasari has mistakenly identified Botticelli's portrait of Saint Augustine (now in the Uffizi) as a painting by Fra Filippo; the portrait he mentions of Saint Jerome actually contains the portraits of Jerome and Francis and is attributed by some scholars to Pesellino (1422-57) rather than to Fra Filippo.

on the main altar: commissioned in 1451 but since lost.

20. *and two of his sons*: done between 1443 and 1445 and now located in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the panel represented Saint Laurence between Saints Cosmas and Damian with three donors of the Alessandri family.
21. *taught this art:* Jacopo del Sellaio (1442-93)
22. *in 1438*: Fra Filippo arrived in Spoleto to decorate the Duomo in 1466 and began work by 1467; his death in 1469 was not caused (as Vasari reports) by poisoning.
23. *as his legitimate wife*; neither man was alive when Fra Filippo died. The pope who actually gave a dispensation to Fra Filippo was Pius II (1458-64).
24. *director of the Medici bank*.....: a Latin epitaph composed by Angelo Poliziano for Fra Filippo has been omitted from this edition.

7
MEDITATIONS IN TIME OF CIVIL WAR
W.B.YEATS

I
Ancestral Houses

SURELY among a rich man's flowering lawns,
Amid the rustle of his planted hills,
Life overflows without ambitious pains;
And rains down life until the basin spills,
And mounts more dizzy high the more it rains
As though to choose whatever shape it wills
And never stoop to a mechanical
Or servile shape, at others' beck and call.

Mere dreams, mere dreams! Yet Homer had not sung
Had he not found it certain beyond dreams
That out of life's own self-delight had sprung
The abounding glittering jet; though now it seems
As if some marvellous empty sea-shell flung
Out of the obscure dark of the rich streams,
And not a fountain, were the symbol which
Shadows the inherited glory of the rich.

Some violent bitter man, some powerful man
Called architect and artist in, that they,
Bitter and violent men, might rear in stone
The sweetness that all longed for night and day,
The gentleness none there had ever known;
But when the master's buried mice can play,
And may be the great-grandson of that house,
For all its bronze and marble,'s but a mouse.

O what if gardens where the peacock strays
With delicate feet upon old terraces,
Or else all Juno from an urn displays
Before the indifferent garden deities;
O what if levelled lawns and gravelled ways
Where slippered Contemplation finds he ease
And Childhood a delight for every sense,
But take our greatness with our violence?

What if the glory of escutcheoned doors,
And buildings that a haughtier age designed,
The pacing to and fro on polished floors
Amid great chambers and long galleries, lined

With famous portraits of our ancestors;
What if those things the greatest of mankind
Consider most to magnify, or to bless,
But take our greatness with our bitterness?

II
My House

An ancient bridge and a more ancient tower,
A farmhouse that is sheltered by its wall,
An arce of stony ground,
Where the symbolic rose can break in flower,
Old ragged elms, old thorns innumerable,
The sound of the rain or sound
Of every wind that blows;
The stilted water-hen
Crossing stream again
Scared by the splashing of a dozen cows;
A winding stair, a chamber arched with stone,
A grey stone fireplace with an open hearth,
A candle and written page.
I *Penseroso's* Platonist toiled on
In some like chambr, shadowing forth
How the daemonic rage
Imagined everything,
Benighted travellers
From markets and from fairs
Have seen his midnight candle glimmering.

Two men have founded here. A man-at-arms
Gathered a score of horse and spent his days
N this tumultuous spot,
Where through long wars and sudden night alarms
His dwindling score and he seemedcastaways
Forgetting and forgot;
And I, that after me
My bodily heirs may find,
To exalt a lonely mind,
Befitting emblems of adversity.

III
My Table

Two heavy trestles, and a board
Where Sato's gift, a chngeless sword,
By pen and paper lies,
That it may moralise
My days out of their aimlessness,
A bit of an embroidered dress
Covers its wooden sheath.
Chaucer had not drawn breath
When it was forged . In Sato's house,
Curved like new moon, moon-luminous,
It lay five hundred years.
Yet if no change appears
No moon; only an aching heart
Conceives a changeless work of art.
Our learned men have urged
That when and where 'twas forged

A marvellous accomplishment,
In painting or in pottery, went
From father unto son
And through the centuries ran
And seemed unchanging like the sword.
Soul's beauty being most adored,
Men and their business took
The soul's unchanging look;
For the most rich inheritor,
Knowing that none could pass Heaven's door
That loved inferior art,
Had such an aching heart
That he, although a country's talk
For silken clothes and stately walk,
Had waking wits; it seemed
Juno's peacock screamed.

IV
My Descendans

Having inherited a vigorous mind
From my old fathers, I must nourish dreams
And leave a woman and a man behind
As vigorous of mind, and yet it seems
Life scarce can cast a fragrance on the wind,
Scarce spread a glory to the morning beams,
But the torn petals strew the garden plot;
And there's but common greenness after that.

And what if my descendants lose the flower
Through natural declension of the soul,
Through too much business with the passing hour,
Through too much play, or marriage with a fool?
May this laborious stair and this stark tower
Become a roofless ruin that the owl
May build in the cracked masonry land cry
Her desolation to the desolate sky.

The Primum Mobile that fashioned us
Has made the very owls in circles move;
And I, that count myself most prosperous,
Seeing that love and friendship are enough,
For an old neighbour's friendship chose the house
And decked and altered it for a girl's love,
And know whatever flourish and decline
These stones remain their monument and mine.

V
The Road at My Door

An affable Irregular,
A heavily-built Falstaffian man,
Comes cracking jokes of civil war
As though to die by gunshot were
The finest play under the sun.

A brown Lieutenant and his men,
Half dressed in national uniform,

Stand at my door, and I complain
Of the foul weather, hail and rain,
A pear-tree broken by the storm.

I count those feathered balls of soot
The moor-hen guides upon the stream,
To silence the envy in my thought;
And turn towards my chamber, caught
In the cold snows of a dream.

VI
The Stare's Nest by My Window

The bees build in the crevices
Of loosening masonry, and there
The mother birds bring grubs and flies.
My wall is loosening; honey-bees,
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

We are closed in, and the key is turned
On our uncertainty; somewhere
A man is killed, or a house burned,
Yet no clear fact to be discerned;
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

A barricade of stone or of wood;
Some fourteen days of civil war;
Last night they trundled down the road
That dead young soldier in his blood:
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare;
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love; O honey-bees,
Come build in the empty house of the stare.

VII
I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart's Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness

I climb to the tower-top and lean upon broken stone,
A mist that is like blown snow is sweeping over all,
Valley, river, and elms, under the light of a moon
That seems unlike itself, that seems unchangeable,
A glittering sword out of the east. A puff of wind
And those white glimmering fragments of the mist
sweep by.

Frenzies bewilder, reveries perturb the mind;
Monstrous familiar images swim to the mind's eye.

'Vengeance upon the murderers,' the cry goes up,
'Vengeance for Jacques Molay.' In cloud-pale rags, or
in lace,

The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,
Trooper belabouring trooper, biting at arm or at face,
Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading
wide

For the embrace of nothing; and I, my wits astray
Because of all that senseless tumult, all but cried
For vengeance on the murderers of Jacques Molay.

Their legs long, delicate and slender, aquamarine their
eyes.
Magical unicorns bear ladies on their backs.
The ladies close their musing eyes. No prophecies,
Remembered out of Babylonian almanacs,
Have closed the ladies' eyes, their minds are but a pool
Where even longing drowns under its own excess;
Nothing but stillness can remain when hearts are full
Of their own sweetness, bodies of their loveliness.

The cloud-pale unicorns, the eyes of aquamarine,
The quivering half-closed eyelids, the rags of cloud or
of lace,
Or eyes that rage has brightened, arms it has made lean,
Give place to an indifferent multitude, give place
To brazen hawks. Nor self-delighting reverie,
Nor hate of what's to come, nor pity for what's gone,
Nothing but grip of claw, and the eye's complacency,
The innumerable clanging wings that have put out the
moon.

I turn away and shut the door, and on the stair
Wonder how many times I could have proved my worth
In something that all others understand or share;
But O! ambitious heart, had such a proof drawn forth
A company of friends, a conscience set at ease,
It had but made us pine the more. The abstract joy,
The half-read wisdom of daemonic images,
Suffice the ageing man as once the growing boy.

8
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINETEEN
W.B.Yeats

I

MANY ingenious lovely things are gone
That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude,
Protected from the circle of the moon
That pitches common things about. There stood
Amid the ornamental bronze and stone
An ancient image made of olive wood—
And gone are Phidias' famous ivories
And all the golden grasshoppers and bees.

We too had many pretty toys when young:
A law indifferent to blame or praise,
To bribe or threat; habits that made old wrong
Melt down, as it were wax in the sun's rays;
Public opinion ripening for so long
We thought it would outlive all future days.
O what fine thought we had because we thought
That the worst rogues and rascals had died out.

All teeth were drawn, all ancient tricks unlearned,
And a great army but a showy thing;

What matter that no cannon had been turned
Into a ploughshare? Parliament and king
Thought that unless a little powder burned
The trumpeters might burst with trumpeting
And yet it lack all glory; and perchance
The guardsmen's drowsy chargers would not prance.

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
To crawl in her own blood; and go scot-free;
The night can sweat with terror as before
We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
And planned to bring the world under a rule,
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.

He who can read the signs nor sink unmanned
Into the half-deceit of some intoxicant
From shallow wits; who knows no work can stand,
Whether health, wealth or peace of mind were spent
On master-work of intellect or hand,
No honour leave its mighty monument,
Has but one comfort left: all triumph would
But break upon his ghostly solitude.

But is there any comfort to be found?
Man is in love and loves what vanishes,
What more is there to say? That country round
None dared admit, if such a thought were his,
Incendiary or bigot could be found
To burn that stump on the Acropolis,
Or break in bits the famous ivories
Or traffic in the grasshoppers or bees.

II

When Loie Fuller's Chinese dancers enwound
A shining web, a floating ribbon or cloth,
It seemed that a dragon of air
Had fallen among dancers, had whirled them round
Or hurried them off on its own furious path;
So the Platonic Year
Whirls out new right and wrong,
Whirls in the old instead;
All men are dancers and their tread
Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.

III

Some moralist or mythological poet
Compares the solitary soul to a swan;
I am satisfied with that,
Satisfied if a troubled mirror show it,
Before that brief gleam of its life be gone,
An image of its state;
The wings half spread for flight,
'The breast thrust out in pride
Whether to play, or to ride
Those winds that clamour of approaching night.

A man in his own secret meditation
Is lost amid the labyrinth that he has made
In art or politics;
Some Platonist affirms that in the station
Where we should cast off body and trade
The ancient habit sticks,
And that if our works could
But vanish with our breath
That were a lucky death,
For triumph can but mar our solitude.

The swan has leaped into the desolate heaven:
That image can bring wildness, bring a rage
To end all things, to end
What my laborious life imagined, even
The half-imagined, the half-written page;
O but we dreamed to mend
Whatever mischief seemed
To afflict mankind, but now
That winds of winter blow
Learn that we were crack-pated when we dreamed.

IV

We, who seven years ago
Talked of honour and of truth,
Shriek with pleasure if we show
The weasel's twist, the weasel's tooth.

V

Come let us mock at the great
That had such burdens on the mind
And toiled so hard and late
To leave some monument behind,
Nor thought of the levelling wind.

Come let us mock at the wise;
With all those calendars whereon
They fixed old aching eyes,
They never saw how seasons run,
And now but gape at the sun.

Come let us mock at the good
That fancied goodness might be gay,
And sick of solitude
Might proclaim a holiday:
Wind shrieked—and where are they?

Mock mockers after that
That would not lift a hand maybe
To help good, wise or great
To bar that foul storm out, for we
Traffic in mockery.

VI

Violence upon the roads: violence of horses;
Some few have handsome riders, are garlanded
On delicate sensitive ear or tossing mane,
But wearied running round and round in their courses

All break and vanish, and evil gathers head:
Herodias' daughters have returned again,
A sudden blast of dusty wind and after
Thunder of feet, tumult of images,
Their purpose in the labyrinth of the wind:
And should some crazy hand dare touch a dau
All turn with amorous cries, or angry cries,
According to the wind, for all are blind.
But now wind drops, dust settles; thereupon
There lurches past, his great eyes without thou
Under the shadow of stupid straw-pale locks,
That insolent fiend Robert Artisson
To whom the love-lorn Lady Kyteler brought
Bronzed peacock feathers, red combs of her cc

MAEN-106/508

UTTAR PRADESH
RAJARSHI TANDON OPEN UNIVERSITY

MAEN-106
British Poetry

Block

4

The Modernist Poets

Block Introduction

UNIT 42
Modern British Poetry : An Introduction

UNIT 43
W.B.Yeats: Background, System, and Poetic Career Until 1910

UNIT 44
The Later Poetry of W.B. Yeats

UNIT 45
T.S. Eliot : *The Waste Land* (I)

UNIT 46
T.S. Eliot : *The Waste Land* (II)

UNIT 47
T.S. Eliot : *The Waste Land* (III)

APPENDIX
The Poems of W.B. Yeats
Adam's Curse
No Second Troy
Easter 1916
Sailing to Byzantium
Lapis Lazuli
and T.S. Eliot : *The Waste Land*

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BLOCK IX - INTRODUCTION:

As 1798 the year of publication of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge marks the beginning of the Romantic period, 1922 the year in which *The Waste Land* was published indicates the advent of the modern age in English poetry. *Ulysses* by the expatriate Irish novelist James Joyce (1882-1941) was also published the same year. Both are highly experimental in character.

You will read *The Waste Land* and about it in this block. Here a word about *Ulysses*. It deals with a day, now known as 'Bloomsday', in Joyces's life in Dublin. This was June 16, 1904 when he first walked with Nora Barnacle. She later became his wife. One of the principal characters in the novel Leopold Bloom parallels Odysseus the Homeric hero; Stephen Dedalus Telemachus and Molly, Leopold's wife, represents Penelope. Joyce's style is highly allusive; he made use of parody and a curious mixture of realism and fantasy and the technique of interior monologue or stream of consciousness. In 1939, Joyce went on to publish his still more 'difficult' work *Finnegan's Wake* where he makes use of puns and port-manteau words and a wide range of allusions. This novel presents the dream-sequence of a night of a Dublin tavern-keeper, Humphrey Chimpden Erwicker.

The early decade of the 20th century could paradoxically well be described as the best of times and the worst of times. The two World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939 to 1945 were expressions of human depravity. However, they churned out some of the best expressions of western culture. The high modernist phase of western culture could be considered to have been the product of the inter-war years in Europe.

It is interesting to recall that Albert Einstein's (1879-1955) most profoundly influential *The Foundation of the General Theory of Relativity* was published in 1916, six years before *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*. Einstein's theory challenged the fundamental ideas in physics such as those of mass, gravitation, energy and light. You should talk to some of your friends in physics in order to discover more about Einstein's contributions to physics and to early twentieth century culture in general.

You may be aware of the work of J.M. Keynes (1883-1946). Keynes's *A General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936) showed how unemployment could take place 'involuntarily'. Keynes's ideas were very influential all over the world until the mid-seventies.

Some of you may like to study the expression of modernism in painting; to begin with, especially in the works of Picasso (1881-1973). Study *First Steps* (1937) printed in this block almost as you would read a poem. Modernism - just like Romanticism and neo-classicism in the late 18th and 17th centuries - began as a cultural movement that influenced all aspects of European culture of which poetry was just one, though a very important field of expression.

However, in this block you will study the poetry of only two representative, as they are now called, high modernist poets -W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965). The first unit in this block will provide you with an introduction to the literary background of the poetry of this age. You should later, guided by your interest and subject to availability, read some other poets, critics and historians referred to by your teachers in the units.

UNIT 42 MODERN BRITISH POETRY : AN INTRODUCTION

Structure

42.0 Objectives
42.1 Introduction
42.2 End of the Nineteenth Century
42.3 The Georgians and the War Poets
42.4 Imagism
42.5 Yeats and Irish Poetry
42.6 Modernism, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot
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42.9 The Poetry of the Fifties
42.10 The Poetry of the Sixties and After
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42.0 OBJECTIVES

Our aim in this unit is to provide a map of modern British poetry. Starting with the end of the nineteenth century it tries to give you some idea of the major movements and figures making brief references to American poetry. This larger perspective will help you to understand an individual poet or a particular tendency in terms of literary tradition and historical change.

42.1 INTRODUCTION

Putting the High Modernist mode of the 1920s in the centre this unit examines its anticipations in the late Victorian era as well as its lasting influence up to the present day. At the same time, it considers the rival tendency to recover the native English tradition wary of the Franco-American element in Modernism. Each decade seems to react against the poetic idiom of the previous one. The Irish and Welsh situations are analysed separately but always in relation to the main stream.

42.2 THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The origins of modern British poetry are not unexpectedly to be found in the poetic cross-currents and developments towards the end of the nineteenth century. Although the reigning Victorian poetic fashions and standards were challenged from diverse directions, many modern poets were indebted to Browning, Hopkins, Hardy and the late Victorian, 'fin-de-siècle' poets. When modern poetry broke with the past, the rebellion became particularly visible in the rejection of conventionally bejewelled and smooth poetic diction which could no longer articulate the raw, disturbing experience already handled in the avant-garde novel of Lawrence and Joyce. The debt of Eliot's *The Waste Land* to Joyce's *Ulysses* is well known.

The point of affinity between Browning and modern poetry is in his obscurity and irregularity of diction. While this initially may have sprung from a mind prone to rambling parentheses and therefore often became a vice, it carried Browning's imagination through a rapid succession of associations. For Eliot and the moderns, he thus linked the past, the 'Metaphysical' poets, with a poet like Hopkins. Browning's ability to create the natural articulation of a voice, which necessitated syntactical obscurity, remains a permanent legacy to modern poetry.

The contrast that the poetry of Hardy and Hopkins offered to contemporary models lies in their use of ambiguity and shifting tonalities, their adoption of an ironic mode in short. At times, Hardy's poetry seems to be boldly experimental, characterised by frequent flashes of daring imagination. His experiments orchestrate the use of dialect words, abbreviations, archaisms, and 'kennings' (or verbal riddles in the style of Anglo-Saxon poetry), some of which would be found barbaric according to orthodox aesthetics. Nevertheless, Hardy functions largely within the traditional forms, presenting the drama of unresolved contradictions: he has himself described his poems as unadjusted impressions. If he tended to relate the local and individual to cosmic pessimism, he was characteristically tentative, holding his judgement in suspense. Ultimately his vision is ironic, involving the rapid and unsettling juxtaposition of images and counter-perceptions that anticipates modernist techniques.

Both Robert Bridges and Hopkins experiment with prosody. The former's attempts stem from Greek and Latin prosody, resulting in much charm and delicacy at the cost of poetic concentration and intensity. For these qualities we must go to Hopkins whose 'sprung rhythm,' borrowed from Anglo-Saxon prosody, was reinforced by fresh imagery and compact structure. By keeping the number of stressed syllables fixed and varying the number of unstressed syllables, Hopkins was able to revive the 'Metaphysical' mode linking it to modern poetry. This mode, submerged through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was characterised, as we all know, by ingenious analogy-the extended or cryptic 'conceit'–the yoking of contraries and irregular rhythm and diction. Such a sensibility was sharply different from the Romantic and Victorian, banishing the bogey of 'high seriousness' from the concept of poetry and locating the poem's value not in ideas or autobiography but in the psychological process of creation in the poet's mind. In this sense, the modern movement amounts to a rejection of expressivist categories in favour of the Aristotelian theory of mimetic representation, although the former were never suppressed. The modern poet's unconscious was a storehouse of heterogeneity stirring him obscurely, prompting him, as it were, to get rid of excessively accumulated experience. The disparateness and breadth of the cultural tradition made for impersonality of expression. The 'metaphysical' poet brought together dissimilars-secular and divine love, for instance-so that the discord plunged him deep into the theme, the greater awareness of the conflict demanding greater poetic technique.

Such are the larger implications of Hopkins's achievement of forging a style capable of conveying the discords and conflicts in his mind. Apart from the contrapuntal play of regular metrical form and irregular speech rhythms, the intermeshing of 'inscape' and 'instress' anticipates the techniques adopted in much modern poetry. If 'inscape' is a variation on the principle of individuation (as defined by Coleridge), a focus on *quidditas or haeccitas*–the thisness and whatness of things-'instress' is the force and energy holding together the 'inscape.' In Hopkins's concern with the outer reflection of a thing as a thing, we encounter the modern mind's awareness of objects in their essential particularity and its simultaneous search in and through artistic form, that is, the poem itself, of the universal.

In the 1880s and 1890s the interrelated and overlapping tendencies of aestheticism, impressionism, and symbolism contributed to the rejection of Victorian priggish moralism and scientific materialism. Aestheticism or the movement known *as l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake) stressed impersonal craftsmanship and a stylized rhetoric of passion. These new elements later became the basis for the ironic and somewhat cold detachment so distinctive of modernist poetry. Stylization was closely related to decadence, that is, the desire to understand the deeper and darker resources of the psyche guided in turn by a sense of overwrought aestheticism. The symbolist movement often aimed at suggesting an inner richness and mystery, and was thus part of the pervasive reaction against the positivist attitudes bred by technological smugness: it fell back upon symbols in order to capture the life above or below

pragmatic reality. In France, symbolist suggestiveness was contested by the Parnassian School of poetry with its emphasis on precise and economical description, of clinical self-observation.

The drive towards hard precision and clarity which represents perhaps the most decisive break with traditional poetic diction found expression above all in Imagism just before World War I. Accuracy, concreteness, and unadorned economy characterised the direct presentation of the objective world without discursive reflection. To this project an evocative dimension was added not only by symbolism but also by impressionism which loosened or dissolved an object into a group of impressions. The modern poet was thereby able to render the passage and dissolution of impressions so distinctive to the new, unsettling experience of the modern megalopolis, of rootless and heterogeneous cosmopolitan culture. Juxtaposing impressions or images apparently disconnected, the poet learnt from the arrangement of multiple planes in sculpture or movements in music the fundamental technique of discontinuous composition. This is how modernism held up a faithful mirror to fragmented reality and in doing so, produced an open *gestalt* or transformed, indeterminate structure of coherence. *The Waste Land* may be a mimesis of the heap of broken images that modern European civilization has been reduced to but the final effect, that is, the poem, remains a mastery of fragmentation.

42.3 THE GEORGIANS AND THE WAR POETS

The colloquial accents and unsentimental economy of Eliot and the later Yeats were, as we have already seen, anticipated at the turn of the century. These features are discernible even among the more conservative Georgian poets at the time of the First World War, although the excesses and exoticisms of decadence as well as the discontinuities of impressionism are absent. These poets include Rupert Brooke and Edward Thomas. Brooke was the most popular and typically Georgian who, somewhat ironically, began as a rebel against Victorian gentility with its fondness for vapid sweetness. But like many of his contemporaries, he could not break out of the orderly bounds of liberal humanism. Edward Thomas's strength lay in nature poetry, which he started to write on the encouragement of Robert Frost. Somewhat like Frost, Thomas meditates on a natural scene and using a plain and direct idiom, creates the effect of a questioning honesty resisting all temptations to abstract conceptual finality. Such a modernity of temperament was reinforced by a certain casual and homely intonation. The American Robert Frost's public image of a Yankee farmer-poet is not entirely unjustified: he turned against the Romantic tradition by choosing the localized authenticity of rural New England. Although the reader may miss in his or Thomas's work the impact of modern psychology, science, and politics, their use of the spoken language has been rightly admired for its unmistakeable modernity. Frost in particular was eminently successful in creating and modulating a fictional speaking voice.

The trauma of the First World War was first expressed by poets in the trenches challenging patriotic and military humbug; it then coloured the sensibility of an entire age. The later war poets like Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and Wilfred Owen increasingly saw the War as organized and motivated insanity: their poetry bore witness to the ugly truth seen through the eyes of the common soldier. In Sassoon, war encouraged a direct, colloquial vigour to reinforce the gruesome imagery, anger, and ridicule. Both Sassoon and Owen used realism in order to shock readers out of their complacency and expose the naked reality of dehumanized violence. After the war, Sassoon's poetry acquired an ironic quality through an unsettled juxtaposition of viewpoints. Owen, despite his unparalleled mastery of realistic detail, achieved a truly complex, sometimes visionary detachment and distancing. Isaac Rosenberg also attempted this imaginative distancing and often used a rapid succession of images. Thus we can see that war poetry prepared the ground for the Modernist poetry of the 1920s.

42.4 IMAGISM

Both in subject matter and form, modern American poetry was more innovative than British. While free verse (*vers libre*) did not last as a vogue, the technique of impressionistic juxtaposition without the links of smooth transition had a much longer life in Ezra Pound, and above all, in T.S. Eliot. Support came not only from the new insights of psychology and psychoanalysis but from the larger mood of a disintegrating civilization. The technique of discontinuous composition was highlighted in Imagism, particularly under the aegis of Pound who no doubt took his cue from T.E. Hulme and Ford Madox Ford. Hulme, in his *Speculations*, not only set out a philosophical basis for rejection of Romantic sentimental meliorism but appended some imagistic fragments as aesthetic equivalents of a new, austere classicism. A threefold Imagistic manifesto was announced in the magazine *Poetry* in March 1913: (i) direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective (ii) scrupulous avoidance of any word that did not contribute to the presentation (iii) rhythmical composition in the sequence of the musical phrase, not of a metronome.

Among the poets originally grouped as Imagist were Pound himself, Amy Lowell, H.D. Richard Aldington, and John Gould Fletcher. Soon divisions surfaced, especially between Pound and Amy Lowell; in any case, the anthologies often included poets like D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce. In the ultimate analysis, Imagism had a historical importance; it survives, variously modified, in the blood-stream of modern poetry, in the search for a hard precision and economy. Lawrence never really fitted the Imagist bill, despite his animal and flower poems, because although he valued accuracy and rhythmic freedom, he rebelled against what he perceived as the cerebral, somewhat academic impersonality of Imagist poetry. His eroticism and intensity authenticated immediate experience–the unceasing fecundity of life unharnessed of teleology–in the tradition of Walt Whitman.

42.5 YEATS AND IRISH POETRY

The Irish situation was different particularly because of the largely agrarian society and the complex history of Irish nationalism. The struggle against British colonialism not only produced political verse but extended to a search for identity through Irish history, mythology, folklore and peasant culture. The so-called 'Celtic Twilight' (actually the name of a collection of stories or sketches Yeats published in 1873) brought together poets like George Russell (AE) and Lionel Johnson along with Yeats. Its primitivism was, however, somewhat sentimental and nostalgic, and its opposition to scientific, rationalistic dogma was largely a Romantic survival. Although the poets turned away from the sunny, Southern European or Alpine landscape celebrated in Romantic poetry to authentically Celtic mists and overcast skies, the general mood was one of world-weariness and disillusionment prompting ultimately escapist journeys into a land of heart's desire, away from the joyless squalor of modern urban life.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Irish literature consciously moved away from dreaminess to a genuine historical awareness, a passionate vigour and coarseness of experience. This reaction was the hall-mark of the Irish Dramatic Movement. Some Irish writers like John Millington Synge went to peasant life for fresh sources of poetry. George Russell's criticism of Yeats's shadowy insubstantiality was vigorously endorsed by the latter himself when he broke decisively with his earlier poetic style in *The Green Helmet* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914).

