

**POETRY-II**  
**M.A. ENGLISH**  
**First Year, Semester: 2**

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**M.A. (English)**

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## FOREWORD

*Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging ahead in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining 'A' grade from the NAAC in the year 2016, Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from over 443 affiliated colleges spread over the two districts of Guntur and Prakasam.*

*The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education in 2003-04 with the aim of taking higher education to the door step of all the sectors of the society. The centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even to housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. Acharya Nagarjuna University has started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A., and L.L.M., courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004 onwards.*

*To facilitate easier understanding by students studying through the distance mode, these self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been drafted with great care and expertise in the stipulated time by these teachers. Constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers involved respectively. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of this distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, weekly classes and contact classes will be arranged at the UG and PG levels respectively.*

*It is my aim that students getting higher education through the Centre for Distance Education should improve their qualification, have better employment opportunities and in turn be part of country's progress. It is my fond desire that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will go from strength to strength in the form of new courses and by catering to larger number of people. My congratulations to all the Directors, Academic Coordinators, Editors and Lesson-writers of the Centre who have helped in these endeavours.*

**Prof. P. Raja Sekhar**  
**Vice-Chancellor**  
**Acharya Nagarjuna University**

# **POETRY-II**

## **SYLLABUS**

### **UNIT- I**

Modernism, Symbolism, Imagism, Irish Nationalism, Poetry of Disillusionment, Poetry of the Thirties, Movement Poetry, Developments in Poetic Technique, Influence of modern Psychology.

### **UNIT - II**

W. B. Yeats : Sailing to Byzantium, The Second Coming , Among School Children.

### **UNIT – III**

T. S. Eliot : The Waste Land

### **UNIT – IV**

Dylan Thomas : Do not Go Gentle Into That Good Night, Fern Hill  
Thom Gunn : In Santa Maria De Popoto, On the Move, My Sad Captains

### **UNIT – V**

Ted Hughes : The Jaguar, Thrushes, Out.  
Seamus Heaney : Death of a Naturalist, Digging, Punishment.

### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Thwaite, Anthony. ( 2011 ed.). Twentieth Century English Poetry. CUP.

Rosenthal, M.L. (2004 ed.). The Modern Poets: A Critical Introduction. Oxford University Press.

**MODEL QUESTION PAPER**  
**M.A DEGREE EXAMINATIONS**

Second Semester

English

Paper-II – POETRY- II

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 70 marks

Instruction : Answer ALL questions.

All questions carry equal marks

UNIT I

1. (a) Write a short note on any Four of the following :

- (i) Symbolism
- (ii) Significance of Imagism
- (iii) Salient Features of Movement Poetry
- (iv) Psychology and Poetry
- (iv) Role of Motif in Poetry
- (v) World war impact on poetry

Or

(b) Identify the broad features of modernism with reference to the prescribed poems.

UNIT II

2. (a) Identify the symbolism in W.B Yeats and comment on its significance.

Or

(b) Explore the imagery and its significance in “A Prayer for My Daughter” and “Among School Children”.

UNIT III

3. (a) Treat “The Waste Land as an attempt at the depiction of the degeneration of the

20<sup>th</sup> century European society.

Or

(b) Evaluate the presence of the East and the West in “ The Waste Land” and

comment on the significance of blending of the both in the poem.

UNIT IV

4. (a) Comment on the impact of Romanticism on Dylan Thomas' Poetry with reference to the prescribed poems.

Or

- (b) Analyze the technique of Dylan Thomas with special reference to the prescribed poems.

UNIT V

5. (a) Portray the image of animal in Ted Hughes poetry and comment on its poetic novelty.

Or

- (b) Identify and comment on the symbols, motifs and imagery in the prescribed poems of Seamus Heaney.

# **POETRY-II**

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# **LESSON-1**

## **LITERARY TERMS AND MOVEMENTS**

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE LESSON:**

- To acquaint the students with the major literary movements, Concepts and Trends of the World War, Modern and Past Modern Periods
- To acquaint the students with the Key Concepts and trends in British Poetry after the advent of Modern Age of Industrial and Technological Development.

### **STRUCTURE OF THE LESSON**

- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Modernism**
- 1.3 Symbolism**
- 1.4 Imagism**
- 1.5 Irish Nationalism**
- 1.6 Poetry of Disillusionment**
- 1.7 Poetry of the Thirties**
- 1.8 Movement Poetry**
- 1.9 Writing techniques used in modernist literature**
- 1.10 Influence of Modern Psychology**
- 1.11 Self Assessment Questions**
- 1.12 Suggested Readings**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The 20th century thinkers like Einstein, Darwin, Freud, and Marx profoundly changed the Western Culture. These changes took distinct shape in the literature of the 20th century. Modernism, a movement that was a radical break from 19th century Victorianism, led to post-modernism, which emphasized self-consciousness and pop art. While 20th-century literature is a diverse field covering a variety of genres, there are common characteristics that changed literature forever.