The poetic life of W.B. Yeats falls into two phases, earlier and later, opposed to each other and yet linked by the same longing for escape from this world. If in his early poetry, Yeats wishes to escape to a dreamy fairyland, in the later poetry the nostalgia is of the spirit, for a world of pure ideas. The poetic influence of the Pre-Raphaelites

as well as his early interest in the occult fortified his opposition to mechanistic conceptions of the universe, an opposition that remains a common link among modern writers otherwise widely different from each other. Yeats's early poetry is characterized by somnolent rhythms, symbolist evocativeness and obscure mystic calls. What gave this mixture credibility was his peculiarly ambivalent Anglo-Irish identity: as a member of the Protestant Anglo-Norman Ascendancy, Yeats was passionately involved in Irish politics and yet distrustful of its nationalist zeal. He was no doubt drawn into politics by his unrequited love for Maud Gonne; at the same time, he remained aloof discovering a mythically resonant, tragic heroism in the futile Easter Rebellion.

The quest for identity led Yeats to resolve his own self into a dialectic, into the antithetical categories of self and soul. Socially he tried to locate himself in the declining aristocracy among the big houses and estates, ideologically bound to the peasant, the servant or the tramp against the emerging threat of a bourgeoisie that was relatively new to Ireland. Failure in love, practical experience, especially of running the Abbey Theatre and contempt for the *nouveau riche* brought in a sturdier note into his poetry chastened by bitterness and disillusionment. The discovery in himself of double selves was aided by the knowledge received at seances supposedly through the 'medium' of his wife; this knowledge grew into Yeats's philosophical system *A Vision* (1925; rev. ed. 1937). Here, as elsewhere, we encounter the central symbolism of interpenetrating gyres or cones and the phases of the moon. Along with the doctrine of the Mask, these metaphors enabled Yeats to impose a certain pattern or order on the history of Western civilization somewhat in the manner of Spengler.

Yeats's pursuit of a world of pure ideas, a Byzantine abstraction-monuments of unageing intellect-was anchored in the concrete vitality of the imagination. Thus his poetry dramatises the fundamental dichotomy of the flesh and the spirit on different levels: as a result, a dispassionately cold style unleashes passionate intensity by virtue of its magisterial control. From *The Tower* (1928) onwards, Yeats's system of opposed personae or split selves is largely unburdened of its occult trappings: it is as though in his last poems Yeats rises above his system to the existential conflict between affirmation and renunciation, art and nature, passion and conquest, old age and the disturbing promptings of the flesh.

42.6 MODERNISM, EZRA POUND AND T.S ELIOT

The High Modernist mode popular in British and American poetry from the early 1920s to the 1950s was of course dominated by Pound and Eliot. Modernist poetry was characterised by a prodigious appetite for assimilating the disparate and fragmentary experiences of a complex and heterogeneous civilization. Fin-de-siècle formalism and aestheticism, impressionism, symbolism and imagism all combined to produce the modernist mode. While we have to wait till the thirties for the poetry of political commitment, the impact of discoveries in psychology and anthropology are clearly discernible. Poetry attempted to explore the new territory of the irrational and associative surge of consciousness, neurosis, dream, and the Collective Unconscious with its storehouse of myth and archetype. This is why the poets adopted what has been described above (42.2) as the technique of discontinuous composition.

Pound's wide and disparate reading extended the range of modern poetry, especially in his intertextual use of literary traditions. Poetry, as he believed, must be as well written as prose. By 1911, his poetic idiom was relatively stripped of 'poetic diction': his syntax became more direct and natural. Apart from compression and excision, Pound concentrated on images against the uninspired abstractness of language. His Vorticism, as a movement, was a continuation of Imagism and its dynamic interplay of images. He moved to a non-mimetic model of the Image, a form produced by an emotional energy, a cluster, an arrangement of planes as in sculpture. After the War and the economic difficulties he went through, in ***Homage to Sextus Propertius***

(1934) Pound uses, over and above the concentrated economy, an ironic persona whose mental ability and emotional variety introduced a shifting point of view. There is even the pose of foppery and tone of self-deprecation associated with Jules Laforgue and Eliot. By the time of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) and the first seven Cantos (1915-20), the extraordinarily compressed, oblique, learned, elliptical, and allusive style had been well established. In these two works Pound uses the masks of two poets in order to produce a critique of contemporary European civilization. In comparison to the pictorial and musical avant-garde, however, he remained a little backward-looking and modishly archaic.

Pound's contributions to the modern movement derived more from his editorial and talent-scouting abilities. Real stylistic innovation came from T.S. Eliot even before he had come in contact with the former. In Eliot at last we encounter the fracturing and re-fashioning of received idiom that had been achieved in music and the visual arts. Largely on the basis of his reading of Baudelaire, Laforgue, and Jacobean drama, Eliot quite independently forged a style that not only surpassed Imagist practice but seamlessly incorporated the self-examining, self-deprecating persona timidly withdrawing from traditions of passionate immersion and confession. Such a persona or attitude was no doubt the legacy of Jules Laforgue. If discontinuous composition is the hall-mark of modernist poetry, then Eliot remains its finest practitioner. Moreover, what gives coherence to the so-called heap of broken images is an essentially musical structure of relationship between part and whole. Apart from music (or for that matter, sculpture), Eliot's use of an organized whole, a web of relationships, seems to have been inspired by the notion of *gestalt* in contemporary psychology. The *gestalt* psychologists believed that a random collection of marks or dots on a page would reveal a certain pattern or design to the observing spectator. If these marks were re-distributed continuously, the effect would never be that of disorder but of constantly renewed configurations. Thus we have in Eliot's poetry the genesis of a form that is harmonious without being closed or rigid, characterised, rather, by its appetite for inclusiveness.

Such a form is no doubt exemplified by *The Waste Land* (1922). But it is discernible even in the earliest poetry of Eliot as it was for him the aesthetic equivalent of fragmentation, rootlessness, and lack of belief in modern European civilization. From this viewpoint, not only is *The Waste Land* anticipated by 'Gerontion' or 'The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' but even the germ of *Four Quartets* (1943) contained within the early verse. In 'Prufrock' or 'The Portrait of a Lady,' sardonic self-deprecating attitudes located within a context of drab boredom, timidity, seediness, and sexual unease are juxtaposed with glimpses of horror and glory. This sets the tone for Eliot's masterly use of squalor and beauty in the *Sweeney* poems. The need for unremitting self-observation, for introspective distrust found its proper outlet in a withdrawal from passion related to the loss of faith and certitude in modern civilisation. Thus, in 'Gerontion' an accurate, authentic cosmopolitan setting dramatizes the shrivelled-up life of reminiscence produced by spiritual atrophy. We have in this poem a central pattern in Eliot's poetry: fear of the full-blooded, spontaneous urgency of life with its structure of desire, wish, and expectation leading to an astringent, ascetic renunciation prompted by the history of tainted, destructive passions that European civilization offers.

Even as Eliot veered towards conservative values and preoccupation with religious dogma through *Hollow Men* (1925) and *Ash Wednesday* (1930), stylistically he remained as innovative as ever. After his fairly successful experiments in verse drama, Eliot moved to the more contemplative, somewhat philosophical *Four Quartets* with its intertwined themes of time, experience, memory, communication and the possibilities of reconciliation. 'Burnt Norton,' the first quartet, seems to begin the polyphonic structure with abstract speculation and memories in a rose-garden. 'East Coker' is the name of the Somerset village from which Eliot's ancestors had emigrated to America, and the quartet thus takes us to the past. In 'The Dry Salvages' (a group of rocky islands off the coast of Massachusetts) Eliot's own lived past in

America is recaptured. Finally, in 'Little Gidding,' war-time England is related to the past of the village which had held a religious community in the seventeenth century and had its church destroyed by Oliver Cromwell's troops. The poem *Four Quartets* continues effectively to use the technique of discontinuous composition, the structure of music, and a subtly permeated self-reflexivity. We recognize through the moving drama of faith the old dry, ironic, detached persona, the unremitting self-observation and preoccupation with language, communication, and poetic form.

42.7 THE POETRY OF THE THIRTIES

As we move on to the 1930s, some changes from the Pound-Eliot era become noticeable at once, especially in the circle of W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, and Louis MacNiece. These poets turned against their predecessors' absorption in poetry as an autotelic art, and were influenced by the stark contrast between their privileged public-school upbringing and the spectre of economic depression and Fascism in Europe. Their fight against Fascism not only centred around the Spanish Civil War but extended to sympathy for Marxism and the achievements of the Russian revolution. By contrast, Eliot, Pound, and Yeats had in their different ways distrusted democratic tendencies in politics. As the focus shifted out of literary tradition or myth into social and political commitment, the poets of the Thirties rejected the discontinuous or disjointed style, a Franco-American import, in favour of a less obscure or gnarled idiom closer to native English speech. This reaction against esoteric poetry packed with recondite allusions aimed at an engagement in immediate and insistent problems. We could mention in passing 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. *New Verse*, a poetry magazine founded by Geoffrey Grigson in 1933 brought out an anthology in 1939 which foregrounded current 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 towards more traditional syntax, metres and forms like the sonnet, the heroic couplet, *terza rima*, and so on.

Apart from Marx, Freud was an important influence in the poetry of W.H. Auden, the outstanding poet of the generation. In *The Destructive Element*, Stephen Spender also believed in the fusion of Marx and Freud. From his earliest volume of verse, Auden struck a remarkably individual note but always within a traditional framework. Ideological de-mystification and psychoanalytic revelations led to the sense of a doomed civilization with constant references to disease and the death-wish, the latter symbolized as a mysterious Enemy. Even as the heroic and the modern are brought together, the imagery is ingeniously drawn by Auden from guerrilla warfare, ruined industry, railheads, and frontiers. Using light verse, parody, and the popular song, he was often successful in making the banal a vehicle of serious meanings. The flippancy may have been reminiscent of Eliot, dismissive of solemnity, but Auden betrays a self-protective irony and tonal uncertainty. As he progresses as a poet, he moves from a taut and elliptical style to an easier, more fluent one, but in the process he loses the pressure and urgency of feeling. Where the emotion or personal experience controls the technique, Auden is at his best. He is particularly good at poems starting with the mood of a place and expanding to general meditation-the technique of 'paysage moralise,' the use of geography and landscape to symbolize spiritual and mental states. After his emigration to America and the beginning of the Second World War, Auden shows a more serious and explicit concern with religion, and the place of Marx and Freud is taken by Kierkegaard and the modern Protestant theologians.

42.8 THE POETRY OF THE FORTIES

The Forties saw a reaction against the poetry of social reporting and political commitment in the surrealist, neo-romantic poetry of the New Apocalypse,

anthologized in *The White Horseman* (1941) and focussed almost exclusively on self-unravelling. Dylan Thomas set the example for this expressive style marked by mystery, inarticulate terrors, and a dream-like quality. In Thomas's early poetry there is almost a pantheistic presence of God in Nature, enabling him to relate vitally energies creative as well as destructive. A non-Welsh-speaking Welshman, he was influenced on the one hand by the Welsh bardic tradition with its verbal and metrical skills. On the other hand, Welsh Non-conformism made him confront the problems of sin and salvation. From his troubled personal life and embattled Welsh identity, Thomas extracted an elemental and innovative richness of vocabulary and diction that went much deeper than the concerns of the Auden circle. From July 1931 till November 1934 he composed *Eighteen Poems* and *Twenty-five Poems* on the basis of his localized experiences at Swansea. The spectre of impending death due to alcoholism coloured his later poetry but at the same time he never gave up the discipline of the craftsman, submitting himself to the restraining demands of narrative verse and drama. With *Deaths and Entrances* (1946) and the radio play *Under Milk Wood* (1954) his poetic reputation was established on a sure basis. Thomas, and to some extent poets like George Darker or G.S. Fraser, rejected the self-conscious, intellectualized, ironic style of modernism in favour of an intoxication with words, myths, and Gothic effects. But in comparison to the poetry of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound, that of even Dylan Thomas does not extend far beyond a combination of sex and the Bible, Freud and the Old Testament.

This neo-romantic style in its extreme forms was unnecessarily involved and prolix, emphasizing the mysterious, mystical and subconscious. When it influenced a later generation of poets like Kathleen Raine and Edwin Muir it was fortunately divested of its violence. Much before the Fifties finally rejected such 'apocalyptic' fashions, the finest challenge to the excesses and defects of this style came perhaps from the poetry of Keith Douglas whose untimely death in the Second World War was a major loss to British poetry. Although his linguistic economy and compactness became an urgent vehicle of a controlled and unblurred vision of death and mutability, his poetry found true recognition only in the Sixties.

42.9 THE POETRY OF THE FIFTIES

The Fifties were marked by rejection of the poetic of the previous decade. The process perhaps began with the wry conservatism of Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, and John Wain who were together at Oxford. Robert Conquest's influential anthology, *New Lines* (1956), brought in six other poets: Elizabeth Jennings, John Holloway, Thom Gunn, D.J. Enright, Donald Davie, and Conquest himself. Known as 'The Movement,' this body of poetry cultivated elegant perspicuity and economy against extravagantly figurative language and shapeless syntax of any kind. In place of theoretical systems and ideology, these poets chose withdrawal from intellectual, public issues; instead of plumbing the unconscious depths they attempted to operate on the register of ordinary and orderly commonsense. This has resulted often in a dry and somewhat stolid academicism, a poetry of the unenthusiastic imagination, as it has been called. But its primary importance lies in the play of intelligence and intelligibility, manifest in the skilful use of traditional metres and forms mixed with low-key speech rhythms and observation of daily detail in the middling sections of contemporary society largely excluded from modern poetry.

The most accomplished Movement poet, Philip Larkin, goes far beyond the manifesto in his use of deflationary rhetoric and teasingly casual irony. Larkin's early verse *The North Ship* (1945), suffers from rhetorical flourishes and an uneasy indebtedness to Yeats. He soon changes his poetic master, by-passing the supposed 'dislocations' of modernist diction and arriving at the poetry of Hardy. As a poet he opened up territories previously dismissed with contempt: provincial-suburban life with its humdrum values invites his cool, somewhat affectionate scrutiny. His poetic fame rests on *The Less Deceived* (1955) *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *The High Windows* (1974). If the emotional range appears to be narrow, the shortcoming is

redeemed not only by exemplary craftsmanship but also by a stark exposure of all wishful deceptions that keep us settled in life. Though not marked by defiance, subversive energy or literary allusions, his poetry offers a distillation of the bleakness and loneliness of modern life in a minor key.

Despite the importance of Larkin as a poet, the Movement and its allies signalled a withdrawal into insular parochialism and elegance bordering upon triviality. The return to traditional modes and styles often concealed a decline in vigour, range, complexity, and passion. As Kingsley Amis wrote in *Poets of the 1950s* (edited by D.J. Enright), 'Nobody wants any more poems about philosophers or paintings or novelists or art galleries or mythology or foreign cities or other poems.' In the same anthology, Philip Larkin, expressing his dislike of Mozart publicly, was more dismissive: he had no faith, he declared, in 'tradition' or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets.

42.10 THE POETRY OF THE SIXTIES AND AFTER

In the mid-Fifties some student poets met regularly in Cambridge to discuss their work. On the basis of this, Philip Hobsbaum founded 'The Group' in London including poets like George MacBeth, Peter Porter, Ted Hughes, and Alan Brownjohn. A more tightly knit circle than the Movement, it was opposed to the sedate formalist poetics of the latter: along with a distrust of polished irony and crystalline forms it took an interest in natural and violent imagery. Obsessively autobiographical in his best work, MacBeth was boldly experimental even if he was not always successful. Peter Porter made intelligently sardonic use of his status as an Australian, a compassionate outsider. He resisted the parochial tendencies in British poetry by allusions to European culture, and turned towards dream and the irrational resources of language under the influence of American poets like Wallace Stevens and John Ashbery.

In fact, American poetry, as we have seen, remained always more innovative and intellectually challenging. The Forties, for instance, saw the emergence of a new generation of poets in America whose influence extended fruitfully to the British poets of the Sixties. The most important of these American poets were Robert Lowell and John Berryman, along with their contemporaries and successors like Elizabeth Bishop, Theodore Roethke, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath. Lowell and Berryman, unlike the British poets, intelligently assimilated the legacy of the Pound-Eliot era although they broke with the conventions of impersonality in favour of personal experience captured usually on the verge of disintegration. Thus Lowell, in particular, beginning in a literary milieu, struggled with his bouts of mania towards what has come to be known as 'confessional' poetry, which directly influenced Sexton and Plath. Despite the obsession with psychoanalytic processes, Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959) remains a landmark in the poetic representation of self-dismantling (which of course is ultimately an authentically modern mode of self-making) in a language of stark, compelling power.

Sylvia Plath, a legatee of the 'confessional' tradition, settled in England after her marriage to Ted Hughes. Her proneness to suicide can be traced to the profound insecurities of her life brought on by her ambivalent attitude to parental authority. Even as she wrote out of a strange kind of terror and despair she was able to approach, through her masterly control of language, the calm centre of hysteria. Unlike Auden, she located her psychological crises in a larger social and historical context, the equivocating anxieties of gender in a patriarchal society. Her early poetry consisted largely of exercises or 'pastiches' of Dylan Thomas, Yeats, and Marianne Moore. From 1960 onwards, she was able to observe and analyse with unflinching honesty her imprisoned psyche, creating and exploring a surreal landscape specific to it. From her mingled response of fascinated terror of death she perilously extracted the heroic courage of liberation. She controlled her obsession with death by means of an intelligent use of rebirth or renewal already evident in her

first collection, *The Colossus* (1960), and her novel *The Bell-Jar* (1963). As she moved on to *Ariel* (1965), her last poems, another theme, that of redeeming the meaninglessness of existence through art, lends an existential headiness to her picture of disintegration.

The British poets of the Sixties were exposed not only to American 'confessional' poetry but also to the freewheeling and open-structured verse of the 'Beat' movement-the latter influenced the British 'pop' poets. From East European poets like Vasco Popa ((Yugoslavia) and Miroslav Holub (Czechoslovakia), the British poet could pick up elements of black comedy.

The resulting enlargement of poetic vision is seen in Ted Hughes and Thom Gunn. Hughes shattered the wry placidity of the Movement with his very first volume of poems *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), reviving, as it were, the Romantic concept of inspiration based in the instinctual and atavistic. His harsh, jagged, and abrasive style rejected urbane effects in favour of a turbulent energy and violence that at times go out of control. A serious interest in archaeology and anthropology gradually drew him towards the primitive, the exotic, and the alternative mythical traditions that lie behind *Crow* (1970). Even as he has extended his horizon, Hughes has remained rooted in Yorkshire life, returning to fresh and mundane country-life, to a regionalism that is in fact one of the common features of much recent British poetry, in *Gaudette* (1977) or *Remains of Elmet* (1979). Beginning with primordial savagery captured in language and imagery, particularly in his poems on caged or uncaged predatory animals, Hughes introduced a distancing irony as early as *Lupercal* (1966). The quasi-Darwinian struggle for survival is increasingly shorn of self-indulgent or sensational elements and fits into a relentlessly bleak landscape in *Wodwo* (1967). By the time of *Crow*, Hughes approximates to a Beckett-like grim and sardonic vision, a black comedy that nihilistically strips off all human pretensions. It is a bitter parody of all myths of Creation in which sexuality is not procreative but becomes a mutual devouring. The element of comic whimsy finds expression also in traditional metres and forms, especially in poems for children.

Like Hughes, Thom Gunn's poetic arrival was also explosive. In *Fighting Terms* (1954) and *The Sense of Movement* (1957) we encounter a reckless immersion in energy and 'happening' as opposed to timid and cautious wisdom. Although Gunn has been accused of admiring instinctual brutality, his untrammelled egotistical heroes articulate an essentially existential situation. His honesty and self-analysis lead to a shift in *My Sad Captains* (1961) to a more humane tone. The poetry that he produced under the influence of hallucinatory drugs only intermittently achieves a surreal insight. This weakening of poetic control is reflected in his later poetry where his honesty is diluted by sentimental nostalgia. Of late a note of nihilism and confused disillusionment has entered his poetry suggesting perhaps a turning point in the future.

Among his contemporaries, Geoffrey Hill seems to strike a different note by virtue of his religious preoccupation. He relates it to the history or memory of Europe and the more personal imperatives of memory through a dense intertextuality.

Despite the popularity of Dylan Thomas, Welsh poetry took much longer than Irish poetry to extract a new power from its native resources. The austere verse of R.S. Thomas, a Welsh clergyman, achieves this by bringing to life a bleak and arid landscape in which he describes the harshness of the farmer's life. Starting with Wales and peasant farmers in the priest's parish he reaches out to the experience of God. The peasants' mental vacancy that matches the emptiness of the setting reduces them to a dehumanizing existence: Thomas takes an unsentimental view of a community cut off from its nourishing traditions. The new directions in his later poetry like *H'm* (1972) suggest an extension of viewpoint beyond the Anglo-Welsh.

In recent decades, Northern Ireland has produced a new breed of powerful Irish poets. Both Derek Mahon and Paul Muldoon were part of the Belfast Group: both the poets attempt to situate the plight of growing up in Northern Ireland within a larger background. Mahon achieves this through his irony and sense of an apocalyptic bleakness. The opposition in Paul Muldoon between rural and cosmopolitan, an Irish dichotomy reminiscent of the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh, expresses itself in a tension between the Northern Irish Catholic identity and English literary tradition.

Although Seamus Heaney now lives in Southern Ireland, his poetic roots go back to the farms and bogs of Northern Ireland. As he vividly portrays Irish farm life with its skills and activities, the relationship with the land gives a rugged power to his verse, including his use of northern dialects and speech-accents. The bogs become a metaphor for the dark, subterranean deposits of history and the psyche. The evidence of ritualistic violence recently excavated enables him to relate the violent history of Northern Ireland to the Early Iron Age. Although Heaney's intellectual sources are different, his sense of artistic responsibilities recalls that of Yeats, even in the note of ambivalence and distancing from the violence.

On the basis of Viking deposits discovered in Dublin, Heaney opens up a link between Ireland and Scandinavia and constructs a 'northern' mythology in *North* (1975). But if his bog poems deal with pagan codes of revenge and ritual slaughter, that world is countered by poems highlighting childhood serenity and tender personal relationships. Under the strange beauty of the bog lie the archaeological layers of violence: this informs Heaney's unusual assurance in the power of the poetic imagination to transmute its raw, embedded sources into beauty. This confident artistic ego is reflected in the honesty of language and uninvolved, disinterested confrontation of political violence.

With *Field Work* (1979), Heaney moves in a new direction, towards the ordinary social world and its plain, conversational manner. From *Station Island* (1984) onwards, even as he returns to the somewhat traditional themes of the role and abiding value of poetry, he articulates the need both to face political violence and to be free of it. Yeats's example is further discernible in Heaney's search for wisdom and interweaving of personal memories with historical images. Memory not only plays a consolatory and absolving role but draws him into a sense of Catholic community. At the same time, his non-committal individuality pulls him in an opposite direction, as evident in *Sweeney Astray* (1983) and *The Haw Lantern* (1987): perhaps the anti-poetry of Eastern Europe has provided the impetus for a detached, hard economy.

42.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about the history of modern British poetry from the late Victorian age to the present day. You have seen how the search for precision and economy along with irony dominates the modernist movement. Political commitment or social reporting, neo-romanticism, and assertion of Englishness are some of the other interwoven themes.

42.12 EXERCISES

1. In what ways do Browning, Hardy and Hopkins anticipate modernity in poetry? (See 42.2)

2. Write short notes on i) aestheticism, ii) impressionism, iii) symbolism. (See 42.2 and 42.5)

3. Assess the contribution of the poets of the First World War to modern British poetry. (See 42.3)

4. Write short notes on: i) Imagism (see 42.4 and 42.2), ii) discontinuous composition (see 42.2, 42.4 & 42.6).

5. Bring out the Imagist elements in Eliot and Pound. (See 42.2, 42.4 & 42.6)

6. Write an essay on the speaking voice in modern poetry. (See 42.3 & 42.6; also 42.2, 42.5, 42.7, 42.9 & 42.10)

7. What in your view is Yeats's contribution to modern poetry? (See 42.5)

8. Write short notes on:

   i) the poetry of social reporting (see 42.7)
   ii) 'confessional' poetry (42.10)
   iii) neo-romanticism (42.8)
   iv) the rejection of modernism (see 42.9; also 42.8)
   v) the Movement (42.9)
   vi) the Group (42.10)
   vii) the theme of energy and the imagery of violence (42.10).

42.13 SUGGESTED READING

Alvarez, A. *The Shaping Spirit* (London, 1958)
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Brooks, Cleanth. *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill, 1939)
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Hamilton, Ian. *Poetry Chronicle* (London, 1973)
Leavis, F.R. *New Bearings in English Poetry* (rev. edn. London, 1950)
MacNiece, Louis. *Modern Poetry* (Oxford, 1938)
Pinto, V. de Sola *Crisis in English Poetry 1880-1940* (London, 1951)
Rosenthal, M.L. *The Modern Poets* (New York, 1960)
Scarfe, Francis. *Auden and After: The Liberatin of Poetry 1930-41* (London, 1942)
Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (London, 1958)
Wilson, Edmund. *Axel's Castle* (New York, 1931)
Contemporary Poets ed. James Vinson (London, 1975)
Great Writers of the English Language: Poets ed. James Vinson (London, 1979)
Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry ed. Ian Hamilton (Oxford, 1994)
Writers and Their Work (published by the British Council)

UNIT 43 W.B. YEATS: BACKGROUND, SYSTEM, AND POETIC CAREER UP TO 1910

Structure

43.0 Objectives
43.1 Introduction
43.2 The Quest for Irishness
43.3 Magic, Mythology, and Symbolism
43.4 A Less Dream-Burdened Will
43.5 Yeats's Ireland
43.6 The System: Mask, Moon, and Gyre
43.7 Poetic Career (1889-1910)
43.8 'Adam's Curse'
43.9 'No Second Troy'
43.10 Let Us Sum Up
43.11 Questions

43.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will introduce you to the historical and intellectual background to the poetry of W.B. Yeats, one of the most important poets of the twentieth century. It will also trace his poetic development up to 1910 since from around that time there is a sharp change in style. It will consider two poems from this early period for close reading.

43.1 INTRODUCTION

W.B. Yeats won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. His poetic career moves from the pre-modern to the modern: he was master of both the styles. Always interested in magic and the occult, Yeats challenged mechanistic conceptions of the universe by foregrounding the former along with Celtic mythology and symbolism. Soon enough the actual world enters into his poetry. He constructs a philosophical system in order to organize the anarchy of modern civilization. His entire poetic career is stamped with a dialectical schematism, essentially of flesh and spirit. Beginning with escape to a fairyland he searches for another kind of escape, into a world of pure ideas.

43.2 THE QUEST FOR IRISHNESS

W.B. Yeats was born in Ireland to John Butler Yeats, a painter, and Susan Pollexfen, who came from a family of shipowners. Through his father's family and the literary company that met at their house, Yeats was exposed early to the ferment of ideas and intellectual conversation in London and in Howth, near Dublin. By contrast, the Pollexfens offered an alternative model of instinct, physical prowess and practical wisdom. Yeats's father thought that the fusion was poetically fruitful for his son. This may well have been the basis for a cast of mind that habitually expressed itself in terms of polarities and antitheses. As Yeats himself has put it in *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), when we quarrel with others we produce rhetoric but when we quarrel with ourselves we produce poetry. His doctrine of the Mask, his lunar symbolism, and his symbol of the interpenetrating gyres of history are all characterised by a dialectical schematism: the self versus the anti-self, the new or dark moon versus the full moon, the widening and narrowing gyres. The schematism which helped Yeats order a disintegrating civilisation may have been prompted by the duality of his Anglo-Irish identity and reinforced by his reading of Blake, Swedenborg and ultimately the earlier Neo-Platonist thinkers. The existential antinomy of flesh and spirit finds resolution in Yeats's pursuit of passionate wisdom which promises deliverance from the disturbing aspects of the life of flesh unmitigated by the onset of old age.

His mother's family lived in Sligo, on the west coast of Ireland where, apart from London, he spent much of his youth. A few miles north of Sligo was the mountain of



Ben Bulben (immortalised in poems like 'Under Ben Bulben') under which was Drumcliff churchyard, Yeats's chosen place of burial. The Sligo landscape, evocatively captured in his early poetry, like 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' or 'The Stolen Child' is steeped in Gaelic folklore and superstition. As Yeats's notes to his *Collected Poems* explain, after *Crossways,* his subject matter, especially in *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889) became Irish. For reasons spelt out in an essay, 'Ireland and the Arts' (*Essays and Introductions*), Yeats decides to give up Arcadian and Indian scenes and never to 'go for the scenery of a poem to any country but my own, and I think that I shall hold to that conviction to the end.' But at this stage of his poetic career, Sligo remained a nostalgic and escapist refuge from the harshness and fragmentation of modern urban civilization.

While Yeats's attempt to construct a distinctively Irish identity was overlaid with antiquarian and sentimental recovery of Celtic myth, magic, legend, and folklore, his father introduced him to the English poetic tradition, the Pre-Raphaelites and *fin-de-siècle* aesthetes in particular. Being Irish, he had difficulties in his London school; in Ireland, his Anglo-Norman origins linked him to the Protestant Ascendancy, a class that had its loyalties divided between England and Ireland, and was virtually wiped out in the 1916 Easter rebellion and the Civil War. Of course, this dilemma of Anglo-Irishness did not extend to the Catholic peasantry; in history it went back to the eighteenth century.

Although Yeats was of a religious temperament and delighted in reverie, he imbibed from his father's circle a lack of enthusiasm for institutionalized religion. The dissatisfaction with Christianity springs in part from the dogmatic rationalism of the orthodox Protestant tradition but largely from the attempt to recover the Fenian traditions of pre-colonial Ireland. In contrast to the exhausted sense of coming at the end of a tradition that affects the work of English poets like Hardy and Edward Thomas, Yeats hopes 'to create some new *Prometheus Unbound*; Patrick or Columcille, Oisin or Finn, in Prometheus's stead; and instead of Caucasus, Cro-Patrick or Ben Bulben' (*Autobiographies*). Thus in challenging the drabness of a civilization dominated by calculating rationalism, technology, and the mercenary ethic, Yeats was spiritually akin to Eliot, although unlike the latter he turned to the heterodox tradition and studied the occult sciences.

43.3 MAGIC, MYTHOLOGY, AND SYMBOLISM

Magic and the mystical life became for the young Yeats the most important pursuit of his life after poetry. If Christianity offered Eliot a unifying design to accommodate the fragmentation of modern society, for Yeats this role was performed by magic and mythology. The first mythology was to be historical, pantheistic, prophetic as well as local and patriotic: 'Have not all races had their first unity from a mythology that

marries them to rock and hill?' (*Autobiographies*). This unity of being, equally relevant to race and individual personality and often symbolized in the perfectly proportioned human body, is rooted in the *Anima Mundi*, a version of the Collective Unconscious, a vast storehouse of images. Unity of being can be attained through the projection into consciousness of men's common ancestral memories: 'Nations, races, and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of related images, symbolical or evocative of the state of mind' (*Autobiographies*).

Yeats was probably introduced to cabbalistic experiments by George Pollexfen, his astrologer uncle. As early as 1885, when his first poems were published in the *Dublin University Review*, Yeats chaired the first meeting of the Dublin Hermetic Society. Katharine Tynan, the poetess, first took Yeats to a seance and in 1887 he met the magician MacGregor Mathers and in 1890 joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn founded by the latter for the study and practice of magic. In the same year Yeats had joined the Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky. From her law of periodicity Yeats may have acquired the cyclical conception of history with a divine incarnation at the beginning of each cycle, as the stories in *The Secret Rose* (1897) as well as his later poetry show.

Even as he was exploring the occult, Yeats was actively engaged in the literary world of his time, in editing and journalism. He was a founding member of the Rhymers' Club and the Irish Literary Society in London (1891) and Dublin (1892). As Richard Ellmann has shown (*Yeats, The Man and the Masks*), Yeats's discovery of split selves within, of a self and anti-self, which gave rise to his doctrine of the Mask was aided by the aesthetes' conception of the artistic personality as really two men. From his roots in decadent aestheticism, Yeats expanded his symbolist vision by giving it an Irish identity as well as tapping the resources of magic, myth, and superstition that were available among the Irish Catholic peasantry. Like Lady Gregory he collected Irish folklore and his three anthologies of nineteenth-century Irish literature-*Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888), *Stories from Carleton* (1889), and *Representative Irish Tales* (1891)–show his wide reading which informed his early poems like *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), plays like *The Countess Kathleen* (1892), and *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), and of course his own collection of Irish stories *The Celtic Twilight* (1893, revised and enlarged 1902). Throughout this latter book there is a desire to enlarge beyond folk-literature to a vision of the unity of man and nature that reason, science and the abstracting Anglo-Saxon mind had ruptured, and that could be recovered through the 'symbolic correspondences' of Swedenborg and Blake.

As he moved among Celtic heroes and heroines in a wistfully primitivist, pre-Christian landscape, his growing interest in symbols was strengthened by his experience of editing Blake's *Works* (1893) and by his friendship with Arthur Symons. The latter initiated him into Symbolist doctrines, and in 1894 in Paris, he attended a performance of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's *Axel* which affected him deeply. The influence of the French symbolists, including Mallarmè, and that of Maurice Maeterlinck is discernible in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). Magic offered to the symbolists a reinforcement of their belief in the power of word or symbol to evoke a reality otherwise inaccessible. As a movement it challenged the hegemony of science and rationalism. In a letter to O'Leary, Yeats wrote of 'a voice of what I believe to be a greater renaesance [sic]–the revolt of the soul against the intellect–now beginning in the world.'

For Yeats's early symbolism we have to go to *The Rose* (1893) *and The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899). The symbols are drawn from the natural world, say, of woods, waves, winds or stars, which resolve themselves into the four elements–earth, water, air, fire-and their conjunctions and oppositions. The moon usually stands for weariness (as often in Shelley), water for the fugitive nature of beauty, the rose for the principle of Eternal Beauty, and the veil for the life of ecstatic reverie hidden from the world. Into the four basic elements merge the Irish mythological figures. The unifying bond is that of the lover to his mistress and thereby to Nature. But the abundance of pale waters, white stars, dim sea, dim sand and so on ultimately build

up a shadowy and languorous waves. Even the esoteric and secret symbol of the Rose, so central to the Order of the Golden Dawn and so various in its meanings, cannot quite break the mood of dreaminess. However, it is in Yeats's control of a simple and passionate diction and rhythm that an intellectual sturdiness becomes discernible.

43.4 A LESS DREAM-BURDENED WILL

The various factors that helped bring a less dream-burdened will into Yeats's poetry include embittered disillusionment in love, experiences at the Abbey Theatre, political involvement and anguish at violence sweeping across Europe. His friendships and liaisons with women managed to draw him out of his shell. He met Maud Gonne in 1889, an encounter that was to transform his life. His infatuation for her drew him into nationalist politics about which, despite strong patriotic feeling, his attitude remained ambivalent. Despite remaining aloof from her brand of incendiary zeal, Yeats came to play an increasingly important role in Irish public life becoming a Senator of the Irish Free State (1922-28) and winning the Nobel Prize in 1923. Maud Gonne's stubborn refusal to marry him led to his happy marriage to George Hyde-Lees. Even as Yeats came to see Maud Gonne and other such female revolutionaries in terms of a tragic fate whereby unity of being was mutilated, she became a recognizable, flesh-and-blood individual freed of the patina of early symbolism. From *The Green Helmet* (1910) onwards, she enabled Yeats to link the anarchy of his private life to the larger context of Civil War and the First World War.

After his first meeting with Lady Gregory and Synge in 1896, Yeats spent the summer of 1897 at Lady Gregory's house, Coole Park, near Galway. Their collaboration bore fruit in the Abbey Theatre as a director of which Yeats was plunged into 'theatre-business, management of men.' This experience not only brought out the practical man in him but deeply enriched his style through the influence of speech and dialogue. Ezra Pound, his secretary from 1913-16, introduced him to the anti-naturalist and symbolical art of the Japanese Noh drama and encouraged him towards a resolutely concrete diction. The resultant spareness of language and style is evident in his play *At the Hawk's Well* (1916).

43.5 YEATS'S IRELAND

Lady Gregory offered an alternative to Maud Gonne by virtue of her caring support for Yeats's writing. Her Coole Park estate not only gave him the time and place to write but also became a model of aristocratic nobility. Ireland in the early twentieth century was not only different from England but even from the Ireland of Synge and O'Casey. It was the least industrialized country in western Europe with virtually no middle class outside the big cities. The people who impinged on Yeats's consciousness and on Irish history were the peasants and the landlords in the big houses. Yeats's obsession with ancestral houses like Coole Park which were in decline or burnt down in the agrarian unrest of the Civil War was coloured by a nostalgic view of the bond between landlord and servant. Since the landlords were mostly Protestant in origin and Unionist in sympathy while the common people mostly Catholic, the former in their search for identity were drawn to the world of myth, ritual, legend, and imagery rejected by Protestant nationalism but nurtured by the Catholic peasantry. In highlighting the rooted affinity of the dream of the noble and the beggar-man, Yeats expressed his contempt for and distrust of the newly-emerging middle-class. Aristocracy thus offered a vantage-point from which Yeats, like Pound and Eliot in their admittedly different ways, attempted a critique of capitalist-democratic values. The metaphor of horseman and the races in 'At Galway Races' harks back to an age when poetry was central to human existence: 'Before the merchant and the clerk/Breathed on the world with timid breath.' As the poem, 'September 1913,' from Yeats's middle period shows, such timidity is the product of the nexus between acquisitive instinct and calculating piety: half pence is added to pence as prayer to shivering prayer until the marrow is dried from the bone.

Ironically it is this world emptied of the heroic for which the Irish martyrs, the wild geese, were laying down their lives.

Placed within the larger context of the marginalization of art and the artist in Europe, Yeats saw the poet's role in somewhat Shelleyan terms, as that of an unacknowledged legislator. If on the one hand, Yeats strives to break away from a sentimentalized Ireland, on the other, Ireland for him was a visionary project to recover buried spiritual identity which was impeded by the revolutionary politics. Thus the Easter uprising becomes for him much more than the search for political independence. In one of Yeats's last poems, 'The Statues,' we find Patrick Pearse, Irish revolutionary leader, summoning Cuchulain, the mythical hero, to his side and the moment of disintegration initiates the realization of unity of being represented in the proportioned human body:

> We Irish, born into that ancient sect
> But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
> And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
> Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
> The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

43.6 THE SYSTEM: MASK, MOON, AND GYRE

Marriage not only gave Yeats stability and direction but more specifically, the supposedly automatic writing of his wife brought metaphors for poetry, the symbol of the gyre, moon, and mask that became the basis for his philosophical system *A Visic* (1925, revised 1937). Of course the doctrine of the Mask can be traced back to *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), if not even further back to the aesthetes' notion of the artistic personality. The self was contraposed to the anti-self; individuals as well as civilizations aspire to such antitheses in search of unity of being:

> If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves though we may accept one from others. Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask.
>
> (*Mythologies*)

As is evident from this extract, the doctrine possibly has its true origin in Yeats's experience as a dramatist and theatre-manager, in particular the masked theatre of the Japanese Noh or the Greeks. The masked performance of our own lives involves an artistic transformation of the disorde backstage: art is thus a mask even as aristocracy is. Human beings as well as entire epochs have their masks.

Human personality and history are divided into 28 types corresponding to the 28 phases of the moon. Phase 1 (when the moon is dark) and Phase 15 (full moon) are states of perfection accessible only to spirits or the symbols of poetry: the waxing and waning of the moon accommodate the opposition of Primary and Antithetical tinctures, of the egoist and the saint, the artist and the businessman. The underlying conception of personality fits in admirably with the doctrine of the Mask, since the antithetical Mask is 'the form created by passion to unite us to ourselves.' Starting from Phase 1, man seeks his opposite at Phase 15, and then returns to the original point achieving union in and through division.

A new corollary symbol was introduced in automatic writing: the gyre, the whirling cone, the pern or spool. European history was diagrammatically interpreted in terms of interpenetrating cones whirling inside one another, one subjective, the other objective. At the time of Christ, objectivity is at its fullest expansion while the Renaissance is the time of fullest subjectivity; in modern times, there is again a swing

towards objectivity, towards democracy, socialism, communism. As Yeats's note to the Cuala Press edition of *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* explains,

> the end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to that of its greatest contraction. At the present moment the life gyre is sweeping outward, unlike that before the birth of Christ which was narrowing, and has almost reached its greatest expansion. All our scientific, democratic, fact-accumulating, heterogeneous civilization belongs to the outward gyre and prepares not the continuance of itself but the revelation as in a lightning flash, though in a flash that will not strike only in one place, and will for a time be constantly repeated of the civilization that must slowly take its place . . . the revelation . . . [will] . . . establish again for two thousand years prince and vizier.

At the dead centre of the two thousand year cycle (corresponding to the 28 phases of the moon) which define the beginning and end of modern times comes the superbly integrated art of Byzantium.

The three central symbols of the mask, the moon, and the gyres admirably represent Yeats's antinomies by remaining anchored in common experience. The mask, we have seen, is fundamentally a theatrical metaphor while the moon suggests fickle fortune and the associative cluster of female fertility, virginity, and sensuality. The gyres give new meaning to the childhood experience at Sligo where he saw 'a little column of smoke from "the pern mill," and was told that 'pern" was another name for the spool, as I was accustomed to call it, on which thread was wound' (Notes on 'Shepherd and Goatherd' in *Collected Poems*). The gyre image in particular simply haunts Yeats: the winding stair of the tower he bought, the flight of the falcon ('pern' also meant a small hawk) or the swans ('scatter wheeling in great broken rings'), the shining web wound by Loie Fuller's Chinese dancers with floating ribbons of cloth ('Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen'), the silken, embroidered cloth bound and wound round the scabbard of a sword ('A Dialogue of Self and Soul'), even the mummy-cloth in which mummies are wound ('Byzantium').

43.7 POETIC CAREER (1889-1910)

The poetic career of Yeats falls into an early and a later phase, each apparently opposed to the other and yet inspired by a similar longing for escape from a world dominated by mechanistic and positivistic conceptions. As we have seen, in the early phase his specific mode of release was somewhat escapist, his fancy spiriting him away from a busy London street to the fairyland of Sligo and its lake isles. In *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), *Crossways* (1889), *The Rose* (1893), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *In the Seven Woods* (1904), Yeats demonstrates the assured mastery of an evocative style woven out of Spenser, Shelley, William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. If it lacks in sinewy strength and precision it is only in comparison with his later style. Far from being a pastiche, however, Yeats's earlier style has a harmonious integrity that established his reputation as a lyrical poet. The symbolist and somewhat hieratic tendency was balanced by a contradictory impulse towards simple passionate speech. While his plays, performed from 1899 onwards, taught him the poetic resources of dialogue, from 1896 he spent the summers at Coole Park collecting with Lady Gregory folktales from peasant cottages. In the evening she wrote them out in dialect which exposed him to the living speech of peasants later used admirably by Synge.

What Yeats learnt most from the 'tragic generation'-Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, George Russell (AE)-was the need for painstaking, fastidious craftsmanship. In the 'nineties, the Rhymers' Club shared a hatred of dry, cerebral verse and of clearly-defined philosophies, believing in a sense of mystery and in melody. But even before bitterness on the private and public fronts had sharpened his vision, deepened his passion and tightened his style, Yeats went beyond the autotelic poetry of the

Rhymers and aesthetes to construct the heroic image of Ireland as the poets have imagined it, terrible and gay. The mask of the Celtic hero triumphant in defeat gradually changes into that of spiritual autonomy and wisdom, the magisterial shaping power of mind over circumstance confronting physical decay even as his home, the old Norman tower he had bought in 1915, was surrounded and threatened by anarchic violence. As early as 14 March 1888, in a letter to Katharine Tynan, Yeats wrote that in the process of correcting his poems he had noticed things about his poetry he had not known before, that it was 'almost all a flight into fairyland from the real world,' a poetry of 'longing and complaint, the cry of the heart against necessity.' He hoped some day to alter that and write the poetry of insight and knowledge.

43.8 'ADAM'S CURSE'

Already *In the Seven Woods* (1904) suggests a departure in Yeats's poetic career, an awareness of the actual world with its unpoetic responsibilities and political conflicts. 'Adam's Curse' remains an important instance of this stylistic evolution: it hovers between the earlier languorous idiom and rhythm and a new conversational, even witty tone disguising a sub-text of emotional yearning and disillusionment. Written in 1902, before the marriage of Maud Gonne to Major John MacBride, the whole poem is a controlled expression of Yeats's futile love for her. As her autobiography notes shrewdly, there is a link between unhappiness in love and beautiful poetry, a link in which Yeats's self-pity plays a role. But the transmutation of failure or inadequacy into poetry is more than a Romanticised self-indulgence. The very title of the poem indicates loss of innocence and idyllic happiness. In the fallen state of humanity, art as labour co-extensive with life brings together poetry, feminine beauty, and love. Each in its own way offers variations on the Yeatsian dialectic of nature and art, each is an artificial re-fashioning or idealization of life. The poem itself is a stylistic enactment of this dialectical process: the biographical self is sufficiently transformed in order for it to become available for detached examination in the mask of the courtly lover, and this love becomes visible rather like the hollow moon.

It is a conversation-poem involving Maud Gonne, her sister, Mrs. Kathleen Pilcher, and Yeats himself. Although it is addressed to Maud, the romantic conventions of intimacy are forestalled by Mrs. Pilcher's presence; moreover, Maud remains enigmatically silent and unresponsive throughout. The irony of this is heightened by the almost banal tone in which an autumnal mood is introduced ('summer's end'). Despite the elegiac tone, there is a movement away from lushness looking forward to the dry woodland paths of the autumn of 'The Wild Swans at Coole.'

Mrs. Pilcher's mild beauty and sweet, low voice (contrasted, for instance in 'Easter 1916' with Con Markiewicz's voice grown shrill in political argument) links her to femininity as the nurturing and creative principle ('On Woman'), to the beauty that is rooted in custom and ceremony ('A Prayer for My Daughter'). Maud Gonne's fiery beauty presents an alternative to this and Yeats the poet is located between the two, pulled towards both, towards involvement and withdrawal.

The talk on poetry contrasts hours of revision with a moment's thought in order to establish the paradox of living, spontaneous beauty as the product of painstaking, artificial re-fashioning of experience. As a poet Yeats was given to revising his work repeatedly. The paradox has been compared to the Renaissance notion of an art that lies in concealing art, to 'sprezzatura' or nonchalance as Castiglione had called it. It also looks forward to the timelessness that is specific to art, a theme that informs Yeats's 'Byzantium' poems. The domestic imagery of stitching and unstitching unobtrusively relates poetry to women; it also seems to anticipate that unity of the artist and the artisan that Yeats celebrated in Byzantine culture. After all, the golden bird of Byzantium is a handiwork of Grecian goldsmiths.

The second stanza offers a racy defence of poetry in a society increasingly dominated by the emerging bourgeois ideology. This new world, summed up by the bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen, was aggressively hostile to art and distrustful of the vital energies. The attitude of this 'noisy set' to the proposed Dublin art gallery invited Yeats's anger in *Responsibilities* (1914); as late as 'Lapis Lazuli' (*Last Poems*) we encounter hysterical women denouncing poets and artists for their uselessness at the time of war. This is the community that sets off the loneliness and autonomy of the artist. Withdrawn from conventionally strenuous and utilitarian obligations, the poet uses his freedom from the drudgery undergone by the housewife or the old pauper to engage in the far more challenging labour of artistic transformation. His defiant triumph is earned at the cost of self-destruction: 'Among subjective men (in all those, that is, who must spin a web out of their own bowels) the victory is an intellectual daily re-creation of all that exterior fate snatches away' (*Autobiographies*). The unremitting psychomachy--self versus anti-self-is directed towards the Unity of Being that is suggested, a little unsatisfactorily, in the articulation of sweet sounds together, and implicitly in the perfectly proportioned human body. More satisfactorily, the unity is mirrored in the poem itself, a whole composed of division. Mrs. Pilcher's witty parallel between the poet's labour and woman's, recorded in Maud's autobiography, relates feminine beauty to unity of being through the doctrine of the mask or the theatrical discipline of self-fashioning. Like the poet, woman also achieves spontaneity.

Feminine beauty with its implicit notion of the discipline of the mirror (or the mask) leads on in the fourth stanza to the lover emulating the artifice of the mask. As Yeats puts it, 'Each divines the secret self of the other, and refusing to believe in the mere daily self, creates a mirror where the lover or the beloved sees an image to copy in daily life; for love also creates the Mask' (*Autobiographies*). With autobiographical poignancy Yeats talks of lovers who, in defiance of the bourgeois ethic (stanza 2) chose the mask of courtly love. His unrequited love is thus located within the custom and ceremony of an aristocratic culture. The note of detachment and self-parody suggests a transition in the poem. The mask of the sighing and bookish courtly lover ironically merges into a literary convention, studiedly archaic in its beauty like the opulently produced old books. Lofty idealization is judged now from the point of view of the everyday world and therefore dismissed as an idle trade. If Yeats extracts beauty out of futility, here we have, as it were, the reverse process at work: the troubled actual world intrudes and dialectically confronts the impulse towards autonomy.

We have here a resistance to the aestheticization of love that looks forward to the interpenetration of the purity of artistic form and unpurged, raw experience. The very mention of love draws out the emotional sub-text, the silence of which calls into question the decorums of conversation. The interpenetrating opposition is captured in the image of the moon. The approaching evening is described in a language somewhat stilted and lush. This is then questioned by a subtly unconventional use of the moon as the objectification of shrivelling bitterness which is the legacy of time. Perhaps reminiscent of Shelley's use of the moon and the shell, the symbolism suggests weariness as well as recovery, an end as well as a beginning. The recovery is manifest in the mood of unsentimental confrontation of the truth. The thought that the poet had reserved for Maud's ears alone reads like a summing-up; at the same time, there is a clear sense of waking up from a pleasant dream.

43.9 'NO SECOND TROY'

The new Yeats becomes clearly visible in *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910) in which his public rhetoric and satiric control of disillusionment-anger, hatred, and bitterness in personal and public life--are in evidence. In fact, in the period 1910-14, Yeats moves away from his earlier misty symbolism and mythology to concrete realistic detail. Yeats's style becomes more supple and economical, and Maud Game is here a real individual despite being identified with Helen of Troy in

terms of personal symbolism. The Trojan war, which ended with the destruction of Troy by the Greeks after a ten-year siege, began because Helen (wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta) was abducted by Paris, son of Priam, King of Troy. Her whole situation including the context of the Trojan War (on which Homer's epics are based) offer a parallel with a difference to Maud Gonne, Yeats, John MacBride and Irish nationalism. After repeatedly refusing Yeats, Maud Gonne finally married MacBride, one of the revolutionaries executed in 1916, in 1903 but was separated from him in 1906. When she appeared in the Abbey Theatre on 20 October 1906 after her divorce, the audience hissed her (see 'Against Unworthy Praise'); after this she withdrew from public life until 1918.

That kind of public reaction sums up the narrow-minded ideology of hatred that characterised the lower middle classes in particular:

> The root of it all is that the political class in Ireland-the lower-middle class from whom the patriotic associations have drawn their journalists and their leaders for the last ten years--have suffered through the cultivation of hatred as the one energy of their movement, a deprivation which is the intellectual equivalent to a certain surgical operation. Hence the shrillness of their voices. (*Autobiographies*)

Maud Gonne's revolutionary ardour becomes a kind of heroic mask tragically at odds with the dominant mercenary-prudential ethic of the age. Ironically, it is this class that she and her tribe of activists wished to influence and instigate to political violence: in 'No Second Troy,' she is shown to have 'taught to ignorant men most violent ways.' The poem places personal experience in the turmoil of Irish history and widens out to heroic myth: history becomes myth even as myth is linked to history.

Maud Gonne was always reproaching Yeats for not putting his art in the service of nationalist propaganda. After she withdrew from the more extreme I.R.B. (an Irish Secret revolutionary organisation) about the turn of the century, she introduced Yeats to Arthur Griffith of the Sinn Fein movement: she desired to keep the Irish literary movement abreast of the policies of Sinn Fein. Before her marriage Maud Gonne was increasingly involved in anti-British activities. She linked the I.R.B. with French military intelligence and offered a Boer agent in Brussels a plan to put bombs in British troopships bound for Africa. As Joseph Hone notes (*W.B. Yeats, 1865-1939*), Yeats wrote in his diary that Maud Gonne never really understood his plans, or nature or ideas: 'Then came the thought-what matter? How much of the best I have done and still do is but the attempt to explain myself to her?' That Maud did not understand him or there was a gap in communication is turned to poetic advantage by Yeats: 'If she understood I should lack a reason for writing, and one can never have too many reasons for doing what is so laborious.' While Maud had perceived that Yeats poetically thrived on his unhappiness, his own realization (see 'Words') suggests freedom from self-indulgence. With the help of the larger contexts of history and myth, Yeats forestalls the whining complaint of unhappiness that the opening line of 'No Second Troy' can degenerate into.

In spite of the disparity between twentieth-century Ireland and heroic Greece, the Trojan war relates Maud Gonne to the violence around her in terms of the Annunciation that develops in 'The Second Coming' and 'Leda and the Swan.' That from the eggs of Leda came love and war enables Yeats to locate his passion within a context of disintegration.

As Yeats saw it, on the one hand the rising middle classes were sunk in ignorance and superstitious piety; on the other hand, they were being incited to blind hatred of the English. At the deepest level, the blindness is an incapacity for honest self-examination and has a corrosive effect on the vital impulses and affections. Ireland must acquire an identity, a spiritual unity of its own before it can embark upon

political nationalism. Of course the coupling of ignorance and violence and timidity and desire may suggest Protestant-aristocratic prejudice about the Catholics. But when the courage did equal desire in the Easter uprising, Yeats paid a noble tribute to it.

The image of the little streets being hurled upon the great has been annotated in terms of the many little semi-literary and semi-political clubs and societies out of which the Sinn Fein movement grew. Yeats had indeed come to distrust and quarrel with them. But the image is a succinct evocation of the topography of political resentment and unrest in a city like Dublin: the narrow lanes and back-alleys from which anger spills out (often in processions) on to the big streets of power and privilege.