The 20th century English poetry emerged in the early years of the 20th century through various schools, styles, and influences. Modern poetry started in the early years of the 20th century with the appearance of the Imagists. These poets wrote in reaction to the perceived excesses of Victorian poetry, with its emphasis on traditional formalism and ornate diction.

Modernists saw themselves as looking back to the best practices of poets in earlier periods and other cultures. Their models included ancient Greek literature, Chinese and Japanese poetry, the troubadours, Dante and the medieval Italian philosophical poets (such as Guido Cavalcanti), and the English Metaphysical poets. Much of early modernist poetry was in the form of short, compact lyrics.



During the flowering of Modernist poetry between 1917 and 1929, all these initial manifestations of modernism combined to find a full nature expression in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and later Yeats most notable of which is Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Sitwell's *Gold Coast Customs* and Yeats's *Michael Robartes and the Dance*. The Modernist poetry of the 30s is marked by the Marxed (Non-Marxist) poets such as Auden, Louis McNiece, C. Day-Lewis and Stephen Spender.

## **Characteristics**

### **Variety of Themes**

The modern poets take inspiration from railway trains, tramcars, telephones and things of commonplace interest. Modern poets have not accepted the theory of great subjects for poetic composition. Poetry today can be written on almost any subject. The whole universe is the modern poet's composition.

### **Realistic in nature**

The poetry of the 20th century is marked with a note of realism. Realism in modern poetry was the product of a reaction against the pseudo-romanticism of the last century over and above the influence of science. The modern poet sees life and paints it as it is with all its pain and ugliness. He tears the veil which the romanticists had hung between life and art.

### **Love**

Love forms the subject of many modern lyrics. Robert Bridges has produced fine sonnets of love in *The Growth of Love* and W.B. Yeats's "When you are old" is a fine poem of love. Arthur Symon's *The Broken Trestle* deals with disappointment in love while John Masefield finds a feeling of dejection in love. The beauty of the beloved reminds him at once of the decay of physical charms.

### **Pessimism**

There is a note of pessimism and disillusionment in modern poetry. The pettiness, suffering and tragedy of human life is deeply felt by modern poets. The modern poet has realized the triviality of human life and the tragedy and suffering of the poor have made him melancholic and sad. Hence there is always a gloominess and pessimistic note present in the poetry of the modern poets.

Housman, Hardy, Huxley, TS. Eliot are the poets of pessimism and disillusionment in modern poetry. These poets are dissatisfied with God and the naked dance of chance and materialism in the modern world, and their poetry is the target of modern society in a pessimistic strain.

### **Romantic Elements**

Although, modern poetry is dominated by Realism, the spirit of romance continues to rule the minds of certain poets like Yeats, E. Thomas, Masefield etc. The works of these poets hold the fact that the spirit of romance is as old as the life itself.

Walter De La Mare's poetry is full of true romantic spirit bordering on supernaturalism. With him, the ghosts and fairies of the old world have come into their own in the 20th century.

### **Nature**

Nature attracts the modern poet no less than the poets of the earlier ages. Modern poet is elated and exalted at the sight of nature's loveliness. He does not find any spiritual meaning in Nature; he is not a mystic. He gives a clear picture of birds, clouds landscapes, sea and countryside in his poetry. Masfield, Robert Bridges, Edmund Blunden etc are some of the great poets of nature in modern poetry. The beauty of nature and the creatures those belong to it are appreciated and depicted in their poems.

### **Humanitarian and Democratic Note**

Modern poetry is marked with a note of humanitarianism and democratic feeling. The modern poet, is interested in the life of labourers, workers etc. He sees, in the everyday struggles of these people, the same potentialities that the older poets found in those of high rank. Masfield, Gibson, Goldsworthy are mainly interested in the common man and his sufferings.

### **Religion and Mysticism**

The modern age is the age of science, but even in this scientific age, we have poems written on the subject of religion and mysticism. W.B. Yeats, Francis Thompson, Robert Graves etc are some of the great poets who have kept the flame of religion and mysticism alive in their poetry.

### **Diction and Style**

Modern poets have a preference for simple and direct expression. Modern poets have chosen to be free in the use of the meter. They have followed freedom from the trammels of verse. Verse rhythm is replaced by sense rhythm. There is free movement in 20th-century English poetry.