Instead of the ambivalence that enabled Yeats to comment on Irish politics from a distance, Maud Gonne's mind and beauty are described in terms of her single-minded intensity. If the modern sensibility is a divided one then her fiery commitment presents an antithesis to it. The fire image along with the noble simplicity or purity and restlessness of her mind telescopes the idea of a curious innocence untouched by obsequious clinging to conformity and the irony of its warped destructiveness. The comparison of her beauty to a tightened bow not only suggests the tensile and arched grace of her body but also the energy of stress, a taut and tense sexuality.

Yeats has written elsewhere that she looked as if she lived in an ancient civilisation and her face was that of a Greek statue. Yeats highlights her supremely lofty, almost inaccessible presence, her aristocratic mask of Olympian solitude and disdain set off against her populist politics in order to cast her in the sublime, tragic mould. The poem is a series of four questions suggesting a man's examination of himself rigorously pursued through the logic of feeling and thought.

43.10 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about the poetic career of W.B. Yeats from 1889 to 1910. Apart from tracing his poetic development, the unit has introduced you to the function of Yeats's philosophical system and occult beliefs. His poetry is related to his embattled Irish identity and to the fundamental dichotomy of flesh and spirit. Various experiences, private and public, drew him out of an imaginative fairyland to the search for insight and knowledge.

43.11 QUESTIONS

1. Write short notes on i) the doctrine of the Mask, ii) the phases of the moon, iii) the interpenetrating gyres. (See 43.6)

2. Bring out the interrelationship of the mask, the lunar symbolism, and the gyres. (See 43.6)

3. How are magic and symbolism related in Yeats's poetry? (See 43.3)

4. What were the factors that made Yeats outgrow his yearning for escape into a land of fantasy? (See 43.4, 43.5 and 43.7)

5. Show how Yeats's choice of the aristocratic mask springs from his view of Ireland. (See 43.5 and 43.2)

6. In what way are poetry, feminine beauty, and love related to one another in 'Adam's Curse'? (See 43.8 and 43.6)

7. Bring out the significance of Troy as a symbol in 'No Second Troy.' (See 43.9 and 43.6)

UNIT 44 THE LATER POETRY OF W.B. YEATS

Structure

44.0 Objectives
44.1 Introduction
44.2 A New Poetic Style
44.3 'Easter 1916'
44.4 'Sailing to Byzantium'
44.5 The Last Poems
44.6 Let Us Sum Up
44.7 Exercises
44.8 Suggested Reading

44.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will concentrate on three chosen poems representative of Yeats's later poetic style. In Unit 2 you have already been introduced to the historical and intellectual background to his poetry. The aim here will be to indicate the main directions within the later poetry and above all to undertake a close reading of the three poems in order to recover the wide-ranging ideas and issues that are packed into them.

44.1 INTRODUCTION

The rich complexity of Yeats's later poetry is best understood through detailed textual analysis. This method is used because valuable as it may be, a general discussion of background and poetic development can hardly do justice to the mastery with which Yeats accommodates the entire modern age within the concretely experienced and irreducibly imaginative life of the text. Since a mature Yeats poem is a tightly woven texture of many threads, we need to unravel the text, to take it apart as it were.

44.2 A NEW POETIC STYLE

In *Responsibilities* (1914), Yeats chooses his new poetic persona by openly declaring that he was stripping off his coat 'Covered with embroideries/ Out of old mythologies' in order to take up the stylistically more challenging task of walking naked' ('A Coat'). In contrast to the vehement political commitment of the middle classes, Yeats's ambivalence remains open to misinterpretation unless we see in it the seed of an essentially artistic detachment that allows him a vantage-point of aloofness and solitude despite immersion in his times. The satirical poems in this collection dealing with the Irish theatre and other controversies (the Dublin art gallery, for instance) relate the crowd, the 'noisy set' of 'Adam's Curse' or the violent, ignorant men of 'No Second Troy' antagonistically to the victimised poet or artist. The artist's freedom from social conventions and bourgeois values is explored in some poems through the adopted persona of the beggar and wanderer. As in the theatre of Synge, this outcast figure has affinities with the Shakespearean Fool, and in Yeats's *oeuvre* looks back to the play *The Hour-Glass* (1903) and forward to the Crazy Jane poems where the intuitive wisdom is deepened by the dimension of gender.

If Yeats cultivates the mask of aristocratic and bardic isolation, it is in search of a deep structure' of Irishness, of a unity of consciousness that informs the symbolic forms of a race, beyond the inflammatory urgencies of the moment. This is why he rejects the public platform in favour of solitude: 'Why should we honour those that die upon the field of battle? A man may show as reckless a courage in entering into the abyss of himself' (Unpublished notes for a London lecture on 'Contemporary

Poetry'). As he saw it, Maud Gonne, Con Markiewicz and Eva Gore-Booth had all betrayed the aristocratic ideal of courtesy and femininity. While this aristocratic order heroically defies, as in the towering example of Lady Gregory and Coole Park, its own historical doom, Yeats found such tragic heroism equally in the self-destructive energies unleashed in the Easter Rebellion.

Perhaps this dialectic is most easily seen in the next two collections, *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) and *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), which signal Yeats's greatest period. In the former, Yeats introduces his preoccupation with ancestral houses. Poems like 'Upon a Dying Lady' and 'A Prayer for My Daughter' look forward to 'Meditations in Time of Civil War,' 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,' 'Coole Park, 1929,' 'Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931,' 'Lapis Lazuli,' and so on. At the same time, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* is Yeats's first attempt to see the Easter Rebellion as a whole, located in world history, within his philosophy of history. The work for *A Vision* coincides with this period, often directly influencing poems like 'The Double Vision of Michael Robartes,' 'Ego Dominus Tuus,' and 'The Phases of the Moon.'

44.3 'EASTER 1916'

The background to this poem, written in September 1916, is the Easter Rising in Dublin against British colonial rule. The Irish Republic was proclaimed on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, and the heart of the city occupied by the Republican rebels. Managing to hold out until 29 April, they were defeated and many of their leaders tried and executed. Despite remaining aloof, Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory on 1 May expressing his anguish:

> The Dublin tragedy has been a great sorrow and anxiety . . . I have little doubt there have been many miscarriages of justice. . . . I am trying to write a poem on the men executed--'terrible beauty has been born again' . . . I had no idea that any public event could so deeply move me–and I am very despondent about the future. At the moment I feel that all the work of years has been overturned, all the bringing together of classes, all the freeing of Irish literature and criticism from politics.

In a subsequent letter to John Quinn (23 May 1916), Yeats wrote:

> This Irish business has been a great grief. We have lost the ablest and most fine-natured of our young men. A world seems to have been swept away. I keep going over the past in my mind and wondering if I could have done anything to turn these young men in some other direction.

Even in June, in a letter to Robert Bridges, Yeats's anguish has not abated: 'All my habits of thought and work are upset by this tragic Irish rebellion which has swept away friends and fellow-workers.'

The rebellion being much closer to Irish experience than the World War, it tied up with Yeats's view of history, producing the chiliastic terror of 'The Second Coming' and 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.' Yeats had thought in 'September 1913' that romantic and heroic Ireland was dead and gone with the death of O'Leary. Instead of the wild geese who spread their grey wings on every tide, Ireland was now ruled by pusillanimous and petty men. In this context the sudden release of 'heroic' energies acquired a doomed tragic dignity heightened by futility. The image stored in the Great Memory (*or Anima Mundi*) for such tragedy was of Celtic ancestry, Deirdre and Cuchulain in particular ('The Statues'). The revolutionaries organized the uprising in clear knowledge of defeat, that is, in the spirit of tragedy.

Images of personal reminiscence become figures of Irish history. The list of his friends begins with Constance Gore-Booth (1868-1927) in the second stanza; her

condition is described also in 'On a Political Prisoner' and 'In Memory of Eva Gore Booth and Con Markiewicz.' Although she took part in the Rebellion, her death-sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life; she was later released. Yeats had stayed at Lissadell with the Gore-Booth sisters in their late-Georgian grey granite house overlooking Sligo Bay. Such ancestral houses were built and furnished mainly in the eighteenth century ('grey/Eighteenth-century houses'). Next in the list ('This man') is Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), the founder of a boys' school, a member of the Irish Bar and an orator. Commandant-General and President of the provisional government in Easter week, he surrendered in the Post Office. The reference to the 'winged horse' or Pegasus is to his poetic talent. With the stroke of its hoof, Pegasus caused the fountain Hippocrates to flow on Mount Helicon, the abode of the Muses in Greek mythology. 'This other' refers to Thomas MacDonagh (1878-1916), poet, dramatist, critic, and academic whose literary sensibility and regard for Celtic tradition were crushed by mechanical logic so fashionable in Ireland at that time. Next in line is Major John MacBride (1865-1916), Maud Gonne's husband, who had fought against the British in the Boer War. The bitterness and contempt are biographical since Yeats had been his rival in love and since he had done wrong to Maud and perhaps to her daughter Iseult. In the last stanza, we meet James Connolly (1870-1916), a trade unionist, who had organized the Citizen Army and was military commander of all Republican forces in Dublin and Commandant in the Post Office during the Rising.

Like 'Adam's Curse,' 'Easter 1916' begins at a transitional hour and with a transitional action: people at close of day coming out of houses or offices although they are still confined to routine colonial drudgery. These are the people dismissed contemptuously in 'September 1913.' But the muted contrast between the vivid faces and the grey houses subtly prepares us for their revolutionary sacrifice which wrenches them out of an archaic monotony and links them to the eighteenth century but now to the heroic martyrs of the United Irishmen movement led by Edward Fitzgerald and Wolfe Tone.

As these men return from work, from counter or desk. Yeats passes them by with a perfunctory polite recognition: the repetition of 'polite meaningless words' locates the encounter in drab banality. But by the end of the poem, the word has recovered its power: 'I write it out in a verse.' The mocking tale or gibe to be shared with cronies around the fire at the club suggests a shallow sociability against which the revolutionary transformation is effected. The club may refer to the Arts Club in Dublin and therefore to the poet's attitude of amused complacence. This is an Ireland of aimless foolery and the particoloured costume of the clown ('motley') in its incongruous mixture looks forward to the description of random life in the third stanza. The change from motley to green in the last stanza indicates a new meaning to life, a rejuvenation, recalling the songs of the 1798 revolution, 'Green on my Cape' and 'The wearing of the Green.' At the same time, the one colour reminds us of the revolutionary dedication to 'one purpose alone,' that 'Can make a stone of the heart.'

The first two stanzas of the poem deal with change while the third and fourth accomplish a neat ironic reversal by interpreting that change as a stone-hearted, tragic incapacity for change. The utter change brings to birth a terrible beauty suddenly releasing atavistic heroic energies. The conscious change of the mask from clown to tragic hero revives '"an Ireland/ The poets have imagined, terrible and gay,"' not the '"dead Ireland of my youth"' ('The Municipal Gallery Revisited'). But Yeats's attitude remains somewhat divided, for doomed heroism is seen to spring from opinionated hatred and inflexible steadfastness. Instead of the casual comedy we have here willed tragedy, a conscious assumption of a second or new self, a deliberate re-ordering of Irish history.

While Pearse, MacDonagh, and Connolly are cut off in their prime, Con Markiewicz and John MacBride offer somewhat different models of transformation. Through the reference to harriers (pack of hounds and huntsmen) Con is related to an easy-going

aristocratic past torn apart by her ignorant good-will: her shrill voice suggests the disfigurement of youthful beauty and links her kind of politics to the Irish Civil War. MacBride, thought to have been a drunken, vainglorious lout, suddenly reveals the will to self-transformation: in numbering him in his song Yeats thus distances himself from a painful element in his life. The terrible beauty is not unrelated to the Yeatesian notion of a violent annunciation at the end and beginning of millennia ('The Second Coming' and 'Leda and the Swan').

The third stanza juxtaposes an incapacity for change (itself paradoxically the result of the change chosen by the revolutionaries) with the ever-changing spontaneity of random natural life. This contradiction is of course Yeats's quarrel with himself producing poetry. The central symbol is of the stone in the midst of the stream: Yeats moves freely between the actual stone and stream and their symbolical meaning. Natural life is characteristically captured (as later in 'Sailing to Byzantium') in images of movement: the changing seasons, the stream, the horse, the birds, the clouds, the moor-hens, and so on. Yeats's verse celebrates the energy of movement as the rider gallops in or the birds range from cloud to tumbling cloud. Mobility makes for inexhaustible variety, and the flux introduces a note of poignant intensity in the fugitive quality of natural beauty: the repetition of 'minute by minute' reinforces this quality.

The 'shadow of cloud on the stream' subtly introduces the concept of the higher insubstantiality of the artistic image involving a movement from the material to the immaterial. As the horsehoof slides on the brim and the horse plashes into the stream the accidental and the sudden are highlighted. Water becomes symbolic of a primal vitality, including the creatural instincts that are expressed in the diving moor-hens calling moor-cocks. The image of the stone-the unwavering commitment of the rebels-is more complex than it seems, for it is seen to trouble the living stream. This is the paradox that is at the heart of the poem: unchanging singleness of purpose has the capacity for utter transformation while the changing rhythms of life fall into a set routine. The last lines of the poem suggest another kind of transformation, the poem itself ('I write it out in a verse'), a changeless artifice that is not inimical to spontaneity (a theme already dealt with in 'Adam's Curse').

Maud Gonne's expectation that the rebels' sacrifice would ensure Home Rule for Ireland failed; moreover, the death seemed to be needless since England could revive the Home Rule Bill which had been shelved because of the War. Above all, too long a sacrifice is a denial of nature resulting in a hardening of the heart comparable to a surgical operation (see 2.9). Even as Yeats aspires to an artistic detachment, interpreting the defeat of the Rebellion as sleep that pacifies the excitable restlessness of a child and trying to nurture like a mother the infant soul of Ireland, he is assailed by misgivings. But he is able to overcome them by choosing the characteristic posture of defiance brought about by the realization of futility: death becomes metaphor as well as fact as it becomes the tragic culmination of heroic dream and excess of love. In the final stanza this capacity for dream raises the revolutionaries far above the everyday world of prudential conformity. In the supremely confident tone of bardic prophecy, Yeats makes them agents of the history of the Irish race in search for identity.

44.4 'SAILING TO BYZANTIUM'

As Yeats moves on to *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), the pugnacious clarity and biting precision of language increasingly perform a stylistic enactment of art as the conscious re-making of blind, instinctual nature, as a mode of deliverance from the fury and mire of human veins. The theme of ancestral houses in decline broadens out to that of the cyclical rise and fall of civilisations endorsed by the symbolism of gyre and moon; to this the dialectic of art and nature, the dancing floor and the sea in 'Byzantium' serves as a counterpoint. Yeats's interest in the visual arts, a family legacy, was deepened by his visits to Italy

in 1924 and 1925 where, apart from Renaissance art, he encountered Byzantine mosaic art at Ravenna and Sicily.

The heart, the seat of sentimental effusion and wistful evasion of stark reality in Yeats's early verse, is increasingly troubled by a passionate imagination in a decaying body. As critics have recognized, the very capacity to imagine is redemptive. Man defiantly asserts his imagined self against futility, for to imagine heroically is to become a hero (as implied in the doctrine of the Mask). Born incomplete, man attains completeness in so far as he conceives of it; if the hero does this unconsciously, the poet does it consciously. Heroic defiance is thus anchored by Yeats in the infinite power of the mind or soul often symbolized by the tower. But this assertion of spiritual autonomy, this nostalgia for a world of pure ideas is ceaselessly disturbed by the undiminished vitality of the natural man. The psychomachy draws strength from Hindu notions of the cycle of reincarnation and escape from it. It is represented clearly in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul': if the sophistry of the heart and the evanescent pleasures of nature turn Yeats to the artifice of eternity, the monuments of unageing intellect, if his soul draws him up the winding stair (gyre) of his tower to escape reincarnation, his self pulls him back down the same ancestral stair into time and history (see also 'The Tower' and 'Blood and the Moon'), into the fecund ditch of folly and passion. At this stage of his poetic career Yeats's landscape changes from Sligo to the countryside south of Galway-Thoor Ballylee, Coole Park, and the stony borders of Clare.

'Sailing to Byzantium,' one of Yeats's masterpieces, is organized around the dichotomy of flesh and spirit, nature and art where the sea symbolizes the energetic vitality of the former. As Yeats advanced into old age he continued to be troubled by the passions. The voyage in the poem is thus an inner spiritual voyage towards wisdom and freedom from enslavement to nature. Quite apart from the special meaning that Byzantium has in Yeats's system, historically it was the meeting-point of the pagan and Christian civilisations. As the centre of the Hellenistic world which became the capital of eastern Christianity, the holy city, Byzantium becomes a happy symbol of the unity in opposition of flesh and spirit.

In *A Vision* Yeats describes Byzantium at about the end of the first Christian millennium, a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato:

> I think that in the early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers--though not, it may be, poets, for language had been the instrument of controversy and must have grown abstract--spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people.

The poem begins when the voyage is already under way. To suggest, as some annotators do, that 'that country' is Ireland is to cripple the meaning since the uninitiated outsider leaves behind the material world, the life of the flesh for the immaterial, spiritual world-the later poem 'Byzantium' begins with a similar purging of materiality. The vitality and movement of natural life are celebrated in the stanza even as the inevitable decay of the flesh makes them a disturbing presence in the life of the old man. The embracing young and the birds in the trees are completely absorbed in one another but the oxymoron, 'dying generations,' suggests the human subjection to nature, to its cycle of birth, growth, and death. Summer, the season of rejuvenation and fecundity, links the young and the birds to the salmon-falls and mackerel-crowded seas, both images testifying to procreative urge and fertility. At spawning time salmon swim inland from the sea, biologically propelled upstream, leaping up high in the air at weirs or small dams on the river to continue against the

current. The image could be a memory of the salmon at Galway which Yeats wanted his wife to see when she first visited Ireland; the abundant shoals of mackerel may be a similar memory. The generic vocabulary with its Biblical echo--fish, flesh, or fowl--reinforces the all-encompassing biological basis of the 'sensual music.' But time, the sequential tyranny of 'begotten, born, and dies,' is the very dimension of natural beauty and pleasure. Thus the overpowering sensual life becomes a trap, an imprisonment in the perishable body. In contrast to this are the 'monuments of unageing intellect' which in their artificiality and stasis offer a mode of triumph, that of the spirit in search of wisdom and a world of pure ideas.

One basic image knits the whole poem together: the singing bird. In the first stanza birds in the trees produce sensual music. In the second stanza they are replaced by the scarecrow ('a tattered coat upon a stick'), an image of ugliness and decay in 'Among School Children'-the mask of 'a comfortable kind of old scarecrow' or the Greek philosophers as 'Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird.' The song of the old man's soul takes us to the sages or the singing-masters in the third stanza–here the submerged image of the phoenix (the bird rising out of its own ashes) merges into that of the perne which also means a small hawk. Finally there is the golden mechanical bird singing to the lords and ladies of Byzantium.

The second stanza moves in thematic sequence from youth to age. As we have seen above, physical decay makes the skin-and-bones appearance comparable to a tattered coat upon a stick, skin and flesh hanging loose. In Neoplatonic terms, widely used in the Renaissance and by Blake and Shelley, the body is a coat that the soul puts on at birth and takes off at death which thus becomes a mode of ecstatic liberation. Such readiness for the spiritual voyage is appropriately expressed in the defiant gaiety (an important Yeatsian theme) of the old man celebrating decrepitude. The flat sound pattern of the second line of the stanza is lightened in the next line, and the metrical-syntactical weight on 'unless' registers the transfer from carnal to spiritual. But the competitive opposition of body and soul is resolved in wholeness and synthesis: spiritual music is represented by the dancer's rhythmic bodily movements, a Yeatsian symbol of the unity of being. Dance, in association with the parallel between body and garment, opens up possibilities of Dionysiac emancipation. In contrast to the many anonymous young men, birds, and fish of the opening stanza, here we have old age as the accumulated experience of an individual. The comparable unity of the mechanical bird suggests that individuation is hammered out of the common raw material of our lives.

In the reference to the singing school that studies monuments of its own magnificence, along with the idea of spiritual preparation and discipline ('studying') we have that of autonomy symbolized by Byzantine mosaic art. In the history of European art, the Renaissance broke away from Byzantine norms in favour of mass, volume and movement of the human body and dramatic composition. In this sense Byzantine mosaic art is a linear art, abstracted from nature and static in quality. This non-referential art has therefore an autonomy equivalent to the human soul's study of its own magnificence: it is at the furthest point from the natural energies of the first stanza. The voyage across the sea, that is, the turbulent life of the flesh, is now over and we enter Byzantium made holy not only by Christianity but by an art purged of nature and materiality.

Consequently, the third stanza introduces us to the sages through the golden mosaic art on the wall, a memory perhaps of the Christian martyrs in the frieze at S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, and an image of God's holy fire. The sages are arranged in stasis purged of all fleshly life and mobility of desire. As Yeats calls upon the sages to be the singing-masters of his soul, he links the two worlds of sage and sensual man, the rival intensities of art and life, through the interpenetrating gyres. As we have already seen above, perne means a small hawk or falcon as well as a spool or gyre. The martyred sages must perne out of their ideal stasis into the

human world with their hawk-like, concentrated wisdom while the poet may perne into that stasis.

The motif of purgatorial burning leading to self-transformation links the initiate sages to the apprentice poet-craftsman. The heart must be burnt away because from the standpoint of ascetic renunciation it is the seat of all desire, wish, and feeling which in their heightened animation tease and torment the old man in his physical infirmity. As he puts it in the next poem, 'The Tower':

> What shall I do with this absurdity--
> O heart, troubled heart–this caricature,
> Decrepit age that has been tied to me
> As to a dog's tail?
> Never had I more
> Excited, passionate, fantastical
> Imagination . . .

A similar image of fastening, of an uncomfortable appendage links the heart to the ageing body, the 'dying animal' (reminiscent of 'dying generations') subject to the cycle of 'begotten, born, and dies.' Desire suffers the same subjection producing the sickness of exhausted disillusionment. Unlike the soul studying the monuments of its own magnificence, the heart is the seat of illusion ('knows not what it is'). The artifice of eternity suggests the specific timelessness of art. That which is natural is in time; movement and change are the source of its beauty (stanza 1). By contrast, that which is artificial or non-natural is liberated from the sequential logic of time, of birth, growth, and death. It is in this sense that art as artifice is timeless and not in the false sense that works of art outlive time. In fact, the destruction of civilisations and their art heritages is a common Yeatsian theme.

In the final stanza the mechanical bird, a work of Grecian or Byzantine craftsmanship, is hammered out of gold, the imperishable metal that like the soul survives the fire. Apart from the paradox of the desire to escape from desire, the intensely passionate plea to cauterize the passions, there is a further paradox here. The hammering with the reiterated sound pattern of 'hammered gold and gold enamelling' relates in somewhat Keatsian terms the finished smooth surface to the anguish and suffering. Artistic form becomes a mediator between flesh and spirit, for its being is at once sensuous and ideal. Yeats's note to the *Collected Poems* reads: 'I have read somewhere that in the Emperor's palace at Byzantium was a tree made of gold and silver, and artificial birds that sang.' The bird sits on the golden bough, contrasted to 'birds in the trees,' and instead of inducing the drowsiness of sensuality, it awakens the drowsy Emperor to heightened consciousness. To the lords and ladies of Byzantium it sings 'Of what is past, or passing, or to come'–corresponding to 'whatever is begotten, born, and dies'–that is, of an eternity specific to art.

44.5 THE LAST POEMS

The pursuit of wisdom prompted by the contrast between old age and young Muse, between physical infirmity and a lively imagination, gradually accommodates the elemental passions as Yeats moves on to the *Last Poems* (1936-39). Of course in the Crazy Jane poems the sexual theme had entered with a new candour and joy. The lust and rage that are celebrated in many of the last poems, the mask of the 'wild old wicked man,' energetically outstripped the autumnal serenity of the comfortable scarecrow, the sixty-year old smiling public man. But what we encounter is not the lasciviousness and irascibility of an old man's feverish fantasies, not the 'chilled delirium' of 'Gerontion,' but a passionate wisdom in which flesh and spirit, actual and ideal are fused. No wonder that there is a virtual identity between the images produced by the imagination and actual people and events (see 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited'). If the heart is symbolic of the history of man in all its joy and terror–all that 'Man's own resinous heart has fed'–the poet retains an intellectual

mastery over it. This mastery is manifest in the spare intensity of diction as also in the mask of the clown or circus performer and the tragic joy that now links the detached poet to the involved figures of history. Yeats watches in defiant artistic gaiety the rise and fall of civilisations ('The Gyres,' 'Lapis Lazali') even as he anchors his re-vitalization in a ruined body.

'Lapis Lazuli' is constructed around the general theme of art and tragic joy. Instead of a more or less linear arrangement the five sections of the poem are organized like sculptural planes, a method singularly appropriate to the Chinese carving in lapis lazuli, a blue precious stone, presented to Yeats on his seventieth birthday by Henry Clifton to whom the poem is dedicated. Several of Yeats's life-long themes are brought together: the recurring rise and fall of civilisations, the millennial vision of the approaching end of European civilisation, the triumph of art and philosophy over ruin.

The poem begins under the shadow of the impending World War (July 1936): events like the Spanish Civil War, the German re-occupation of the Rhineland in 1936 and the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 built up a climate of hysteria in which poetry seems to be nothing more than an idle trade. The hysterical women betray their masks of nurturing femininity and in rejecting art in favour of politics peddled in the thoroughfares they reject custom, ceremony and the contemplative life. Zeppelin, a rigid-framed airship for bombing was anachronistic in 1936 but Yeats probably remembered the Zeppelin bombing raids on London in the First World War. Around the time he was writing the poem, Edmund Dulac, the artist, had written to him to express his terror of a bombing raid on London. The bomb-balls refer to 'The Battle of the Boyne,' a ballad included in *Irish Minstrelsy* (1888), an anthology containing a poem by Yeats; there is an inscribed copy in his library. The parallel between King William of Orange (King Billy in Irish colonial memory) and Kaiser Bill or Kaiser Wilhelm II, German emperor at the time of the First World War, and the impending Second World War introduces the theme of the cyclical recurrence of history which is developed particularly in the third stanza.

The colloquial diction and speed of the first stanza in its approximation to drawing-room talk aesthetically controls the hysteric fear preparing us for the discipline of the theatrical mask in the second stanza. Here the long slow vowels capture the poet's calm, reflective response to popular rage and impatience that would drag him down like a quarry (see 'Parnell's Funeral'). We begin to encounter the familiar Yeatsian dialectic of art and life wherein the turbulence of reality is gathered with undiminished intensity into the stillness and repose of art. Art here, whether of the theatre or of the sculpture in lapis lazuli, means not only the individual work or object of art but the 're-creation of the man through that art' (*Autobiographies*).

The apocalyptic premonition is controlled by the vision of life as tragic theatre: this distancing leads logically to the panoramic view from the mountain top (stanza 5) through the rise and fall of civilisations (stanza 3). By contrast, 'The Gyres' articulates a tragic joy somewhat marred by indifferent withdrawal: 'We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.' In 'Lapis Lazuli' we are as it were inside the theatre, simultaneously involved in and detached from the performance of our lives. Ophelia and Cordelia provide alternative models of femininity implicitly opposed to the hysterical women. More important, along with Hamlet and Lear they foreground the individuality that collective passions can stifle. Hamlet's strutting and rambling suggest Yeats's characteristically defiant pose and passion for knowledge and speculation: 'For many years Hamlet was an image of heroic self-possession for the poses of youth and childhood to copy, a combatant of the battle within myself' (*Autobiographies*). Lear is a later mask appropriate to an old man's frenzy with the help of which Yeats declares in 'An Acre of Grass': 'Myself must I remake.' But Lear's rage, read in the context of 'hysteria' and in association with poems like 'A Bronze Head' or 'Parnell's Funeral' is a heroic struggle to control 'hysterica passio': 'Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow' (*King Lear*, II.iv.57). Yeats wrote t

Dorothy Wellesley that in producing a play in verse he would always remind the actors that 'the passion of the verse comes from the fact that the speakers are holding down violence or madness-"down Hysterica passio." All depends on the completeness of the holding down, on the stirring of the beast underneath.'

For Yeats, no tragedy is complete without arriving at a kind of joyous defiance: 'The arts are all the bridal chambers of joy. No tragedy is legitimate unless it leads some great character to his final joy.' In contrast to the wretched 'exit' of Polonius, Hamlet and the other tragic figures confront death with the energy of a defiant will (somewhat Nietzschean in origin) that is the greatest in tragedy since it struggles against an immovable object (*Explorations*). The unique tragedy of each man or woman is ignored and suppressed by the collectivized fanaticism on the eve of the War. In 'A General Introduction for my Work' Yeats finds the tragic protagonists of Shakespeare transformed by 'the sudden enlargement of their vision, their ecstasy at the approach of death.' Their gaiety is very different from what the fanatics mean by 'gaiety,' namely, an irresponsible expression of frivolity. The moralistic insistence of stanza 1-'For everybody knows or else should know'-is inimical to tragic ecstasy. As Yeats put it in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley (6 July 1935), 'People much occupied with morality always lose heroic ecstasy.'

The entire second stanza is built around theatre imagery reminiscent of Shakespeare and Renaissance drama. Related to the doctrine of the mask, the metaphor of the actor is one of self-making whereby man becomes an increasingly conscious agent of his own history and not the bewildered, passive victim taking refuge in 'hysterica passio.' The moment of death thus becomes a pyrrhic victory, paradoxically the moment of self-consciousness. Lady Gregory's belief that 'Tragedy must be a joy to the man who dies' is endorsed in Yeats's letter to Dorothy Wellesley (26 July 1935): 'the supreme aim is an act of faith and reason to make one rejoice in the midst of tragedy.' This emphasis on defiant will is crucial to Yeats's view of the human condition; when the will's 'limit is reached it may become a pure, aimless joy, though the man, the shade, still mourns his lost object' (*Explorations*).

That is why 'no actress has ever sobbed when she played Cleopatra . . . There may be in this or that detail painful tragedy, but in the whole work none' (*Explorations*). Yeats's search for a cold and passionate style ('The Fisherman') is thus inseparable from the wholeness of artistic form. This purposive design masters all confusion and turbulence into stillness through metamorphosis: 'Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.' The mastery is admirably suggested in 'wrought' and 'uttermost,' words which capture the pressure of experience passing into artifice. As all earthly involvements, goals, ambitions, and calculations run on to their logical end of disillusionment and despair, Yeats represents the situation in terms of a simple theatrical device: the foot-lights black out while the auditorium lights are turned on full blaze. This in turn suggests the Neoplatonic concept of spiritual, even ascetic illumination; in his Introduction to *The Holy Mountain* Yeats quotes Henry Vaughan: 'There is in God, some say/ A deep but dazzling darkness.' We may also recall the movement towards the identity of darkness and the soul in 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' or the darkening night that reveals Byzantium ('Byzantium'). The re-fashioning of human experience transforms the natural into the fully determined stasis of art so that it cannot grow or change any further.

The 'hundred thousand stages' prepare us for the extended survey in stanza 3 of history as the specific raw material of tragedy. The somewhat remote pictorial effect of the cyclical procession of history suggests an artistic disengagement that becomes triumphant later in the final stanza. In this sense Yeats's last poems are poems of age, a time of summing-up completed in death. Especially in the first three lines of the stanza the style recovers its earlier colloquial sprightliness observing with poised, sympathetic detachment the panoramic rise and fall of civilisations. The cyclical procession of history and change is made to surround the closely observed work of art, whether of Callimachus or of China. Callimachus was a late fifth-century B.C.

Greek sculptor who was the reputed inventor of the Corinthian capital (head or cornice of pillar or column). Yeats refers to his work in *A Vision*–to 'that bronze lamp, shaped like a palm'–and in *Essays and Introductions* to his 'stylistic management of the falling folds of display, after the naturalistic drapery of Phidias.' As B. Rajan has argued, the description of Callimachus' handiwork-making marble a malleable as bronze–poetically blends the sense of beauty with that of evanescence i a rhythm which both absorbs and counteracts the latent tragedy of the recognition of perishability. Far from defeating the artist, fragility inspires him to endless creativity thus are the destructive and the creative aesthetically poised.

In the fourth stanza Yeats describes the actual sculpture in lapis lazuli. About a year before the poem was completed, Yeats had written to Dorothy Wellesley about a present from Harry Clifton:

> a great piece carved by some Chinese sculptor into the semblance of a mountain with temple, trees, paths and an ascetic and pupil about to climb the mountain. Ascetic, pupil, hard stone, eternal theme of the sensual east. The heroic cry in the midst of despair. But no, I am wrong, the east has its solutions always and therefore knows nothing of tragedy. It is we, not the east, that must raise the heroic cry.

The ascetic figure of the Eastern sage blends into the Yeatsian symbol of the wise old man. By the solutions of the east Yeats probably means the doctrine of reincarnation and karma; as opposed to this, tragic vision makes the insoluble endurable and meaningful. The contraries of sensuality and asceticism are interrelated since the latter becomes the theme and destination of the former. The long-legged crane is a symbol of longevity in Chinese and Japanese art from early medieval times. The serving-man suggests a pre-democratic, aristocratic order of a by-gone era but it links the past cyclically to the future since 'our scientific, democratic, fact-accumulating, heterogeneous civilisation belongs to the outward gyre' and the interior gyre of the contrary age will establish prince and vizier again for two thousand years.

In the final stanza, we seem to leave behind the panoramic perspective to examine minutely the actual sculpture. Every detail-discoloration, crack or dent-on the crafted surface is closely observed and simultaneously transformed into symbol; meanwhile, as in Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' we are drawn from visible art into the invisible, troubled experience behind it. In the process we move back from the minute to the cosmic, to the view from the mountain-top. As ascetic and pupil climb up towards a possible Eastern solution, 'the little half-way house' becomes the meeting-point of the east and the west, of the snows of winter and blossoms of spring. From this veritable hill of the Muses, the tragic theatre co-extensive with the scheme of things unfolds itself on the cosmic stage.

The eyes of the Chinamen stare in wonder at this distanced view which unburdens the human condition of the blind fury of passions without diluting their intensity. As the accomplished fingers begin to play the musical instrument, the link with the fiddle-bow in stanza 1 suggests the theme of cyclical recurrence. The accomplished artistry is the specific mastery that produces tragic art out of human suffering and despair. The repetition of 'eyes' foregrounds the calm and joyous consciousness, the indomitable will to create. In the wrinkled face of the old and infirm which is the mask of an ancient wisdom, the glittering eyes suggest an assertive vitality and spiritual liveliness heightened by decrepitude. At the same time, the glitter remains a faithful description of the quality of the precious stone, the carved artifice in lapis lazuli.

44.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the complexity of Yeats's later poetry primarily through a close reading of three representative poems. Although the major

developments in Yeats's later poetic career are charted out, the emphasis is always on the unravelling of the densely textured poem. This exercise has been undertaken in order to demonstrate how a great poet can pack in an entire world-view into a short poem.

44.7 QUESTIONS

1. Comment on Yeats's poetic use of his ambivalent attitude to the Easter Rebellion in 'Easter 1916.' (See 44.3)

2. Who are the rebels mentioned in 'Easter 1916'? Why does Yeats mention them? (See 44.3)

3. Comment on Yeats's use of the theatrical metaphor in his poetry. (See 44.5)

4. Write a note on the imagery of 'Easter 1916.' (See 44.3)

5. What are the various meanings of Byzantium in 'Sailing to Byzantium'? (See 44.4)

6. Comment on the opposition of art and life and youth and old age in 'Sailing to Byzantium.' Are the two oppositions related to one another? (See 44.4)

7. Discuss Yeats's use of history in either 'Easter 1916' or 'Lapis Lazuli.' (See 44.3 or 44.5)

8. What is the meaning of 'gaiety' in 'Lapis Lazuli'? How is it related to Yeats's tragic vision? (See 44.5)

9. Write an essay on the theme of heroic defiance in Yeats's poetry. (See especially 44.3 and 44.5)

10. How does the image of the bird provide structural unity to 'Sailing to Byzantium'? (See 44.4)

44.8 SUGGESTED READING

Bayley, John. *The Romantic Survival* (London 1957)
Donoghue, Denis and J.R. Mulryne (eds). *An Honoured Guest* (London 1965)
Ellmann, Richard. *Yeats, The Man and the Masks* (London 1949)
– *The Identity of Yeats* (London 1954)
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UNIT 45 T.S. ELIOT : *THE WASTE LAND* (I)

Structure

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45.1 INTRODUCTION

The first fifty years of the twentieth century saw the emergence of two major poets in Great Britain and their contribution to British poetry is of immense value. Firstcame Walter ButlerYeats (1865-1939), an Irishman, who, while actively working for the Irish Nationalist Movement, made rich contributions to English poetry and drama. The other, Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), was an American who made England his home, and left behind him a wealth of literary works in prose, poetry and drama. Both the poets were modernists who came under the sway of contemporary European trends of art and literature. Their literary works show the influence of the French imagist and symbolist poets. The efforts that they made in relating English poetry to the ongoing European literary movements are second to none. Though differing opinions have been expressed about their relative merits as poets of international repute, it is best to regard them as two bright figures, that contributed equally to the enrichment of English literature. Both of them successfully worked for the revival of the poetic drama, which was virtually a dead literary form in Ireland and England. What is more, they inspired a young generation of English poets who appeared on the English literary scene in the years following the First World War (1914-18). In this Unit, we shall now tell you briefly about the life and works of T. S. Eliot. Further, we shall discuss the main features of his poetic art displayed in *The Waste Land,* a long poem of five sections that is prescribed for detailed study in the British Poetry Course of your M.A. syllabus.

45.2 T. S. ELIOT : LIFE AND WORKS

T.S. Eliot was born on 26 September 1888 in St. Louis, a large industrial city in the Missouri State of the U.S.A. His Calvinist (Puritan Christian) ancestor emigrated in 1667 from East Coker, a village in Somersetshire, England, to settle in a colony of New England on the eastern coast North America. Eliot's and father, W.G. Eliot, moved in 1834 from Boston to St. Louis, and established the first Unitarian church there. A leading philanthropist of his time, he also founded the Washington University. T. S. Eliot was the seventh and youngest child of Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte Champe Stearns, and the family background had an important role in the shaping of his poetic sensibility.

Eliot trained himself to be a poet from the age often, when he brought out eight (hand-written) issues of a magazine called The 'Fire Side'. At school, his favourite writers were Byron, Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, R.L. Stevenson, Conan Doyle, Swinburne and D.G. Rossetti. Eliot's Family tradition took him to me University of Harvard, where he spent four years in the study of philosophy. It was at Harvard that Eliot, for the first time, read some works of Baudelaire, the French poet, in whom he discovered poetical possibilities that he had not found in any of the English poets. From the same source he learnt how the real and imaginary worlds could be brought together in literature. The Symbolist Movement in Literature by Arthur Symons



introduced Eliot to the French poets of the nineteenth century. Soon after getting his M.A. degree in 1910, Eliot went to Paris for a year to study French literature and philosophy. About the same time, he came under the influence of the French. Philosopher, Henri Bergson, whose lectures he attended in Paris. But that was a passing phase. On his return to Harvard, Eliot registered himself as a graduate student in philosophy since he intended to pursue philosophy as an academic career. He also studied Sanskrit, Pali and Indian philosophy. The Bhagvad Gita was one of the Indian classical texts that he studied with interest. He leamt about Buddhism the influence of which remained with him for many years. The concluding section of The 'Waste Land' shows the shadow of Indian spiritual thought on Eliot's poetic sensibility.

For a short while, Eliot studied in Germany, and later went to Oxford. Spending the years of the First World War (1914-18) in England, he married Vivien Haigh-Wood in June, 1915. Though he went on a short visit to America to see his family, he had made up his mind to settle down in England. At first, he worked as a schoolmaster, but in 1917 he gave up that job for one at the Lloyd's Bank in London, where he worked for eight years. Around this time, Eliots poems began to appear, first in magazines and journals, and later in small volumes. A collection of his poems entitled Prufrock and Other Observations was published in 1917, and The Sacred Wood, a book of essays, in 1920. The earlier modernists in England had rejected tradition and the freedom of a poets expression, but Eliot in essays asserted that an individual writer needs to retain his links with the past tradition, which he should carry forward to the future generations.

It was with the publication of *The Waste Land*, in 1922, that Eliot came to be recognised as a leading light of English poetry in the period following the Great War. We shall tell you about that poem in some detail in the next section (1.3) of this Unit. Giving up his bank job in 1925, Eliot joined a newly formed publishing house, which later came to be known as Faber and Faber. Two years later, he gave up the Calvinist faith and joined the Church of England. This was not due to a sudden change of mind but the culmination of a long process, which coincided with his becoming a British citizen. He declared in the preface to a book of essays that he was a classicist in literature, a royalist in politics and an Anglo-Catholic in religion. This statement caused a flutter in the English literary circles where such firm beliefs were not publically expressed. In 1932, Eliot revisited America to deliver two series of lectures at the Universities of Harvard and Virginia; these were later published as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) and *After Strange Gods* (1934).

In the years that followed, Eliot brought out several poetical works including *Four Quartets* (1943) which many knowledgeable critics consider to be his greatest poetical achievement. Its four parts are: 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', 'The Dry

Salvages' and 'Little Gidding.' Eliot also wrote and lectured on a variety of literary and social topics. As the editor of the Criterion, a quarterly journal, he exerted far-reaching influence upon the English literary world. When the magazine stopped publication in 1939, Eliot turned his attention from literary criticism to poetic drama which, for several years, he had been wanting to revive in England. He was commissioned to write Murder in the Cathedral for the Canterbury Festival of 1935. Its publication was followed by that of *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and *The Elder Statesman* (1958).

Eliot's first wife, Vivien, died in 1948 after a prolonged mental illness. Nine years later, he married his secretary, Valerie Fletcher, much to the disappointment of his friend, Emily Hale, whom he had known and corresponded with for more than forty years. By this time, Eliots reputation and authority had considerably grown on both sides of the Atlantic, i.e., in England and America. If earlier he was known mainly to the younger generation of university students, now his merit as a poet, critic and dramatist acknowledged even by the traditionally conservative university scholars and teachers. While interpreting the age to which he belonged to itself, he had maintained the standards of the highest literary excellence in whatever he wrote, whether it was prose, verse or drama. Several prestigious awards were bestowed on him in the wake of his literary success. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948 and the Medal of Freedom (the highest American civilian honour) in 1964. After a severe illness in the winter of 1962-63, Eliot's health gradually deteriorated. He died on 4 January 1965. Among the distinguished mourners at the Westminster Abbey in London was his mentor, Ezra Pound, who told the gathering that the best tribute to Eliot would be to read his works.

Check Your Progress 1

a. How and where was Eliot introduced to the French poets?

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b. Prepare a list of Eliot's major works in the chronological order of their publication.

45.3 *THE WASTE LAND* : ITS THEME AND ART

T.S. Eliot projects several levels of modem experience in 'The Waste Land'. These are related to various symbolic wastelands in modem times, such as,

a. The wasteland of religion, where there are but no water;

b. the wasteland of spirit, where all moral springs have dried up; and

c. the wasteland of the reproductive instinct, sex has become a means of physical satisfaction rather than a source of regeneration.

The poet communicates to the reader his own sense of anarchy and futility that he finds everywhere in the contemporary world. He has no intention of expressing the

'disillusionment of an entire generation.' But the poem remains an important document of social criticism of the world to which Eliot belonged.

'The Waste Land' is mainly concerned with the theme of barrenness in the mythical wasteland of the twentieth century. The land having lost its fertility, nothing useful can grow in it; the animals and crops have forgotten the true significance of their reproductive function, which was meant to rejuvenate the land. The negative condition of the land is closely related to that of its lord, the Fisher King, who too, through illness and maiming (some kind of hurt), has lost his procreative power. There is some curse on the land and its master, and this could be removed only by a concerted effort at spiritual regeneration. This idea links *The Waste Land* to the legend of the quest of the Christian knights for the Holy Grail (the cup used by Christ at the last supper with his twelve original disciples before his crucifixion), which has been a recurring theme in the literatures of the Christian nations. The physical sterility of the original Christian legend is replaced by spiritual sterility in Eliots poem.

At a different level of meaning, one of the themes of *The Waste Land* is also death; 'Death by Water' being only one aspect of it. According to Cleanth Brooks (a critic) the poem deals with the contrast of 'two kind of life and two kinds of death': Death-in-Life and Life-in-Death, as you might have found in S.T. Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" (a ballad of the early nineteenth century). Life devoid of meaning is a kind of death, while death in a sacrifice is a renewal of life as it provides hope of life to come. Through all the five sections of 'The Waste Land', Eliot explores, at some length, the variations of this paradoxical theme. Along with this, he presents through his poetic art the wonderful trinity of religion, culture and sex. A combined ideal of the three concepts taken together ought to be the common goal of humanity, but, since these human impulses tend to work in isolation, we have the resulting corruption of the European civilization. Perhaps the Orient (Eastern World) could provide an alternative, and that is how 'The Waste Land' ends on a message of charity, hope and peace from the Hindu Upanishads.

45.3.1 Composition and Publication

The first mention of 'The Waste Land' was made by Eliot in November, 1919, in a letter to a friend, John Quinn. For many years even before that he had been writing fragments which were later included in the final version of the poem that appeared in the first number of the *Criterion* (October 1922), a literary journal edited by Eliot. The American edition of the poem appeared two months later. The first British edition was brought out by Leonard and Virginia Woolf (the celebrated husband wife team of writers) at the Hogarth Press in 1923. The published versions of the poem differed from the magazine version by the addition of Eliot's explanatory notes. The French version (1947) contains additional notes by John Hayward (English critic).

The poem was mostly written in 1921, when Eliot was under great strain due to a breakdown suffered by his wife, Vivien. At that time, he was himself feeling mentally exhausted. Hence, the writing of the poem took longer than he had anticipated. Part of it was written at Lausanne in Switzerland, where he had gone to rest and recoup. In line 182, Section III of 'The Waste Land', there is a reference to 'the waters of Leman', which is the French name of Lake Geneva in Switzerland, close to the town of Lausanne. On his way back to London, Eliot left the completed draft of the poem with Ezra Pound in Paris. After going through the manuscript, Pound suggested shortening of the poem by cutting out some long and short passages. Eliot was grateful to him for taking such pains with another's poem, and willingly deleted a long episode about a ship-wreck at the beginning of Section IV, 'Death by Water', which was inspired by his reading of the Italian poet Dante's Inferno (part of the Divine Comedy). In response to Pound's criticism, Eliot also redrafted the opening lines of Section III, 'The Fire Sermon'. Pound diluted the dramatic and fictional elements of the poem, and removed some passages in parody or mock imitation of The Rape of the Lock of Alexander Pope, the early eighteenth century

English Poet. As a consequence, 'The Five Sermon' was reduced from about 200 lines to only 139. In this way, by his skilful editing, Ezra Pound helped to give *'The Waste Land'* a greater unity and meaning than was possessed by its original version.

Check Your Progress 2

a. What are the different kinds of wasteland that you find in *The Waste Land* of T. S. Eliot?

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b. In which journal and when did the poem appear for the first time in England?

45.3.2 The Form of the Poem

The manner in which *The Waste Land* evolved in its composition (as we told you in the last sub-section of this Unit) raises relevant questions regarding the process of poetic creation and the form of poetry. For instance, should a long poem be a group of short poems or a unified whole? Also, what do we understand by poetic or artistic unity? It appears that Eliot himself was not quite sure about the unity of 'The Waste Land', since he had initially wanted to divide it between two issues of the Criterion. (Please turn back to sub-section 45.3.1 of this Unit). Though Eliot drought of it as a 'series of poems', Pound persuaded him that the poem should appear as a single sequence. Reading the five parts together is more effective in understanding what the poet says; and the poem is likely to lose its full meaning, if its parts are taken up in isolation.

The unified pattern of *The Waste Land* appears clearly only when we regard it as a single poem of several movements comparable to those of a musical symphony, or to a play of five acts. Eliot is of the view that a poet should work out different elements of a poem separately, and then fuse them together to achieve the unity of an artistic whole. He disagrees with the contention of E. A. Poe (American poet, critic and short story writer of the nineteenth century) that a long poem is 'a series of short poems strung together'. Poe finds it difficult to write a long poem because he believes it should possess one mood and be without variations of style. Eliot, on the other hand, writes a long poem only for the purpose of expressing a variety of moods. This requires the bringing together of a number of different moods and themes, which could either be related in themselves or in the mind of the poet, who can visualize and combine together the diverse elements.

According to Eliot, the parts of a poem taken together form a whole which is more than the sum of the parts, and the pleasure that one gets from reading a part is enhanced by his grasp of the whole. This is what he means by the poetic unity of a work of literary art - be it a poem, play or novel. By these standards, 'The Waste Land' is a cohesive work of poetic art in spite of being divided into five parts or sections. It is difficult to question the totality of artistic effect achieved by Eliot in this poem through a fusion of form and meaning. The five parts are interwoven and linked together through cross-references and echoes of one or several occurring in the others. Through recurrence of images, figures, rhythms and lines, there are constant

reminders that what we are reading is basically one long poem, and not a disjointed group of five. The desolation and sterility of the first two parts is transformed by the purifying elements of fire and water in the middle parts to achieve the spiritual peace of the Buddha in the concluding section. That is the artistically unified pattern that emerges at the end of *The Waste Land*, and points to the possibility of attaining peace and tranquility in the midst of the confusion and bewilderment of modem times.

45.3.3 The Poet's Vision

Eliot's wasteland is the European scene immediately after the end of the First World War. He is dismayed by the emotional and spiritual sterility surrounding him everywhere in Europe. Consequently, his poem presents a horrifying vision of the modern world. It is linked to the popular myth of the Fisher King who became impotent through sickness, and whose lands were devastated by barrenness. The location of 'The Waste Land' is a place where the people, surprisingly, pray for winter but not for spring, since all normal values are topsy-turvy in that land. The Tarot pack of cards, once used for prophesying important events, is reduced in the hands of Madame Sosostris the 'famous clairvoyants' into an instrument of ordinary fortune telling. It is significant that she is not able to find in her pack the card of the 'Hanged Man' representing some hanged god (or even Christ on the cross), a symbol of redemption, life and fertility. This is another symbolic indication of the arid desert into which the green earth is transformed in the poet's vision.

Another picture of corruption is seen in the second part of the poem, 'A Game of Chess'. Shakespeare's Cleopatra (Queen of Egypt) amidst her affluence and wealth once again depicts the lot of the modem man of the twentieth century. The grand works of classical art no longer sustain him in his search ideal attainments. The rape of Philomel's virginity the metaphorically repeated in Eliot's wasteland, a perverse act which is the result of a combination of man's scientific temper with his spiritual dryness. In 'The Fire Sermon', the third part of 'The Waste Land', we encounter Tiresias, the blind visionary, who pronounces his judgement upon the existing relationship between modern men and women. According to him, this very significant and vital natural relationship is reduced to a meaningless physical ritual. Even Cleopatra, that great romantic figure of ancient history, is degenerated into a psychiatric patient who needs counsel and help. What Tiresias and all other characters in Eliot's poem see is the poet's vision of the futility of human behaviour in a social context. The only positive picture is that of the Hyacinth Girl, but the flowers she carries are doomed to decay in the fog and rain. This part of the poem ends with reference to quotations from the teachings of two visionaries, the Buddha of the East and St. Augustine (a Christian saint) of the West - and they are commenting on the physical aspect of love between man and woman. Both religious philosophers significantly use the imagery of fire to convey their impression of lust. On this point, the wisdom of the East and West somehow arrives at the same conclusion.

'Death by Water', the fourth part of *The Waste Land* contains some pictures of death by drowning and comments on the decay of youth into old age. The world is a whirlpool that draws high and low, rich and poor, Christian and Jew, into its destructive vortex, as there is no permanence of human endeavour. The fifth and last part of the poem, 'What the Thunder said', begins the journey over the desert to the Perilous Castle, which is connected with the legendary quest (search) for the Holy Grail. The vision of a land without water again presents a view of dryness and sterility. However, one is encouraged by the sight of Christ, walking with a hood over his head, after his Resurrection (rising from the grave). The search is complete with the Christian knight's arrival at his destination, i. e., the Perilous Castle. At long last, water comes in the form of falling rain, and provides a refreshing vision of freedom, fecundity and flowering of the soul. The voice of *Prajapati (Bramha)* in the Upanishad follows in the form of thunder; *'Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata'*- give, sympathise, control. To sympathise is a kind of giving of oneself, and to control is to

discipline and govern. This concluding message is given for saving humanity from its spiritual drought. The poem ends on a note of peace: *'Shantih, shantih, shantih'.*

Check Your Progress 3

a. Write a short note on the unified pattern of *The Waste Land.*

b. Sum up the vision of Tiresias and other characters in Eliot's poem.

45.3.4 Different Points of View in the Poem

In his essay on William Blake (English poet of the eighteenth century, whose poems you have studied in Block Unit of this course in The Sacred Wood, Eliot writes, 'You cannot create a very large poem without introducing a more impersonal view, or splitting it up into various personalities'. *The Waste Land* is a poem that includes a number of fragmentary monologues of several figures. The different voices and shifting points of view merge together in a manner that makes it difficult for the reader to distinguish one from the others. For example, it is not easy to identify and segregate the many speaking voices in 'The Burial of the Dead'. It is equally hard to make a difference between the 'I' (first person singular) and 'you' (second person singular) of the several narrators who project various points of view of the poet of *The Waste Land.* Then 'I' of 'The Fire Sermon' mingles with the Fisher King of the legend of the Holy Grail and the Ferdinand of Shakespeare's *The Tempest.* The self is not, therefore, a single entity but a shifting plurality of many voices, all of whom together speak in the 'objective voice' of Tiresias, the central figure in *The Waste Land.*

There is greater poignancy in the voices of the female figures, who speak freely of their loneliness and fear. Among them we have the Hyacinth Girl, Philomela, the Thames Daughters, the woman at the pub, and the sophisticated lady in 'A Game of Chess'. The satirical tone of the apparently impersonal Tiresias (the chief narrator) is influenced by an allusion to the tragic rape of Philomela, which manifests the recurring image of woman as victim in *The Waste Land.* The objects of Eliot's irony are not only women in general, but also the meaningless man-woman relationships such as those of the Earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth 1, the clerk and the typist, the rich young men and their girl friends. *The Waste Land* is a remarkable poem, in which several points of view merge together to project a single central voice, which belongs as much to Tiresias as to the poet himself.