## **1.2 MODERNISM**

Modernism originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mainly in Europe and North America, and is characterized by a self-conscious break with traditional ways of writing. Modernism experimented with all forms of literary theory and expression, as exemplified by Ezra Pound's maxim to "Make it new." This modernist movement was driven by a conscious desire to overturn traditional modes of representation and express the new sensibilities of their time. The chaos of the First World War saw the prevailing assumptions about society reassessed, and much modernist writing engages with the technological advances and societal changes of modernity moving into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Modernism designates the broad literary and cultural movement that surpassed all of the arts and even ran into politics and philosophy. Modernism was highly varied in its manifestations between the arts and even within each art. The dates when Modernism flourished are in dispute, but few critics identify its genesis as being before 1860 and World

War II is generally considered to mark an end of the movement's height. Modernist art initially began in Europe's capitals, primarily London, Milan, Berlin, St. Petersburg and especially Paris. It spread to the cities of the United States and South America after World War - I and by the 1940s. Modernism had thoroughly taken over the American and European academy, where it was challenged by nascent Postmodernism in the 1960s.

Modernism's roots are in the rapidly changing technology of the late nineteenth century and in the theories of such late nineteenth-century thinkers as Freud, Marx, Darwin, and Nietzsche. Modernism influenced painting first (Impressionism and Cubism are forms of Modernism), but in the decade before World War I, such writers as Ezra Pound, Filippo Marinetti, James Joyce, and Guillaume Apollinaire translated the advances of the visual arts into literature.

Characteristically modernist techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration and allusiveness, by the late 1930s, spilled into popular writing and became standard. The movement's concerns were with the accelerating pace of society toward destruction and meaninglessness. In the late 1800s, many of society's certainties were undermined. Marx demonstrated that social class was created, not inherent; Freud reduced human individuality to an instinctive sex drive; Darwin provided fossil evidence that the Earth was much older than the estimate based on scripture; and Nietzsche argued that even the most deeply held ethical principles were simply constructions. Modernist writers attempted to come to terms with where humanity stood after its cornerstones had been pulverized. The modernists sifted through the shards of the past looking for what was valuable and what could inspire construction of a new society.

### 1.3 SYMBOLISM

The symbolist movement in literature originated during the 1850s in France and lasted until about 1900. Symbolism exerted a profound influence on twentieth-century literature, bridging the transition from Realism to Modernism. Symbolism also exerted a strong influence on the arts, including theater, painting, and music. The symbolists sought to convey very personal, irrational, and dream-like states of consciousness, relying heavily on metaphorical language to approximate, or symbolize, an eternal essence of being that, they believed, was abstracted from the scope of the five senses. These literary ideals developed as a reaction against the dominance of positivism, which emphasized rational thought, objectivity, and scientific method. Symbolism also represented reaction against Realism and Naturalism in literature, which sought to accurately represent the external world of nature and human society through descriptions of objective reality. Stylistically, the symbolists emphasized the inherent musicality of language, developed the use of *vers libre* (free verse), and modernized the existing form of the prose poem. The symbolists were greatly influenced by the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, whose *Les fleurs du mal* embodied many of their literary ideals. In addition to Baudelaire the central figures of French Symbolism are the poets Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimbaud. French Symbolism affected international literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular, inspiring the Russian symbolist movement, which developed in the 1880s. The literature of Germany, Great Britain, Japan, the United States, and Turkey was also influenced by Symbolism. Though poetry dominated the symbolist movement, great works of fiction and drama were also written by adherents of Symbolism. Free verse or *Vers libre* was developed by the symbolist poets as a form of verse liberated from the traditional formal requirements of French poetry, such as meter and rhyme. The symbolists felt the formal qualities of a poem should emerge from its content, rather than being imposed upon it by conventional rules

Symbolist writers were particularly interested in bringing out the musical qualities of language. They developed works of lyrical beauty in which language was orchestrated with image to create a symphony of mood and suggestion. The symbolists focused on evoking a strong sense of mood through the use of language. Moods such as longing, regret, a sense of loss, and reverie are often expressed in symbolist literature.

Major authors of the movement are Charles Baudelaire; the poetry of Charles Baudelaire was the chief inspiration for the development of Symbolism. His masterpiece, *Les fleurs du mal* (Flowers of Evil), and his important collection of prose poetry *Petits poèmes en prose* (1868; Little Prose Poems), embody the central ideals of the symbolist movement. Aleksandra (Aleksandrovich) Blok, Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé was major poet and one of the founders of the symbolist movement and a major influence on nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry. Mallarmé was profoundly influenced by the poetry of Baudelaire, from which he developed the literary ideals of Symbolism. Maurice Maeterlinck was the foremost playwright of the symbolist movement and the greatest Belgian playwright of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### **Themes of the Symbolist movement:**

The symbolist writers were concerned with expressing various elements of the internal life of the individual. They focused on subjective mental impressions, internal moods, delicate emotional states, and spiritual sentiments in reaction against the nineteenth-century focus on objective, external, concrete realities as perceived through rational scientific methods. Their use of imagery often exemplifies states of mind, the imagination, the human psyche, and dreams.