The most significant point of view emerging out of *The Waste Land* is that of its central voice, which is the prophesying voice of Tiresias, who is a 'seer' in spite of being physically blind. Although not a character but only a spectator, he is the most important figure in the poem, uniting in himself all the others. As the one-eyed

merchant merges with the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not separate from Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What he says is' in essence, what the poem is all about; Eliot admits as much in his notes to the poem. Hence, it is evident that Tiresias is a possible mouthpiece of the poet. He also provides the connecting link between the various parts of the poem, lending it a unity of perception so important in the context of the form and meaning of 'The Waste Land'.

45.3.5 Myth, Imagery and Symbolism

The first line of *The Waste Land*, April is the cruellest month...' is an inversion of the popular myth that April is a time of warmth, love and joy. The Christians connect it with Easter and the Resurrection of Christ. In the fertility myths, the coming of spring is associated with the growth of potency and fertility in mankind, animals and the earth. The trees and plants drawing life-giving sap from the land through their roots grow leaves and flowers in their branches. The flowers eventually develop into fruits with seeds that are a promise of the life to come in the following years. But these things are anticipated in Eliots poem with fear rather than hope, and thus April is cruel rather than kind. Tiresias observes with dismay the coming of April and its perverse effect on the people of 'the waste land'. They fear the onset of the season of life-giving rain since they are incapable of enjoying the mysterious process of the regeneration of the earth. They prefer the cold of the winter to the warmth of the summer. To them, winter is a symbol of spiritual decay, of an animalistic life that involves merely eating, sleeping and breeding, which they seem to prefer to a meaningful life of spirituality and thought. Such a way of life, of survival by instinct, is contrasted by Eliot with April, the popular symbol of growth and regeneration.

The myths, and symbols of fertility and sterility are central to the first part of 'The Waste Land'. These are noticed in the images of the Hyacinth Girl, Madame Sosostris, the Phoenician Sailor, and the corpse in the garden, which are linked to speculations on life, life-in-death, death-in-life, decay and renewal (winter and spring), memory and desire (past and present). The fertility theme is projected through the symbolism of spring rain, wet hair, vegetation and flowers. At the same time, it is contrasted with the dryness of the arid landscape. A biblical allusion (Old Testament, Ezekiel, Chapter 37) again highlights the barrenness of *The Waste Land.* The dead trees provide no shelter, the dry stones give no sound of water. Caught between two shadows of morning and evening, of youth and age, the mankind is haunted by the fear of mortality and doom.

The two episodes of love in 'The Burial of the Dead' are studies in contrast, symbolising the gulf separating the ecstasy of love from the frustration in love. The Hyacinth Girl standing in rain with flowers in her arms is an image of youthful aspiration and passion that is bound to have a tragic end. That is how Eliot, the consummate poet, conveys his impression of the frustrations suffered by his contemporary generation. The Sweeney image (which should be related to Sweeney Agonistes - Fragments of an Aristophanic melodrama, a poetic drama of Eliot, published as early as in 1932) stresses the mental paralysis of humanity, since it can neither understand nor speak about the terrible state in which it finds itself in the modern world of the twentieth century. The prophesying Tarot cards of Madame Sosotris are now used for vulgar fortune telling, which marks the decline of values in the modern European society. Here it should be noted that Eliot makes extensive use of the pack of Tarot cards as a symbolic structural device in 'The Waste Land'. The image of the drowned Phoenician Sailor is linked with the allusion to the in The Tempest (a Shakespearean play) in which a character named Ariel (in a song) informs Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, of his father's death by drowning in a shipwreck. The symbolic pattern of these images is repeated in the fourth part of *The Waste Land.* 'Death by Water'.

Eliot, as he admits in his notes to the poem, uses ritualistic and mythic allusions in *The Waste Land.* All the figures depicted in the Tarot pack of cards symbolically unite in the dominating personage of Tiresias. He is the central consciousness the

various episodes from whose experience make up the poem. The 'unreal city' with its flowing crowd under the brown winter fog is a merging together of Baudelaire's Paris with Eliot's London - it could as well be Boston, Chicago, Moscow or even Srinagar in Kashmir in December or January. In this city, men and women are ghostly figures without a vital social life; they have no permanent moral values, only pretensions and makebelief. The crowds flowing over London Bridge, every day, morning and evening, are not independent human beings, but the slavish victims of a mechanical way of life, bereft of the vitality of real living. The planting of a corpse in the modern wasteland is not a sacred ritual but its antithesis comparable to the action of a dog first burying and then digging up a bone. The dog digs up the bone in order to prevent it from blossoming into new life the. It is obvious that Eliot deliberately uses symbolic and mythical imagery and literary allusions for expressing his deeply thought out meaning drough a well-ordered artistic pattern, which is his poem, 'The Waste Land'.

Cheek Your Progress 4

a. Whose are the different voices that you hear in *The Waste Land*?

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b. With which European cities could one relate the 'unreal city' of the poem, and why?

45.4 SUMMARY OF THE UNIT

In this Unit, we introduced you to the life and works of T.S. Eliot, a major English poet of the first half of the twentieth century. Though born and educated in America, he made England his home, came under the influence of the Symbolist Movement in the French poetry, and at one time also studied some Indian classical texts. ' *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) was his first published poetic work, and *The Sacred Wood* (1920) the first book of critical essays. With the appearance of *The Waste Land* (1922), Eliot came to be recognised as an English poet of great promise. He worked as a schoolmaster and later as a bank clerk before joining the publishing house of Faber and Faber. The Criterion was a literary quarterly that he started, and the writing of Four Quartets (1943) was, perhaps, his greatest poetic achievement. Beginning with *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) he wrote a series of five poetic dramas. Eliot married twice, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948. Following a severe illness, he died in January 1965.

The Waste Land projects several levels of modern experience related to various symbolic wastelands, such as those of religion, spirit and the reproductive instinct. The poem is mainly about the theme of barrenness and infertility. The curse on the land and its master, the Fisher King, is linked to the quest for the Holy Grail. Death,

life-in-death, and death-in-life are some of the other themes of the poem. Life devoid of meaning is a kind of spiritual death. Eliot hopes that Eastern philosophy could possibly provide a redeeming alternative to the corruption of the European nations. *The Waste Land* was first published in the Criterion, and followed by its American and British editions. The poem was mostly written in England and Switzerland; it was revised and edited by Ezra Pound, Eliot's friend and mentor. It consists of five parts:1. 'The Burial of the Dead', II. 'A Game of Chess', III. 'The Fire Sermon'; IV. "Death by Water' and V. 'What the Thunder said'. Though Eliot thought of the poem as a 'series of poems', Pound persuaded him that its five parts should appear as a single sequence, for it was likely to lose its full meaning if the parts were taken up one by one. The poem has a unified pattern like that of the different movements of a single musical composition. Hence, it is a unified work of poetic art even while having five parts. Eliot's wasteland is a poetic vision of the European scene immediately after the First World War. All normal values of society have turned upside down, and there is little hope of redemption, life and fertility. In the poet's vision, the green earth is transformed into a dry barren desert where there is no water, and hence no hope of life in the future. The vital relationship of regeneration between man and woman is reduced to a meaningless sexual ritual. What Tiresias, the prophetic central voice of 'The Waste Land', discovers and comments on is the poet's vision of the futility of human endeavour in a social context. The Buddha and St. Augustine, visionaries of the East and the West, respectively, seem to agree in their pronouncements on the physical aspect of love. The decay of youth into old age is only a pointer towards death and destruction. But in the midst of spiritual dryness there is hope in Christ's sacrifice and the message of the Upanishad: give in charity, sympathise with fellow human beings, control your desires. Eliot's poem ends on a note of peace: *'Shantih, shantih, shantih'.*

In *The Waste Land*, the different voices and shifting points of view merge together, making it difficult for the reader to distinguish one from the others. It is hard to separate 'I' from 'you' of several narrators projecting the different points of view of the poet. The female voices, though, speak freely of their loneliness and fear. The most significant voice in the poem is that of Tiresias, who provides the link among the five parts of 'The Waste Land'. The myths and symbols of fertility and sterility are central to the first part of the poem. The two episodes of love in the second part symbolise the gulf separating the ecstasy and frustration of love. The symbolic pattern of death and drowning recurs in the various parts. Eliot also uses ritualistic and mythic allusions in 'The Waste Land' to make his meaning clear to the readers. The 'unreal city' of the poet is any city where men and women are ghostly figures without a vital social life. The crowds flowing over London Bridge are not independent human beings but the slavish victims of a mechanical way of life.

Now you could begin by reading the text of the poem given in the Annexure. Here, we would like to tell you something about the Epigraph that follows the title of the poem, and introduces the theme of death-in-life. It is a quotation in Latin and Greek from a speech by Trimalchio (character) in the Satyricon, a satire by Petronius, the Roman writer of the first century. It means: 'For once I saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumac hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her, "Sibyl, what do you want?" she answered, "I want to die". The Sibyls were women in ancient Rome with prophetic powers.

45.5 ANNOTATED READING LIST

This is only a suggested reading list, and will provide additional help to your understanding of T. S. Eliot and his poem, *The Waste Land.*

I. Works of T. S. Eliot:

1. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; an interesting early poem from *'The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot'.* (London : Faber & Faber, 1969).

2. 'East Coker' (out of *Four Quartets*) from the same book.

3. Essays on 'Hamlet' and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent *'The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1928; repeated 1976).

4. *The Waste Land : A Facsimile and Typescript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 197 1).

II. Works on T. S. Eliot:

1. Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (London : Faber & Faber, 1969). This is a very useful book on the poetic art of Eliot.

2. F.O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot* (Oxford University Press). This is perhaps the most comprehensive study of Eliot's work during the years between the two world wars.

3. G. Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot* (New York, 1953). This book will be a useful addition to the material provided by IGNOU for understanding 'The Waste Land'.

4. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet T. S. Eliot* (London, Methuen, 1969). This book will be of use to those who want to make a special study of Eliot and his poetry.

5. Manju Jain, *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). This is a very useful book for a textual study of *The Waste Land* and some other poems of Eliot.

6. A.N Dwivedi, ed. *Studies in Eliot* (New Delhi; Bahri Publication, 1989).

45.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1 a. It was at Harvard University that Eliot first read some works of Baudelaire, the French poet. After reading Arthur Symons' book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* he came to know about the contribution of the French poets of the nineteenth century.

b. Murder in the Cathedral (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), and *The Elder Statesman* (1958).

2a. The various wastelands that one finds in 'The Waste Land' of Eliot are those of (i) religion, where there are rocks but no water; (ii) spirit, where all moral springs have dried up; and (iii) the reproductive instinct, where sex has become a means of physical gratification rather than a source of regeneration.

b. 'The Waste Land' appeared for the first time in the opening number of *Criterion* (October, 1922), a literary journal edited by Eliot in London. The American and British published editions followed in 1922 and 1923, respectively.

3.a The unified pattern of *'The Waste Land'* becomes evident when we regard it as a single long poem of several movements (five in all) comparable, to that of a musical composition or a play of five acts.

b. Please refer to Section 45.3.3 of this Unit.

4a. The central voice that we hear in 'The Waste Land' is that of Tiresias, the blind prophet. In his voice are combined the voices of the other figures, such as, the Hyacinth Girl, The Thames Daughters, Philomela, the woman at the pub, Madame Sasostris (with her pack of Tarot cards), Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, and the sophisticated lady in 'A Game of Chess'. At the spiritual level, we hear the voices of Christ, St. Augustine and the Buddha. The literary voices are those of Chaucer, Dante, Spenser and Shakespeare.

b. The 'unreal city' with its flowing crowds under a brown winter fog is a merging together of Baudelaire's Paris with Eliot's London. In this city, men and women are ghostly figures without a vital social life.

UNIT 46 T.S. ELIOT : *THE WASTE LAND* (II)

Structure

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46.0 OBJECTIVES

After a careful study of this unit, you should be able to answer questions related to the text of *The Waste Land,* and also explain the meaning and significance of select passages of the poem with reference to the context. In short, this Unit will help you to understand the first two sections of the *The Waste Land,* and, in case occasion demands, you could explain it to others as well.

46.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, our attempt is to explain to you the first two parts of *The Waste Land of T.S. Eliot* so that you are able to understand the complexities of its meaning. In fact, the poem does not have a single straight forward meaning but several layers of interpretation belonging to different historical, social, philosophical and most important of all literary contexts. All these divergent elements are simultaneously present in the text of the poem, and you have to grasp the same before venturing to make sense of what the poet is trying to say in this path-breaking work of the early twenties of the twentieth century. The deeply thought out and skilfully worked out message *of Eliot* is not true of only that period in European society but of all times and climes, since he is pointing his accusing finger at the general corruption of men and women everywhere in the modern world. Therefore, we have tried to make your task easy by fully explaining the lines together with their complex references and literary allusions. Hence, we provide you with a glossary and detailed interpretation explaining each of the five parts of *The Waste Land.* Under the *Critical Comments* we try to unravel the myths and metaphors, and pass judgement on the numerous symbolic devices employed by the poet for projecting his ideas to the successive generations of his readers. Therefore, it is important that you collaborate with us by studying this Unit most carefully with the text of the poem by your side all the time for constant reference. Also, when you complete the study of this Unit, try to attempt the explanation of some chosen passages with reference to the context, following the pattern of the examples provided by us in the interpretation of the text and model answers to the 'check your progress exercises'. Such attempts will prove useful to you at the time of the examination.

46.2 THE WASTE LAND: 1. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

It is very important at the very outset to grasp two fundamental concepts in order to understand T. S. Eliot's poems. Firstly, his poetry is a kind of continuous and complex stream of thought, a collection of memories in which what one has experienced in the past constantly merges with his experience of the present. Once we read a favourite poet, some of his memorable lines are bound to become an

essential part of our personal experience. Very often, we quote him/her to ourselves, and we experience a repeat of either one or a series of emotions in a poem or other kind of literary work. In exactly the same manner, Eliot quotes his favourite writers to himself in the poems, goes over their images, phrases and metaphors, like so many possessions in the crowded storehouse of his mind. It is our sincere hope, dear student, that we are making ourselves clear to you since our chief aim is to make difficult ideas and concepts clear to you in as many words as the scope of this Unit allows. Well, so far so good; let us now pass on to the next hurdle in our effort to understand of *The Waste Land of* T. S. Eliot.

> The second important point is that one must grasp Eliot's obsession with the problem of time. He writes in *Four Quartets,*
>
> *Time present and time past*
> *Are both perhaps present in time future*
> *And time future contained in time past.*

The essence of this thought is that if our past can determine our present, as most philosophers and ' historians seem to agree upon, then our present could equally determine our future. There is also the hope that memory could bring up feelings and incidents of long ago to render them real, so that they once again become a vital part of the present. Thus, when Eliot alludes to the Thames in The Waste Land, it remains the river that flows through London even now. But it is also the river on which the royalty and aristocracy of England went out in their boats centuries ago. The very name of the Thames evokes historical and personal memories, not only to those who live in London but also in far-off places, and who have never seen the Thames but read about it in English literature. Eliot's Thames is the same river that inspired Edumnd Spenser (The English Poet of the sixteenth century who also wrote *Epithalamion* that you studied as part of this course in Block , Unit), Line 183 in *'The Fire Sermon'*(please check in the text of the poem), 'Sweet Thames, run softly till end my song', evokes the same line of spenser in *Prothalamion,* another of his poems.

After these introductory remarks, let us now turn our attention to the text of The Waste Land, the first part of which is 'The Burial of the Dead.'

46.2.1 Glossary

Lilacs	plants with fragrant purple or white flowers
Tubers	short thick rounded roots
Starnbergersee	lake near Munich in Germany
Colonade	row of pillars
Hofgarten	park in Munich
Cricket	small brown insect resembling a grasshopper
Frisch ... du?	The wind blows fresh to the homeland. My Irish girl, where are you lingering?
Hyacinth	plant with fragrant bell-shaped flowers
Oed'...Meer	desolate and empty the sea
Clairvoyante	person with power to visualise events in the future, woman with prophecying powers
Phoenician	resident of Phoenicia (old name of Lebanon on the Eastern Mediterranean coast)
Belladonna	'beautiful lady' in Italian
Saint Marry Woolnoth	church in King William Street, London
Mylae	ancient city on the north coast of Sicily, Italy
Sprout	leaves growing out of roots, tubers or beans
Lecteur	reader in French
men semblable	my fellow-man
mon frere	my brother

46.2.2 Interpretation

The title of this part of *The Waste Land* is derived from the service for the burial of the dead in the Church of England as given in the Book of Common Prayer. Let us caution you at the very outset that for a full understanding of this poem, you require some knowledge of the English Bible, which is not compulsory but still desirable.

Lines 1-7 : In these lines, Eliot subverts the traditional view of spring as a season of joy and merriment. He deliberately provides an ironic contrast to the glad opening of Geoffrey Chaucer's 'General Prologue' to *The Canterbury Tales* (which you have studied in Book, Unit of this course). To Eliot, April is cruel for being the time of Good Friday, when Christ was crucified on Calvary Hill on the utskirts of Jerusalem. Yet, he hints at the resurgence of life in the wasteland through the welcome image of flowers growing out of the barren earth. The April rain revives memory and desire equally in human beings and plants. Winter ironically keeps people warm since the vegetation continues to live in the warm underground while the surface is cold with snow. The image of a little life in dry roots is a reminder of the idea of death-in-life.

Lines 8-11 : This is a reference to a shower of rain that perhaps drenched the poet and his group of tourists while boating on a lake near Munich in August, 1911. When the sunlight returned, they went into a public park where they had some coffee.

Lines 12-18: The details of this passage are perhaps taken from *My Past* (1913), an autobiographical work by Countess Marrie Larisch, a relation of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth. Valerie Eliot (the poet's second wife) writes that Eliot met the Countess somewhere, and that his description of the sledding episode comes from a conversation he had with her. This passage evokes a picture of the decadence (or corruption) of contemporary European aristocracy. The only place where Marrie feels free is in the mountains. Just to impress Eliot, she informs him that the Archeduke is her cousin, she is an intellectual since she reads at night, and also she goes to the warmer south of Europe (France, Spain and Italy) in winter when it is very cold in Austria.

Lines 19-24: Here Eliot uses images from a passage in the Bible, Book of Job, viii, 11-13, 16-17, where there is mention of roots wrapped about a heap of stones. 'Son of man', is the Jewish prophet, Ezekiel, who is sent on a mission to preach God's word to the unbelieving people of Israel. The preacher reminds people of the vanity of life, and stresses the importance of remembering God in their youth before the desolation of old age sets in. It is, again, a reference to the Bible, Ecclesiastes xii, 5. The dry stone that gives no sound of water is a recurring image of death-in-life in *The Waste Land.*

Lines 25-30: These lines are virtual repetition of a passage in an early poem of Eliot, 'The Death of Saint Narcissus', which he probably wrote in 1915. The various biblical echoes in these lines are of (a) Isaiah ii, 10 (b) Isaiah xxxii, 2; (c) 1 Corinthians x, 3-5. Christ is described as a Spiritual Rock in the Bible, and those who did not believe in him were overthrown in the desert. The shadow of the rock provides no solace in *The Waste Land,* but reminds us of mortality (certain death). The last line in this passage is a reminder of the fear of death, of which dust is a symbol as the body inside the grave turns into dust after death. This passage supplements the previously expressed idea that the European society is decayed and disintegrated. The voice of the biblical prophet is only one of the many, in Eliot's poem, that comment on the barrenness of the wasteland.

Lines 31-42: In Greek mythology, a youth named Hyacinth was killed in an accident and a flower grew out of his blood. The flowers in this passage evoke feelings of sadness, sympathy and desire. The lines record the recollection of a passionately intense moment of romantic live. There is sad memory of the remembered joy with a

feeling of irreversible loss. To express his view forcefully, Eliot quotes from *Tristan and Isolde,* an opera of the German poet, Wagner. Thereby, he suggests not only the desolate state in his own poem but also a correspondence between the situation in the opera and that in *The Waste Land.* Eliot's use of the quotation heightens the general effect of desolation in the poem.

Lines 43 - 59 : Here, Eliot satirizes the dabbling in matters spiritual by the society ladies of his time. Ironically, he ridicules the practice of fortune - telling through the Tarot pack of cards, which were the first playing cards made in Italy in the early fourteenth century. It should to be noted about Madame Sosostris, the society clairvoyante, that she has no knowledge of any spiritual matters. Hence, she cannot find in the pack the 'Hanged Man', whom Eliot associates with the hooded figure of Christ (refer to II.362-3 in part V of *The Waste Land).* She herself does' not fully understand what she sees. The Phoenician Sailor was a kind of fertility god, whose image was every year thrown into the sea as a symbol of the death of summer. As per tradition, he was later reclaimed, and his resurrection meant the return of new life in spring. In section IV, he figures as Phlebas, representing not resurrection but mortality of mankind. Actually, there is on drowned sailor's picture in the Tarot pack of cards. The line, 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' is a quotation from Ariel's song in The *Tempest* of Shakespeare.

'Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks' is the image of a beautiful and seductive women who could be a source of threat to the narrator (of *The Waste Land*). She reminds us of the vampire-like figure of Mona Lisa as described by Walter Pater (the Victorian Critics) in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci (the Italian painter) in the collection entitled the *Renaissance.* The man with three staves (or sticks), a figure in the Tarot pack, is associated by Eliot with the Fisher King. The wheel (of fortune) another card, reflects the cyclic reversal of fortune in life. The one-eyed, merchant is the fool in the pack, and also linked with Mr. Eugenides, the merchant from Symma (section III, pp.209-14). But there is no blank card in the Tarot pack; this is a deliberate mystification introduced here by the poet. 'The Hanged Man' could be an allusion to Christ on the cross. Mrs. Equitone is obviously a client of Madame Sosostris . the name carries on ironic connotation.

Lines 60-76 : Eliot himself, in his notes to the poem, refers to a poem about Paris by the French poet, Baudelaire. It is about a swarming city full of dreams. In colder climes like that of London, Paris, New York, Moscow, and Srinagar in Kashmir, the winter fog is thick in the sub-zero temperatures of December and January. The people on their way to work pass on surrounded by the thick brown fog. Eliot visualizes such a scene of people flowing over London Bridge. The exhalation of sighs from the crowd of passing humanity, recalling a similar passage in Dante's *Inferno* is an image of the tragedy of modern world. The crowd, reminiscent of the damned souls in Hell, is of the workers on their way to the city district of London, the financial nerve centre of that metropolis, of which King William Street is a part. Saint Mary Woolnoth is a church in that very street. In the 1920s, nine o'clock in the morning was the usual starting time for the workers in the city.

Stetson, just a name, does not refer to anyone in particular.' he could be any senior bank clerk in a bowler hat. The reference to the battle at Mylae (an ancient city on the coast of Sicily) in 260 BC is a comment on the continuity of the past and present: the old battle and the first world war in Eliot's own time. The 'corpse' could be a forgotten memory or the self buried in the surrounding life. The familiar idea of the dog being a friend to men is juxtaposed with the menacing image of the dog in the Old Testament (Psalms xxii, 16-20). At the end of this passage, Eliot refers to the prefatory poem of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). The quotation is from 'Au Lecteur' (To the Reader): 'O hypacrite reader, my follow-man, my brother!' Eliot, by reference to Baudelaire, compels the reader to confront the vice of boredom or spiritual emptiness in order to realize how he himself is situated. After going through *The Waste Land,* the reader shares with the poet a state of deep spiritual

emptiness, something that the poem projects, among several other things, as indicated in the earlier Unit on T. S. Eliot.

46.2.3 Critical Comments

Here are a few additional critical comments to explain certain allusions in this part of *The Waste Land.*

Lines 6- 7: The image of 'feeding/A little life' is derived from 'To Our Ladies of Death,' a poem by the English poet James Thomson (1834-82). Through this allusion, Eliot suggests the dried up state of human consciousness which is reduced to a death-in-life situation.

Line 12: this comment by Marrie is quoted as a criticism of her conformity with the German idea of racial superiority in which Adolf Hitler believed.

Lines 31 -34: Eliot's note refers to *Tristan and Isolde* an opera by Richard Wagner (1 813 - 83), the German poet. The quotation is a comment on the episode in the hyacinth garden.

Line 35: The hyacinths are a symbol of the resurrected god of fertility rites.

Line 42: this quotation is from the last act of *Tristan and Isolde.* Eliot perhaps quotes from the original German in order to evoke the music of the opera.

Line 46 : Eliot explains in his notes that he did not know the exact structure of the Tarot pack of cards, from which he departs to suit his own convenience.

Line 49 : Belladonna , apart from being a powerful drug, is also the name of the three fates in classified muthology.

Line 64: In his note, Eliot refers to Dante's Inferno, IV, 25-27.

Line 70: The Battle of Mylac was fought between the armies of Rome and Carthage in 260 BC. It provides a link between the past and present in there context of the First world war.

Line 74 : Eliot's note refers to the dirge (song of mourning) sung by Cornelia for her son in John Webster's *The While Devil.*

Check Your Progesss 1

(a) What are the difficulties that a student faces in trying to understand *The Waste Land?*

(b) Write a critical interpretation of 11. 1-7 of The Burial of the Dead.

Explain with reference to the context 11. 60 - 65.

46.3 II. A GAME OF CHESS

The title of this part of *The Waste Land* is taken from a play called *A Game of Chess* by the English dramatist, Thomas Middleton(1580 - 1627). That drama is a political allegory about the conflict between England and Spain, which extended over a prolonged period in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the actual game of chess in Middleton's play, the white pieces represent the English, while the black pieces are the Spaniards because of their comparatively dark complexion. In *Women Beware women,* another play by Middleton, a young woman is being seduced in the background of the stage even as a game of chess is in progress in the foreground. By choosing the title of this part of his poem, Eliot is suggesting that the relationships of men and women, as shown here, are like the moves and counter-moves in a subtle game of chess, both parties trying to overcome each other.

46.3.1 Glossary

burnished	: polished
fruited vines	: grape-vines bearing clusters of grape fruit
Cupidon	: baby Cupid, the pagon god of love
Candelabra	: large stands for candles or lamps with branches
vials	: small bottles
Unstoppered	: without caps, corks or stoppers
synthetic	: chemically prepared as against something made of natural ingredients
Unguent	: ointment or lubricant
laqueria	: a panelled ceiling
coffered	: decorated with ornamental panels
dolphin	: large sea mamal with a beak like snout
gave upon ... scene	: opened towards a forest scene
forced	: violated, seduced
'Jug Jug'	: the bird-song of the nightingale
stumps	: remnants, reminders of old times
told	: retold in the form of carvings

shuffled	: moved noisy
rat's alley	: narrow passage infested by rats
Shakespearian Rag	: This is a reference to an American regatime hit song of 1912. Rag was a style of Jazz dance music very popular at the beginning of the First World War.
demobbed	: demobilised or retired from the army
gammon	: salted or smoked piece of meat from the bottom of a pig
beauty	: charm, pleasure
Goonight	: slang expression for good night.

46.3.2 Interpretation

Lines 77-96: The first twenty lines of this part of *The Waste Land* recall the literary tradition of the Renaissance period in Europe dealing with the subject of fatal romantic passion. The artificial language and diction as well as the style of these lines satirize the mode of expression of that tradition. Eliot's note refers to the famous passage in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra,* Act II, se ii, where Enobarbus (a minor character) gives a description of the ceremonial boat of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, and her first meeting with Mark Antony, the Roman commander. Here Eliot's style is an ironic parody(mock imitation) of what Enobarbus says in Shakespeare's play. The description of the woman at the dressing table reminds one of Belinda at her toilet in The *Rape of the Lock,* a mock-herioc poem by Alexander Pope (1688-1744). The panelled ceiling of the room invokes the banquet scene in the Latin epic, the *Aeneid* (Book I,1.726) of Virgil, the Roman poet. The banquet was given by Dido, Queen of Carthage (an ancient state on the northern coastal area of Africa), in honour of youthful and handsome Aeneas, a Roman hero in exile. Later when faithlessly deserted by Aeneas, her lover, Dido destroyed herself by burning on a funeral pyre while the Roman returned to his own land to continue his expliots. All these literary allusions are built into the text of Eliot's poem in this part of *The Waste Land.* If one does not know these allusions it is difficult for the reader or student to understand what the poet is trying to convey. Hence, we have made a special effort to explain such classical and other references for the benefit of our distance education students.

Lines 97-110 : Eliot's note refers to the scene encountered by Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost,* iv, 140, when the fallen angel, in his journey across planets, reaches the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God, lived their life together in absolute bliss and peace. Next, Eliot recalls a tragic event in the Latin poem, *Metamorphoses,* vi, by Ovid (43 BC-AD 18), another Roman poet, who touchingly describes the rape of young Philomela by King Tereus of Thrace (in ancient Italy), the husband of her sister, Procne. Later, she was meta morphosed (physically transformed) into a singing ninghtingale by the gods who took pity on her sad condition. The peculiar expression 'Jug Jug' is both the bird's song as well as a rude joking reference to the act of sexual union, the purity of the one being contrasted by Eliot with the vulgarity of the other interpretation. Through Philomel, the poet projects the enternal image of woman as victim in a male-dominated world. But as the scene unfolds, the society lady at the dressing table is revealed to be an exploiting seductress rather than an innocent victim, the sound of foot-steps on the stairs are of her approaching lover who now joins her. The one sided conversation that follows exposes the shallow values and priorities of such men and women caught up in the social whirl of modern times.

Lines 111 - 126 : The woman of this satiric episode is in a nervous mood, and would like to be entertained through a bit of light- hearted and frivolous conversation. But her man is not drawn into the amusing dialogue since he is in a pensive (thoughtful) mood. He is thinking of the fragility of life in the slum and what follows after death. 'Nothing again nothing' of 1.120 is an echo of several literary sources :

(a) Webster's The *White Devil*, V, 223-7;

(b) Lear's warning to Cordelia (his daughter) in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, I, i, 'Nothing will come of nothing'; and

(c) Ophelia's answer to Hamlet's query ____ 'I think nothing my lord', Hamlet, III, ii.

The man in Eliot's scene is still thinking of death, as is indicated by the repetition of a line from *The Tempest* of Shakespeare. (Please refer to 1. 48 of *The Waste Land).* His continued silence draws an ironic remark from the woman. (see 1 126 of the text: 'Are you alive, or not ? Is there nothing in your head?)

Lines 127 - 138 : The poet's allusion is to a popular American song of 1912, when Eliot was twenty-four years old:

> The Shakespearian Rag
> Most intelligent, very elegant,
> That old classical drag,
> Has the proper stuff
> The line 'Lay on Macdiff'.

The last phrase, 'Lay on Macduff ', comes from *Macbeth,* one of the four major tragedies of Shakespeare, in which he explores the psychology of an exalted man and his wife who are driven to murder and, consequently, their own destruction through over - riding ambition.

The last utterance of Hamlet in Shakespeare's celebrated play is '0,0,0,0', the repetition of it here mocks the woman's taunt to her lover. (Again, please see 1. 126). Her abnormally nervous speech and indecisive behaviour recall Queen Dido's despair at Carthage when Aeneas finally deserts her. In a similar fashion, sleep had disappeared from the woman's 'lidless eyes' as she waited for the arrival of her lover on the appointed time. Eliot's artistic juxtaposition of the sublime (Dido's tragic story) with the ridiculous (the lowly placed London woman's plight) highlights the devaluation of human values in the early twentieth century.

Lines 139 - 172 : This comparatively long passage is the second scene in'A Game of Chess'. The critics often pick this episode to illustrate (the American) Eliot's ignorance of the contemporary life and speech of the working class men and women in (the very British) London. He once frankly admitted that this episode involving a sexual encounter between Lil and Albert owes its origin to a story told him by his housemaid. Incidently, everyone in India knows how talkative and informative on the neighbourhood scandals a housemaid could be. The language and diction in this scene are deliberately stylized as in a musical comedy. Eliot contrasts a meaningless and sterile sexual encounter between a lower middle-class woman and her man with the unchecked fertility of a woman in a pub (one of London's numerous popular public bar cum - restaurants). Both relationships, as cleverly presented in the two episodes, are a negation of the number of children that are likely to be born out of the union of a love marriage. The poet is here mainly involved with the basic problem of sexual morality, he is not concerned with the distinctions of class in society.

Dear students, in order to understand the second scene in the second part of *The Waste Land,* you have to image a situation in a public bar of the postwar London where the two women are having an intimate conversation about their immediate status and family circumstances. Lil is worried about the return after war of Albert, her soldier husband, while her unnamed friend wants her to take better care of herself before she welcomes back the man of the house. The experienced friend goes to the extent of advising Lil to order a new set of teeth (dentures) so as to look more attractive to her husband who has already paid her to fix the dentures. The soldiers

all over the world, when they return home from war, look forward to having a 'good time' with their wives or girl friends, and that includes plenty of sex. If the women do not provide that kind of relaxing entertainment, the men will naturally look for it somewhere else. As Lil looks accusingly at her wise and experienced friend, the latter advises her to take good care of Albert for her own sake. After all, why should Lil look old at just thirty one. Perhaps it is due to the pills she took to bring off an abortion having already aborted five times. She knows the pills have had a bad effect on her in spite of the assurances of the chemist from whom she bought the medicine. The friend is at a loss to understand why Lit married if she did not want children. When Albert finally returns home on a Sunday, Lil invites her friend to dinner to celebrate on the occasion, and she serves special dishes made out of pork (pig's meat). As the pub closes for the day, the women bid farewell to each other, all others present wishing a good night to everybody else. There is a touch of sadness of parting that colours the farewell at the pub.

46.3.3 Critical Comments

Line 92 : Eliot's use of the word 'laquearia' is meant to recall the dinner that Dido hosted in honour of Aeneas.

Lines 124-5 : Here, the allusion is to the story of Paolo Lines 124-5 : Here, the allusion is to the story of Paolo and Francesca who, having subjected reason to lust, are in the second circle of Dante's *Inferno*. Dido and Cleopatra too are found in this very part of Hell.

Line 137: Eliot's note refers to the game of chess in Middleton's ***Women Beware Women***, II, ii.

Line 141 : This is the call of the barman at the closing time in a British pub. The line is repeated throughout the rest of the scene as a refrain. It provides an echo of the idea expressed by Andrew Marvell in 'To His Coy Mistress', II. 185-6:
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near.

Line 172 . These are the last words uttered by Ophelia in Shakespeare's Hamlet, IV, before she drowns herself, driven mad by the doubleshock of rejection by Hamlet and her father's death.

Check Your Progress 2

(a) Write a brief note on the significance of the first twenty lines (77-96) of 'A game of Chess.'

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b) Explain with reference to the context 11.97 - 102.

(c) Briefly comment on the scene at the pub, it, 138 -72.

46.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we aquaint you with two fundamental points that a student needs to grasp beforehand for trying to understand Eliot's poems. The first is that his poetry is a kind of continuous stream of thought as well as a collection of his memories of the past events and works read by him. He quotes his favourite authors to himself in the poems that he writes, and this increases the complexity of his writings. Secondly, Eliot has an obsession with the problems of time, and he tends to let past, present and future times overlap each other. After this preamble (introductory remarks), we give you the glossary and detailed interpretation of the first part of *The Waste Land*, 'The Burial of the Dead', followed by additional critical comments to explain some of the allusions and reference, that we could not include in the interpretation. Then, you have the detailed explanation of 'A Game of Chess', the second part of the poem, on exactly the same pattern as attempted before. In 'Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises', we do an illustrative explanation with reference to the context of a model passage, the exact pattern of which you should follow in your own attempt at the exercises. This particular exercise is aimed to examine your close knowledge of the text of Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*.

46.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

(a) See section 46.2 of the Unit.

(b) See section 46.2.2 of the Unit.

(c) This passage is taken from 'The Burial of the Dead', the first part of *The Waste Land* written by T. S. Eliot. The little of this section of the poem is derived from the service for the burial of the dead in the Church of England. The central theme of this part is barreness, sterility, death and decay. Immediately before the passage under discussion, we have a scene involving Madame Sosostris, the famous prophecying woman, who uses the Tarot park of cards to predict the future of her customers.

Here, Eliot evokes the image of the 'unreal city' which could be London, Paris or any other northern snow bound city in winter. The people, on their way to work, are surrounded by the thick brown fog

of the early morning. The poet visualizes a crowd of people passing over London Bridge, and all of them are saddened by thoughts of death. Each man looks fixedly in front.' the people exhale their sighs, short and irregular, in thick clouds of vapour as happens in sub-zero temperatures. The flowing crowd reminds Eliot of the passage in Dante's *Inferno,* where the poet describes the movement of the damned souls in Hell.

(a) The first twenty lines (77-96) of 'A Game of Chess' deal with the subject of fatal romantic passion, which was a literary tradition of the Renaissance in Europe. Eliot deliberately imitates the style of that tradition. As an example, he recalls the famous first meeting of Mark Antony with Cleopatra as described by Enobarbus in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* The poet also remembers Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock* of Alexander Pope, and Dido Queen of Carthage in Virgil's *Aeneid.*

(b) See section 46.3.2 of the Unit.

(c) See the last paragraph of section 46.3.2.

UNIT 47 T.S. ELIOT : *THE WASTE LAND* (III)

Structure

47.0 Objectives
47.1 Introduction
47.2 III. 'The Fire Sermon'
  47.2.1 Glossary
  47.2.2 Interpretation
  47.2.3 Critical Comments
47.3 IV. 'Death by Water'
  47.3.1 Glossary
  47.3.2 Interpretation and Critical Comments
47.4 V. 'What the Thunder said'
  47.4.1 Glossary
  47.4.2 Interpretation
  47.4.3 Critical Comments
47.5 Conclusion
47.6 Let Us Sum Up
47.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises.

47.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous Unit, you studied the first two part of ***The Waste Land,*** each of which we explained to you with the help of a glossary, detailed interpretation and additional critical comments. Ideally, you ought to read that Unit along with the text of the first two parts more than once to get the best instruction out of it. In the present Unit, we follow the same pattern in teaching you the last three parts of ***The Waste Land,*** i.e . III. 'The Fire Sermon", IV. "Death by Water', V. What the Thunder said". After a careful reading of this Unit, you should be able to answer textual questions on these three parts of the poem. You should also be able to relate each part to the other two, and again the three included here to the two explained in Unit 2. That would give you a complete understanding of ***The Waste Land*** as a unified work of literary art.

47.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we explain the meaning and poetic significance of the last three parts of ***The Waste Land.*** All the complexities have been smoothed out for you, the numerous symbols and metaphors are unravelled, and the musicle literary allusions have been explained in detail with reference to the contexts mind which the poet has drawn those to add to the deeper and wide-rangig , earning of his poem. We follow the earlier model of putting the whole thing across to you with the help of glossaries, interpretations, and critical comments, wherever necessary. Towards the end, we provide a conclusion of our extended discussion of root's poem spread over three Units. There follows the usual summing up of the present Unit as well as the answers and hints to Check Your Progress Exercises." That brings to its logical end our effort of introducing and teaching you the text of ***The Waste Land*** of T.S. Eliot.

47.2 III THE FIRE SERMON

The title of the third part of ***The Waste Land*** is taken from the Fire Sermon preached by Gautam Buddha (563BC-483BC) to convince his followers, the Buddhists, of the negative and evil influence on the human mind of the fires of lust, passion, infatuation and hatred. Though Buddhism as a religious faith started in India, but through the efforts of King Ashoka, the Maurya ruler of the third century BC, it spread across South Asia in Sri Lanka, Burma, Malayasia, Tibet, Thailand, China and

Indonesia. The Buddha's message is still remembered, respected and followed in these countries.

47.2.1 Glossary

nymphs	:	literally pastoral goddesses, but here taken in the sense of pretty young girls loved and entertained by the sons of City directors.
testimony	:	evidence, proof
City	:	the commercial centre of London
Leman	:	the French name for Lake Geneva in Switzerland
chuckle	:	wide-mouthed laughing gesture
slimy	:	covered with wet mud
Musing	:	thinking of
garret	:	poor men's attic (top storey of a house)
Rattled	:	disturbed
Et O... cupole!	:	'And, O those children's voices singing in the dome!'
Tereu	:	the Latin vocative form of Tereus
Smyrna	:	modern Izmir in Western Turkey
currants	:	dried grapes used in cookery
C. I. F.	:	'Cost, insurance and freight'
domotic French	:	the French of common popular speech
Metropole	:	the fashionable hotel at Brighton, a sea resort on south coast of England
violet hour	:	time of sunset, when the violet colour is prominent on the western horizon
throbbing	:	with idling engine as at a red-light crossing
perilously	:	dangerously
combinations	:	undergarments covering body and legs
Stockings	:	close-fitting long socks that cover feet and legs.
camisole	:	women's cotton undergarment
stays	:	not to be confused with the third person present tense of the verb 'stay'; it means 'support for waist or corset'
wrinkled dugs	:	shrunken teats or nipples
carbuncular	:	red or inflamed

assurance	:	self-confidence
Bradford	:	an industrial town in North England
propitious	:	lucky, fortunate
caresses	:	tender loving touches
unreproved	:	unoffended
Tiresias	:	the blind prophet of Thebes in Greece in the days of King Oedipus, about whom Sophocles, the Greek poet of the fifty century BC has written three tragedies known as the 'Theban Trilogy'
gropes	:	feels around in the dark
strand	:	street leading towards the city part of London
whining	:	sad music
mandoline	:	stringed musical instrument
Magnus Martyr	:	the church of Magnus the Martyr built by Christopher Wren, a great British architect.
Ionian	:	ancient Greek style of architecture
barges	:	large flat-bottomed boats
leeward	:	the side away from the wind
spar	:	the strong central pole of a large sailing boat or ship
Greenwich reach:		the south bank of the Thames at Grenwich
Weilia ... leialala	:	the lament of the Rhine maidens in an opera by the German poet, Wagner
stern	:	the rearside of a boat or ship
brisk swell	:	fast-moving waves
peal	:	ringing of bells
Highbury	:	residential suburb in the north of London
Richmond and Kew	:	two riverside districts on the Thames
Moorgate	:	poor area in the City of London
Margate sands	:	seaside resort in Kent on the Thames
Carthage	:	`close to Algeria in North Africa
pluckest	:	takes out (of fire)

Lines 173-86: This opening passage of the third part of *The Waste Land* provides some visual images of the River Thames in autumn. The leafy branches of the trees on the river bank provide a tent-like shelter in summer. But, at the present time, the leaves that resemble hands with fingers have fallen down on the wet earth, and there is no shelter. The cold wind blows across the land without the noisy flutter of the leaves. The pretty young girls are gone away. Line 176, 'Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song', recalls the refrain of Edmund Spenser's 'Prothalamion.' There is no evidence of the picnics and parties held on the river bank on the summer nights-none of the debris (left overs) that people generally leave behind on such occasions. The sons of the directors of the companies situated in the City part of London, the boy friends of the 'gone away' girls too have departed from the scene. They have not left their addresses by which they could be traced.

Line 182 is an echo of the psalmist's lament, when he recalls the longing of the Jews for their homeland during their exile in biblical Babylonia : "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion (Isreal).' The biblical associations of the line evoke the poet's feelings of despair and alienation from contemporary life of the early twentieth century. Lines 185-6 are an ironic variation on the theme of 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvell, the seventeenth century English metaphysical poet:

> But at my back 1 always hear
> Time's winged chariot hurrying near.

This sad image of death is the very opposite of Spenser's lyricism. Eliot suggests death as a human skelton with the naked jaws spread to their extreme limits in a gesture of omnious laughter.

Lines 187-202 This second passage presents a contrasting picture of the River Thames. The persona or speaker of these lines ironically identifies himself with the Fisher King of the legand. The image of the slimy rat dragging itself through the bushes on the bank is an ugly picture providing a contrast to the earlier bright images of the river. The persona identifies himself with Prince Ferdinand of Naples in *The Tempest* of Shakespeare, mourning the reported death by drowning of his father. This obsession with the naked realism of the images connected with death are opposed to the renewal of life in the fertility myths. There follows on echo of a line in Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress'. Sweeney is Eliot's recurring image of the natural, sensual man, and also figures in poems like 'Sweeney Erect',' 'Sweeney among the Nightingales', and' Sweeney Agonistes.'

In his notes, Eliot says that lines 199-201 are taken from a ballad which someone wrote to him from Sydney, Australia. Mrs. Porter was a legendary brothel-keeper in Cairo, Egypt, in some versions of the ballad, which was popular among the Australian soldiers during the First World War. The soda water is not the aerated drink but the bicarbonate of soda solution. The next line is in French, from Paul Verlaine's (1844-96) 'Parsifal', and it means' And, O those children's voices singing in the dome.' The quotation evokes on ironic awareness that such aspiration perhaps exists only in art and literature.

Lines 203-6 The first two lines consist of sounds made by birds like sparrows and nightingales. And, then there is repetition of a phrase that, obviously, refers to the rape of Philomela by her sister's husband, King Tereus. Hence the single word "Tereu" which concludes this passage.

Lines 207-14 The 'Unreal City' could be any city in Europe, America or Asia. It is a ghost city-hence unreal-where the passing crowd and life in general are hidden under the fog of a winter noon. Eugenides, the merchant from western Turkey, is ironically associated with the Fool in the Tarot cards. Eliot once admitted that, while working in a bank in the City, he was invited by an unshaven man from Smyrna with currants in his pockets. Also, in any business transaction, the documents of ownership and transport would be handed over to the purchaser in exchange for a bank draft payable at night.

Lines 215-27 At the time of sunset, when the western sky bears a violet colour, the clerks of the banks and offices in the City stand up and stretch their backs as a gesture of realization (after a whole day spent working at the desk). Their bodies are like taxi-engines idling at the side of the road, waiting for a customer. At that very hour, Tiresias (the blind prophet of ancient Greece), who lives between the two fives of a male and female, and whose breasts are shrunken in old age, has a vision of what life brings to each man and woman as reward of their daily labour.

That is the time when the sailor comes home from the sea. The typist returns home from office at tea-time, clears the dishes from the dining table and makes preparations for the dinner. Her undergarments, touched by the last rays of the sun, are hanging dangerously out of the windows. On the divan, which serves as her bed at night, are spread all the various items of her clothes of daily use.

Lines 228-48 Tiresias foresees the scene that follows and make a prophecy for the future. Like the London typist, he too waits for the visitor expected by her. Finally, the young man with a disfigured face, arrives at the typist's flat. He is no hero, only an ordinary house-agent's clerk, but his self-assurance is as high as that of a rich industrialist from Bradford in North England. The clerk imagines that the typist must have finished her dinner, and must be feeling tries and bored. Hence, she would be in a receptive mood to love-making. He tried his best to arouse her passion by caressing her, but she remains unresponsive. Finally being himself sexually aroused, he assaults her without any resistance from her. He is so egotistical and selfish that he does not expect a response from her, and regards her indifference as a welcome to his advances. Tiresias, the eternal witness of Theaves in ancinent Greece has undergone the suffering and pain of the typist centuries ago, in anticipation of the events to come. He has given company to the lowest among the dead, and he watches ineffectually while the clerk gives a parting kiss to the typist before finding his way down by the darkly lit stairs.

Lines 249-56 The typist has hardly noticed the departure of her lover. She looks at her reflection in the mirror, and feels relieved that the pre=arranged sexual encounter is over. The narrator quotes a line from Olivia's song in Oliver Goldsmith's novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (of the eighteenth century) to suggest a contrast between the typist's situation and the seduction of Olivia in that novel. The typist moves

around in her room absent-mindedly smooth down her ruffled hair, and puts a record on the gramophone as if nothing has happened. This episode of the typist and the clerk, like the one in the pub before it, is a deliberate thearical device by Eliot to achieve a satiric effect.

Lines 257-65 Here, the poet begins with a quotation from Ferdinand's reflection on the music that distracts him away from through of his father's supposed death by drowning in *The Tempest,* I.ii 192. The music is an ironic reference to the typist gramophone record while recalling Ariel's song in shakespeare's play. The narrator of *The Waste Land* takes us along the strand and Queen Victoria Street in the City district of London, where is heard the sad music of a mandoline near a public bar in Lower Thames Street. He also remembers the cluttering sound of utensils and talk of the fishermen who usually relax there at noon. Nearby, the walls of the Church of St. Magnus the Martyr display the white and gold columns of the Greek (Ionian) style of its architecture.

Lines 266-78 In his notes to the poem, Eliot says that the song of the three Thames daughters starts here. From line 292 to line 306, they speak one by one. His Thames daughters merge with the nymphs of the opening section of this part of *The Waste Land* and present an ironic variation of Spenser's Daughters of the Flood in Prothalamion and the German poet Wagner's Rhine daughters in the opera, *The Twilight of the Gods, III.* i. The Thames daughters complain that the surface of the river is covered with oil and tar; the flat-bottomed freight-carrying boats have to shift position between the high and low tides of the sea, the widespread red sails change direction with the tide while hanging by the central poles of the barges that push floating logs of wood down the river towards Greenwich and the Isle of Dogs. The two lines that conclude this passage are the lament of the Rhine maidens of Wagner.

Lines 279-91 In his note to the first line of this passage, Eliot refers to the History of England, vii, 349 by J.A. Froude, where there is an allusion to the love-affair between Queen Elizabeth I (of the late sixteenth century) and her minister, Earl of Leicester. They were once together on a boating excursion on the Thames where the Spanish Ambassador was also present. The passage that follows recalls Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's barge in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (see interpretation of line 77 in Unit of this Block). The rear - side of the boat was painted in red and gold. The quick-flowing waves struck against both shores of the river. The southwesterly winds carried the sound of the ringing bells down stream where the white stone towers of the Tower of London could be seen. There follows a repetition of the lament of the Rhine maidens of Wagner.

Lines 292-311 What follows in this passage is the song of the three Themes daughters. The first speaks of the boring trams and dustry trees of Highbury in North London. The riverside districts of Richmond and Kew do not please her either. Floating down near Richmond she raises her knees, lying on her back on the floor of a narrow boat. This action is obviously, meant for the convenience of the lover accompanying her in the boat. The second girl says that she had her encounter in the poor quarter (area) of Moorgate. At that time, her heart was virtually under her feet because of the sexual excitement she experienced. After the encounter, her lover feels sorry and cries out of remorse. He promises to behave property in future, a remark

on which she makes no comment. Being practical-minded, she knowns there is no reason for her to resent the physical union that she and her lover enjoyed together. The third Thames daughter declares on Margate Sands, a seaside resort on the Thames in Kent, that she finds it difficult to connect different things together. She ponders over the broken fingernails of her dirty hands (which is a hint of her low working class origin in society.

The reference to Carthage is taken from the Confessions (iii, 1) of St.Augustine, who was born in Algeria and went to Carthage at the age of sixteen. In the passage under reference, he writes of the sensual temptations of his youth. The word 'burning' repeated four times indicates not only sexual passion, but also the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah as recounted in the Old Testament. Eliot points out in his note, that the coming together of the Buddha and St.Augustine, the two representatives of East and West, in their opinion of lustful physical passion in love, is the culmination of this part of *The Waste Land.* Both the religious leaders refer to sensual temptation as a burning fire. While the Buddha advocates a rejection of the pleasures of the senses leading to freedom from passion and rebirth, St.Augustine trusts to the grace of God for the ultimate salvation of man in Christian terms.

47.2.3 Critical Comments

Line 173

This line provides a link with the last line of the second part of *The Waste Land,* and thereby helps to sustain the continuity of the poem. The images that one finds in this line recall Ophelia's death by drowning in Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* and that is already alluded to in the final passage of part II. 'A Game of Chess', passage from the German book, in which the author writes of the drunken spiritual frenzy of Eastern Europe, where the saint and the seer listen to the people's song with tears in their eyes. That work by Hesse is a commentary on how *The Brothers Karamozov* of the Russian novelist Dostoevsky (1821-81) provides a prophetic vision of the collapse of Europe that actually came about during the First World War. Hesse spent those years in neutral Switzerland, and wrote denunciations of militarism and nationalism. He regards the maintenance of civilization as a conflict between man's rationality and his repressed wile instincts, which he seems emerging as the decay of European culture. Eliot shares the vision of Hesse whom he visited in May 1922. Line 367 recalls Christ's words to the women who lamented him as he was led away to be crucified: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for your selves and your children. (New Testament, Luke xx iii, 27-8). The word 'horde' came into the Europeen languages from the steppes of Central Asia. It means a mass of creatures on the move, on the attack, a blind menace, more animal than human. That is how the 'hooded' Mongols came down on horses in their thousands from their Central Asian camps to invade and spread their empire across South Asia and China, led by fierce commanders like Changes Khan and Halaku Khan. They symbolise the primitive invading forces, underwhose relentless onslaught the European cultures, like those of the Jews and Christians (Jerusalem), the Greeks (Athens), the Pharoahs and the Arabs (Alexandria), the East Europeans (Vienna), and the British (London) fall as of little consequence. The various cities of Europe, Asia and Africa, mentioned in this passage, are examples of the 'Unreal City' of Eliot's wasteland. The decay of Europe is seen within the perspective of the rise and fall of civilizations throughout

history. Eliot's vision of the unreal cities might be intended as a contrast to the ideal city of Plato as described by him in his *Republic.*

Line 377-84 The fantastic and unreal imagery of these lines was partly inspired by a painting of Hieronymus Bosch, the fifteenth century Dutch artist. In the panel entitled 'Hell', Bosch has painted night, marish visions of Hell with a bat-like semi-human figure crawling head-first down a rock wall. This passage in the poem recreates the strange and unreal world of Bosh's symbolic picture of hell.

Lines 176 This is the refrain of 'Prothalamion', a much appreciated lyrical poem by Edmund Spenser of the late sixteenth century. While celebrating a double marriage at which he was present, Spenser expresses his appreciation of the River Thames and the city of London through which it flows before going down into the sea. Hence the refrain, which appeals to the river to flow softly till the poet ends his song. By repeating the line here, Eliot too celebrates London and the tames.

Lines 197-8 In his notes, Eliot refers to the *Parliament of Bees*, a play by John Day (1574-1640?) quoting :

> When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear,
> A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring
> Actaeon to Diana in the spring,
> Where all shall see her naked skin...

In Greek mythology, Actaeon was a hunter who surprised Diana, the goddess of chastity, when she was bathing in a river, As punishment, the goddess turned him into a stag, and he was torn to pieces by his own dogs.

Line 209 Smyrna was in the news, and was of topical (current) interest when *The Waste Land* was being written. In May, 1919, Smyrna was accupied by the Greek army, but was recaptured by the Turks in 1922.

Lines 243-6 In these three lines, Eliot refers to the bisexuality of Tiresias and to his role in two masterpieces of Greek poetry, *Oedipus Rex (* a play) of Sophocles and the *Odyssey* (an eipc) of Homer. In both the classics, he is shown to be a blind visionary with prophecying powers. But, then, he is also linked with the Roman Sibyls, women who could predict the future events.

Check Your Progress 1

(a) Write a short note on the relevance of Eliot's repetition of Edmund Spenser's line, 'Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song.'

(b) What do you know about Eliot's 'Unreal City'?

47.3 IV DEATH BY WATER

'Death by Water' is a revised version of the last seven lines of a French poem, 'Dans le Restaurant', that Eliot wrote in May-June, 1981. This part of *The Waste Land* refers to the various associated connections of water with mortaility and the theme of death by drowning. It has links with the drowned god of the fertility cults, the shipwreck in *The Tempest* of Shakespeare, and with the death of Ophelia in *Hamlet.* In ancient Egypt, the yearly ritual of the god's head being thrown into the Nile was an enactment of the death and resurrection of the god. The Bengali Hindus follow the same ritual on the tenth day of the Durga Puja Festival in October when they immerse decorated images of the goddess in the Hoogly, the sea, or the nearest river. In Maharashtra, the same practice is observed on Ganesh Chaturthi (the fourth day of the bright fortnight in September) when the images of the Elephant God after ritual puja are taken out to the sea or the nearest watering place accompanied by a procession of devotees singing and dancing all the way to the chosen spot. In Eliot's poem, the emphasis is on death, and not on the hope of rebirth into a new life. Perhaps there is also an allusion to the Christian sacrament of baptism, at which the holy water becomes an agent of death of the old self and rebirth of the spirit.

47.3.1 Glossary

Gulls : large sea-birds that haunt the sea coasts.

Whirlpool : current of water moving in a circle

Gentile : non-Jewish person such as a Christian

Wheel : the steering wheel of a ship

Windward : the side of the ship from which the wind blows.

47.3.2 Interpretation and Critical Comments

Lines 312-21 Phlebas the Phoenician is connected with several other figures in *The Waste Land,* such as : (a) 'the drowned Phoenician Sailor' of Line 47 in part I, (b) the 'one-eyed merchant', who is the Fool in the Tarot cards of Line 52, and (c) Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant of line 209 in part III. Since he is already dead, there is no question of remembering the cry of the sea gulls, the movement of the deep sea, and any matters concerning profit and loss, which were his everyday business while he was alive.

An undersea current gently disturbs the bones of Phlebas. His bones rise and fall suggesting the different stages of his youth and old age while he was living. Lines 315-16 recall Alonso's words in *The Tempest,* where he thinks that his son, Ferdinand, is perhaps dead. The narrator of the poem next addresses the pilot (of a hypothetical ship) who turns the wheel that controls the direction of the ship. The pilot is asked to ponder over the fate of Phlebas who was once handsome and tall like the former. The phrase, 'Gentile or Jew', is an

evocation to all mankind, of non-Jewish or Jewish origins. 'The wheel' could also be taken as the wheel of fortune in the Tarot pack. The last line in this passage has a link with *Philebus,* a dialogue of Plato (Greek philosopher of 5th century BC). There Socrates, the Greek philosopher and teacher of Plato, refers to 'People who think themselves taller and more handsome and physically finer.... than they really are'. In saying so, Socrates is actually commenting on self-deception.

Check Your Progress 2

(a) What is the significance of the title, 'Death by Water'?

(b) What does Phlebas the Phoenician Sailor represent in the overall context of *The Waste Land?*

47.4 V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

Eliot thought that the fifth and last part of *The Waste Land,* entitled 'What the Thunder said', was not only the best part, but the only part that justified the whole [poem]'. In the first section of part V, three themes are introduced: the journey to Emmaus (a village near Jerusalem), the approach to the Chapel Perilous, the present decay of Eastern Europe. The story of the journey to Emmaus occurs in the New Treatment, Luke XXIV, 13-31. Two disciples of Jesus Christ were travelling on the road to the village after his crucifixion and discussing the events of the past few days. Christ, just risen from the grave, joins them and explains to them how his death and resurrection were in full accord with the divine plan. The disciples do not recognise Christ until he blesses their evening meal, and then he disappears from the scone. The approach to the Chapel Perilous is the final stage of the quest for the Holy Graill (the cup used by Christ at his last supper with his disciples). The decay of Eastern Europe is a reference to the Red (communist) Revolution of Russia under the Czars in November, 1917, with the refugees fleeing to West Europe. None of these themes is resolved in 'What the Thunder said', the three journeys merge here but remain inconclusive.

47.4.1 Glossary

frosty cold in the winter frost.

reverberation Resounding echo

carious decayed with cavities

serile thunder only the sound of thunder but no fruitful rain

snarl	threatening noise like that made by on aggressive animal
mud cracked	mud-houses with cracks on the surface due to dry heat
cicada	chirping insect resembling a grasshopper
hermit thrush	a song-bird that frequents lonely places
Gliding	moving along noiselessly
mantle	cloak
lamentation	expression of grief
hordes	crowds
Ringed	surrounded
Jerusalam	city in Palestine (modern Israel) where the tomb of Christ is situated. It is a place equally sacred to the Jews, Christians and Mohammedans.
Athens	capital city of Greece, centre of ancient Greek culture
Alexandria	port city of Egypt founded by Alexander the Great of Macedonia (in ancient Greece)
Vienna	capital of Austria, centre of art and music
reminiscent	that which reminds us of something
cisterns	tanks for storing water
tumbled	irregular, overthrown
chapel	place other than a Church used for Christian worship
roof tree	the main beam supporting the ridge of the roof
Coco rico	cock's crowning signal at dawn
Himavant	Sanskrit name for the Himalaya mountain
humbped	hung over
Datta	Sanskrit for 'to give' or 'given'
prudence	worldly wisdom
retract	reverse, withdraw
obituaries	notices of death
solicitor	lawyer who advises clients
Dayadhvam	to be compassionate
aethereal	airy, baseless

Cariolanus the Roman general in Shakespeare's play of the same

Damyata self-control

arid dry, parched

Poi..affina '-be mindful in due time of my pain.' Quoted from Dante's *Purgatorio* xxvi, 145-8.

Quando ... Chelidon: 'When shall 1 become as the swallow?'

Le Prince ... abolie 'The Prince Aquitaine of the ruined tower

shore propped or supported with wooden pillars

lle I shall

Hieronymo character in the *Spanish Tragedy* of Thomas Kyd **(1557-95)**

Shantih Sanskrit for 'peace'

47.4.2 Interpretation

Lines 322-30 This passage recalls the chain of events from the betrayal (by Judas Iscariat, an early disciple) and arrest of Jesus Christ, after the night of agony and prayer in the garden of Gathsemane, up to the time of his crucifixion. Judas, along with a group of soldiers and men from the Jewish priests, came to the garden with lanterns, torches and weapons. Christ was arrested and taken to the palace of the High Priest, where he was openly questioned before being taken to the Hall of Judgement, where Pilate the Roman governor of Palestine was awaiting him. On the day of Christ's crucifixion, there was a terrible earthquake. His death meant a kind a universal death for all. 'Patience' of line 30 is the key-word in this passage since it signifies the suffering of the living humanity after Christ was no more. It also denotes the agony of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of mankind.

Lines 331-58 Eliot thought these twenty-eight lines of the water-dripping song to be the only good lines in *The Waste Land,* and hence immortal compared to the transitoriness of the rest of the poem. He believed that the less realistic literature was, the more visual it must be. In order to be seen, dreams must be real, or at least seem to be so. In this passage, clear visual images, and sounds that artistically convey the sense of the words, create hypnotizing recitative rhythms to achieve an unusual effect. The evocative suggestion is one of an arid and waterless rocky region, a virtual wasteland or desert, where there is no hope of regeneration and life. This God-forsaken land would be transformed if only there were some water somewhere. The repetition of certain key-words like 'rock' and, water' only heighten the general atmosphere of dryness and sterility.

There is no water in this land, only rocks and a winding sandly road which goes up among the dry and bare mountains. If only there were water, the travellers on the road would gladly stop to drink. But, for want of that, they can neither stop to rest nor think of what to do. The heat of the sand underfoot dries their sweat. The rock is like the cavity-filled mouth of the mountain that does not spit (or yield) any water. This is no place to rest and refresh oneself. The dry mountains are not silent but echoing with the sound of rainless

thunder. There is not even the solace of solitude, since the ominous faces of the dwellers of this wasteland glare at the pedestrian travellers from the doors of cracked mud-houses. So what the narrator of the poem repeatedly asks for is only some water without rock, and, if that were not possible, let it be rock with a little water. He desperately craves for a spring, a pool among the rocks. What he asks for is the sound of water only, not that of the dry grass or the cicada. Above all sounds, he cares for the sound of water flowing over a rock, surrounded by the pine trees and the song of the hermit-thrush. But, unfortunately, his eager ears do not hear the 'drip drop drip drop' sound of water.

Lines 359-65 Here we have a change of scene. We have to imagine ourselves watching the progress of the two followers of Christ on the road to Emmaus near Jerusalem. One asks the other about the shadowy presence of a third person, dressed in a hooded brown cloak, silently walking by their side. He is not sure if it is a man or woman, but who could it be! Obviously, the cloaked figure is that of Christ risen from the grave.

Line 366-76 Eliot, in his notes, refers to the 1920 text of *Blick ins Chaos* ('A Glimpse into Chaos') by the German writer, Herman Hesse (1872-1962). He quotes a 'Shanthi' is the formal ending to an Upnishad. Eliot's use of the Sanskrit word implies that he had to look beyond the European tradition to find a word of adequate depth and resonance.

47.4.3 Critical Comments

Line 326 Francis Bacon (1561-1626), The first English essayist, begins his essay 'Of Truth' with this line: ' "What is truth"? Asked jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer " '. When interrogated by Pilate, Christ is reported to have told him that whatever he preached was only truth. Pilate made the remarks quoted above, and ceremoniously washed his hands of the whole affair. He walked out of the Hall of Judgement after handing Christ over to the Jewish High priest, who condemned him to death by crucifixion under the Jewish law. Incidentally, *Jesting Pilate* is the title of a book by Aldous Huxley, a popular British writer of the twentieth Century.

Line 353 The cicadas frequent the willow groves of Kashmir, where their shrill high-pitched noise in chorus could be heard throughout the day in summer and autumn. They are also found in other Asian countries like Japan.

Lines 366-70 (a) Herman Hesse is also the author of a novel called *Siddartha,* based on the Indian theme of how and when Buddhism as a faith started in India. A picture was made in English on this novel with Shashi Kapoor and Simi Grewal in the lead roles. (b) Nasir-ud-Din Babar was a Muslim descendent of the Mongols of Central Asia. He established the rule of the Mughal dynasty in Delhi, which lasted for nearly 250 years. Kublai Khan of S.T. Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan', was a Mongol King in a part of China, which is now known as Mangolia.

Line 395 Eliot uses the Sanskrit name for the river, commonly known in India, but not the anglicized term 'the Ganges'.

Line 397 'Himavant', again is the Sanskrit name of the high snowcovered Himalayan mountain range. The literal meaning of the word is 'snowbound'.

played upon with a bow like the strings of a violin? The tolling bells are the church bells of London and of the 'failling towers' of other capital cities of the countries of three continents surrounding the Mediterranean sea on three sides. There is also a reference to Browning's poem, 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.' In his Clarke Lectures of 1926, Eliot praises this poem for achieving the stet of a double world, whereby the character's words and deeds seem to belong to another plane of reality, from which he is in exile. The background of 'What the Thunder said' resembles the dream-like world of Browning's poem, the narrative of which too is in the form of a quest. In the Old Testament, the empty cistern and wells signified the loss of faith and the worship of false gods.

Lines 385-394 Suddenly, we are confronted with a scene that is a contrast to the earlier desert-like desolation. There is an empty place of worship, without doors and windows. The wind comes and goes through it as it likes. But in this deserted small gap in the mountains, the grass is singing over a graveyard in the faint moonlight. The dry bones of the graves can cause no harm. A cock stands on the roof tree of the chapel, crowing, 'Co co rico co co rico' in the flash of lightning. Soon after a damp gust of wind brings welcome rain. The cock is connected with the betrayal of Christ. After his arrest by the soldiers of Pilate, the Roman governor of Palestine, one of his first disciples, Peter, thrice denies that he knows him. The cock crows after the third denial. Peter then remembers what his master had previously said to him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' (Matthew xxvi, 69-75). The crowing of the cock in Eliot's poem marks the moment of Peter's recognition of his betrayal of Christ. The cock, however, is a bird of good omen since it announces the morning, when the evil sprits, and ghosts, that walk the earth by night, are dispersed. Eliot's reproduction of the cock's crowing is the French equivalent of the English 'cock-a-doodle-do'. What follows this passage is an echo of the message of the *Bhagvad Gita* and the Hindu *Upnishads*.

Lines 395-409 The poet suddenly has thoughts of the River Ganga (Ganges) and its land, India. In the heat of the summer, while the river was almost dry and the lifeless leaves of the trees on the banks awaited the rain, the dark clouds gathered over the Himalayas, and the forests waited in silence. At that time, the thunder in terms of the message of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* V, 2. The threefold offspring of Brahama, the Creator in Hindu mythology, i.e., men, gods and demons, approach him after finishing their formal education. To each group, he says only one syllable, *'DA'*, and they interpret it according to their separate ways of thinking. The men interpret it as *datta,* which means 'to give'? The demons interpret it as *dayadhvam,* which means 'to be compassionate'. The gods interpret it as *damyata,* which means 'to control oneself'. When the three groups express what they understand by *'DA',* Brahma responds with *Om,* which signifies that they have understood him. The thunder in heaven repeats that very message. *DA, DA, DA,* i.e., give to the needy, be compassionate, exercise self-control. One should practise this very three-fold advice, and that is how Dr. S. Radhakrishnan interprets the fable in the *Principal Upanishads* (London Allen and Unwin, 21953, pp. 289-90). The fable concludes by asking men to practise all the

three commands for there are no gods or demons other than men. Eliot adopts this very interpretation, and lends to it his own meaning.

Hence, the poet asks, 'What have we given?' Sometimes, like Peter, with a palpitating heart, we surrender to a momentary weakness, which the wisdom of experience cannot reverse. Our acts of giving might not be recorded in the obituaries, memorials or wills the seals of which shall be broken by the lawyers after our death. But, by those very acts of charity have we lived, and shall be remembered by the posterity.

Lines 410-22 Eliot says that in this world we are like prisoners in a locked cell. The key in the lock turned only once, and that is when we are truly compassionate towards the underprivileged. To remember the key is a confirmation of our worldly imprisoned state. Perhaps only at nightfall do we remember our true state like Coriolanus, the Shakespearean hero who was a prisoner of his own conscience, and eventually perished for his own past misdeeds of arrogane and want of compassion. As for *damyata,* Eliot translates the word as 'control' when the more accurate rendering would be 'restrain' or 'control yourselves'. However, the emphasis in this third command of the thunder is on self-control or self-restraint. The image that the poet evokes in support of the Upanishdic idea is that of a boat, well-equipped with sail and/or, and which responds to the hand of the helmsman who controls its movement. When the mind is like a calm sea, the heart of an individual (like the boat) would easily respond to the guiding hand of the captain (call him god if you so like).

Lines 423-33 In his notes, Eliot refers to the chapter on the Fisher King in Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance.* The ruler of the wasteland is sitting upon the shore, fishing, with the desert behind him, and is pondering over the question if he should set his lands in order. The failling of the London Bridge, a historical monument of the capital of the British Empire, is a startling event that foreshadows not only the decline of Europe but also the winding up of the Empire.

Procne, the wife of King Tereus, was transformed into a swallow, and Philomela, her sister raped by Tereus, into a nightingale. In his notes, Eliot refers to Philomela as mentioned in part II (lines 99 - 103) and part III (lines 203 - 6) of *The Waste Land.* There is also an echo of Tennyson's poem ('O Swallow, Swallow, if i could follow...') to evoke a yearning for release and transformation, together with a realization of its impossibility. 'The Prince of Aquitaine, of the ruined tower' is a line from the sonnet 'El Desdichado' (The Disinherited) by Gerard de Nerval (1808-55). The medieval concept of courtly love, which deeply influenced later European lyrical poetry, first appeared in the minstrel poetry of France. Physical passion is neutralized in the cult of courtly love. The 'ruined tower' is linked with the earlier images of falling towers, and again signifies the disintegration of civilization and of the self. One of the cards in the Tarot pack is the tower struck by lightning.

In his note to line 431, Eliot refers to *The Spanish Tragedy of Thomas Kyd* (1557 - 95), subtitled 'Hieronymo is Mad Again'. Hieronymo, mad with grief over the murder of his son, plans the destruction of the murderers. His answer to the suggestion of writing a play is double-edged, meaning that he will write something suitable for the occasion, and that he will punish the murderers fittingly. Hieronymo's play is composed of fragments of poetry in unknown

languages. In the guise of Hieronymo, the poet seems to threaten the reaer.

Lir e 416 Perhaps the memory of 'a broken Coriolanus' is a reminder to such people as are self-dependent and lacking in human sympathy.

Line 426 This is the refrain of a nursery rhyme. The line is connected with the apocalytic vision (relating to the Revelation of St. John in the New Testament part of the Bible) of falling towers (refer Lines 373-5). That vision is of the future or events to come before the final destruction of the human race at the time of the Last Judgement of mankind by God.

Line 429 Aquitaine was a region in the south of France, where the ministrel poets, writing in their French dialect, flourished from the late eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.

Check Your Progress - 3

(a) Explain the meaning and significance of the following lines with reference to the context:

There is always another one walking beside you Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle hooded I do not know whether a man or a woman - But who is that on the other side of you?_____

(b) What is the relevance and meaning of the Sanskrit words, i.e., *Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata ?*

47.5 CONCLUSION TO *THE WASTE LAND*

The ending of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot is marked by a sense of uncertainly. It has been suggested that the last line, which is a triple repetition of the Sanskrit word 'Shantih', invokes the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. To Eliot it means a moment of exhausion after the hard endeavour of writing the poem. It also expresses a longing for peace, appeasement, absolution, and something close to total destruction which in itself is indescribable. Professor Balanchandra Rajan (In 'The

Dialect of the Tribe' in A.D. Moody, ed. *'The Waste Land* in Different Voices'; London : Edwin Arnold, 1974, p. 14) says that the final benediction of Eliot may be read 'as reflecting the peace of enlightenment, or as indicating no more than exhausted subsidence [or falling] into a consolatory formula, a termination rather than an ending.' If it is not Eliot's greatest poem, *The Waste Land* is certainly his most influential work. The generation of English poets that grew in the years immediately after the First World War absorbed the poem so that it became a part of their mental set up. The depth and violence of the contrasts of themes, the sense that the poet wresting with the problem within and outside his mind is stronger here than in Eliot's later poetry. Even in his commonly acknowledged great work, *The Four Quartets,* one does no feel that philosophy and everyday life have been brought so together as in *The Waste Land.*

47.6 LET US SUM UP

As in the previous Unit in this Block, here too we have systematically done our job of explaining to you the text of the remaining three parts of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot: III. 'The Fire Sermon', IV. 'Death by Water', and V. 'What the Thunder said'. After a brief introduction to each part, we provide for you a useful glossary so that you do not have to depend too much on a dictionary of the English language. Next, we give you the detailed interpretation and analysis of each part. This is so exhaustive that you would not have to look for a critical work or help-book for a thorough understanding of the text of the poem. Almost all the literary, mythical and biblical allusions have been explained, as far as possible within the scope of this Unit, to make it easy for you to unravel the many layers of meaning that Eliot's complex and multi-dimensional poem possesses. In case, we have missed some indirect references into the interpretation, we provide additional information on each part of the poem under a separate subsection called 'Critical Comments' That should help you in tackling explanations with reference to the context and other textual questions on the poem in the examination . We round off our painstaking effort with a 'Conclusion' that hints at the significance of studing this epoch-making poem of T.S. Eliot as a representative work of modern English literature, which is an important part of your post-graduate syllabus at IGNOU. As usual, the critical interpretation of each part of the poem is followed by 'Check Your Progress' exercises, the hints and answers to which re provided at the end of the Unit.

47.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Cheek Your Progress 1

(a) This Line is a deliberate repetition of the refrain from 'Prothalamion', a lyrical poem by Edmund Spenser, the late sixteenth century English poet of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I . That poem is about a double marriage celebration of the aristocracy in London at which Spenser was an honoured guest. While he writes imaginatively of the two weddings, he also lovingly describes the towers of the city of London and the boat procession of the two bride-grooms on the River Thames. Hence the refrain, 'Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song.' Eliot's repetition of this line expresses his own admiration of the beauty and grandeure of the river that flows through London, one of the great historical and metropolitan cities of Europe.

(b) Please refer to 47.2.1 'Interpretation', lines 207-14.

Check Your Progress 2

(a) Please refer to 47.3.

(b) Please refer to 47.3.2 'Interpretation and Critical Comments', lines 312-21

Check Your Progress 3

(a) These four lines have been taken from 'What the Thunder said', the fifth and last part of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot, who regards this as the best part of that widely inflnential poem in the history of English literature. According to him the last part justifies the whole poem. The lines under reference relate to the journey to Emmaus (a village near Jerusalem in ancient Palastine) undertaken by two disciples of Jesus Christ soon after his crucifixion.

Though there are only two of them walking together, one notices the shadowy presence of a third figure by the side of his companion. Hence he asks him about the identity of the additional person. The third figure moves along softly, entirely covered by a hooded brown cloak, which makes it difficult to say whether it is a man or woman. The doubt in his mind makes the disciple repeat his question regarding the third, shadowy, figure moving on the road along with them.

This passage hints at the resurrection of Christ, who joins these two disciples on their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus even before the other disciples come to know about christ's rising from the grave for the good of mankind.

(b) *Datta* means 'give in charity' to the needy and the poor. It is an appeal to the charitable instincts of an individual. *Dayadhvam* means 'be compassionate 'to the people in misery and helplessness. It is an appeal to the emotions of pity and compassion in a person. *Damyata* means 'contract yourself' in the world full of temptations. It is an appeal that exhorts one to exercise self-control in order to live at peace with others.

Additions to 1.5 ANNOTATED READING LIST

I. Works of T.S. Eliot:

1. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'; an interesting early poem from *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969). Here Eliot writes with a touch of irony about the fashionable London society of the time he came over from America to settle down in England. In this poem, one finds him experimenting with the language and form of the English verse, the improved version of which is found in *The Waste Land* and the culmination in Four Quartets. Some of the favourite images of Eliot, such as that of London under a brown fog, appear for the first time in 'The Love Song'.

2. Essays on 'Hamlet' and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1928; repeated 1976). In the essay on 'Hamlet', Eliot puts forward his theory of the 'objective correlative', by which he means a set of images and patterns that tend to recur in the work of a writer, thereby achieving a unity of structure in that work. The other essay is known for its theory of how a writer works within an accepted tradition and yet maintains his individuality as a literary artist.

ADAM'S CURSE

We sat together at one summer's end,
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
And you and I, and talked of poetry.
I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

Better go down upon your marrow-bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake
There's many a one shall find out all heartache
On finding that her voice is sweet and low
Replied, 'To be born woman is to know–
Although they do not talk of it at school–
That we must labour to be beautiful.'

I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
There have been lovers who thought love should be
So much compounded of high courtesy
That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
Precedents out of beautiful old books;
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

MAEN-106/586

NO SECOND TROY

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

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
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–
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

September 25, 1916

SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees
–Those dying generations–at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

1927

LAPIS LAZULI
(For Harry Clifton)

I have heard that hysterical women say
They are sick of the palette and fiddle-bow,
Of poets that are always gay,
For everybody knows or else should know
That if nothing drastic is done
Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out,
Pitch like King Billy bomb-balls in
Until the town lie beaten flat.

All perform their tragic play,
There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
Yet they, should the last scene be there,
The great stage curtain about to drop,
If worthy their prominent part in the play,
Do not break up their lines to weep.
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.
All men have aimed at, found and lost;
Black out; Heaven blazing into the head:
Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.
Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages,
And all the drop-scenes drop at once
Upon a hundred thousand stages,
It cannot grow by an inch or an ounce.

On their own feet they came, or on shipboard,
Camel-back, horse-back, ass-back, mule-back,
Old civilisations put to the sword.
Then they and their wisdom went to rack:
No handiwork of Callimachus,
Who handled marble as if it were bronze,
Made draperies that seemed to rise
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;
His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;
All things fall and are built again,
And those that build them again are gay.

Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
Are carved in lapis lazuli,
Over them flies a long-legged bird,
A symbol of longevity;
The third, doubtless a serving-man,
Carries a musical instrument.

Every discoloration of the stone,
Every accidental crack or dent,
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
Or lofty slope where it still snows
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch
Sweetens the little half-way house
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I
Delight to imagine them seated there;

There, on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scene they stare.
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

T.S. Eliot
THE WASTE LAND
1922

'Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse
oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum
illi pueri dicerents : Σίβνλλα øελ ζ;
respondébal illas? γποøανείνøελω

For Ezra Pound
il miglior fabbro.

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm'aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats.
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you:
I will show you fear in a handful of dust,

Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irisch Kind
Wo weilest du?

'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
'They called me the hyacinth girt.'
Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence
Oed' und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City.
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn.
A crown flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down king William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him crying; 'Stetson!

'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
'On keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again'
'You" hypocrite lecteur!- mon semblable, - mon frère!'

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines.
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion:
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid-troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours: stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking ? What?
I never know what you are thinking. Think.

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

'What is that noise?
The wind under the door.
'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?
Nothing again nothing.
'Do
You know nothing? Do you see nothing?
Do you remember
Nothing? I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?'
But
O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag–
It's so elegant

So intelligent
'What shall I do now? What shall I do?
I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
What shall we ever do?
The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said–
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
And if you don't give it him there's others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said,
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a Straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said,
Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.
Your are a proper fool, I said.
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you don't want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot–

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight,
Ta ta. Goonight, Goonight.
Good night, ladies good night, sweet ladies, good night,
Good night.

The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are
departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are
departed.

And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd.
Tereu

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest-
I too awaited the expected guest.
He , the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once:
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronising kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...

She turns and looks a moment in the glass

Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass;
'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over'
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

'This music crept by me upon the waters'
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City city, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon; where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide

Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach

Past the Isle of Dogs.
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers

Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

'Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.'

'My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised " a new start".
I made no comment. What should I resent?'

'On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing.
la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

IV. Death by Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.

A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward.
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as
You.

V. What the Thunder said

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
If there were water

And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water

A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
–But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the roof tree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
DA
Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms
DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands
I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I sat least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon–O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à'la tour abolie

430. These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
Shantih shantih shantih