Many symbolist writers describe various journeys, voyages, or quests as metaphors for internal explorations into the inner consciousness of the individual. Symbolist poems explore the tension in their lives between the sensual love of women and the spiritual idealization of women. Modern urban life is an important element and central theme of symbolist poetry that inaugurated the transition to modern literature in the twentieth century. Symbolist literature is often preoccupied with spiritual exploration and religious questions

### **1.4 IMAGISM**

Imagism flourished in Britain and in the United States for a brief period that is generally known to be somewhere between 1909 and 1917. As part of the modernist movement, imagist poets sought many sources to help them create a new poetic expression. For contemporary influences, the imagists studied the French symbolists, who were experimenting with free verse, a form that used a cadence that mimicked natural speech rather than the accustomed rhythm of metrical feet or lines. Rules of rhyming were also considered nonessential. The ancient form of Japanese haiku poetry influenced the imagists to focus on one simple image. Greek and Roman classical poetry inspired some of the imagists to strive for a high quality of writing that would endure.

T.E. Hulme is credited with creating the philosophy that would give birth to Imagism. Although he wrote very little, his ideas inspired Ezra Pound to organize the new movement. Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" is often cited as one of the purest of his imagist poems. Amy Lowell took over the leadership role of the imagists when Pound moved on to other modernist modes. Her most anthologized poems include "Lilacs" and "Patterns." Other important imagist poets include Hilda Doolittle, whose poem "Sea Poppies" reflects the Japanese influence on her writing, and whose "Oread" is often referred to as the most

perfect imagist poem; Richard Aldington, who was one of the first poets to be recognized as an imagist and whose collection *Images of War* is considered to contain some of the most intense depictions of World War I; F. S. Flint, who dedicated his last collection of imagist poems, *Otherworld: Cadences to Aldington*; and John Gould Fletcher, whose collection *Goblins and Pagodas* is his most representative imagistic work. Imagism is considered to be the first organized modernist literary movement in the English language. It is sometimes viewed as “a succession of creative moments” rather than a continuous or sustained period of development. Imagist publications which appearing between 1914 and 1917 featured works by many of the most prominent modernist figures in poetry and other fields, including Pound, H.D. Amy Lowell, Ford Madox Ford, William Carlos Williams, F. S. Flint, and T. E. Hulme. The Imagists were centered in London, with members from Great Britain, Ireland and the United States.

### **1.5 IRISH NATIONALISM**

Irish Nationalism is a nationalist political movement which, in its broadest sense, asserts that the people of Ireland should govern Ireland as a sovereign state. Since the mid-19th century, Irish nationalism has largely taken the form of cultural nationalism based on the principles of national self-determination and popular sovereignty. The Irish literary renaissance evolved after the death of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1891. An important feature of Irish nationalism from the late 19th century onwards was a commitment to Gaelic Irish culture. A broad intellectual movement, the Celtic Revival, grew up in the late 19th century. And this Celtic Revival is also known as the Irish Literary Renaissance, the Gaelic Revival, and the Celtic Twilight and this period identifies the remarkably creative period in Irish Literature from about 1880 to the death of William Butler Yeats. Yeats was a prominent poet and dramatist of the Irish Literary Renaissance and artists and others sought to establish a distinctly Irish identity different from the British culture that dominated the island. Lost manuscripts of Irish literature were found and reissued, and interest in Gaelic, the native language of Ireland, grew. The most prominent poets William Butler Yeats, George Russell, and Oliver St. John Gogarty. Lady Gregory was an important patron and publicist for the movement. John Millington Synge and Sean O’Casey are among the best-known figures of this movement. Though the literary aspect of the Irish renaissance lost much of its momentum during the Irish civil war of the 1920s, writers such as James Joyce, Sean O Faola in, and Brendan Behan carried on the interest in Irish nationalism for decades to come. The major writers, however, wrote not in the native Irish but in English, and under the influence of various non –Irish literary forms and many of them also wrote for their subject matter to modern Irish life rather than to their old prevailing subject matters.

Though largely initiated by artists and writers of Protestant or Anglo-Irish background, the movement nonetheless captured the imaginations of idealists from native Irish and Catholic background. Periodicals such as *United Ireland*, *Weekly News*, *Young Ireland*, and *Weekly National Press* (1891–92), became influential in promoting Ireland's native cultural identity. This Celtic Revival produced some of the greatest poetry, Prose Fiction, Drama written in English during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

### **1.6 POETRY OF DISILLUSIONMENT**

The period from the two World I to World War II explores the possible contrast to the harmony and complacency of the Victorian Era. The Two wars came as terrific shock to the society. The hopelessness of the extensive devastation of life and values led to Sense of desolation, uncertainty, futility. The established values totally broke down in the Post War

period. The society was in a state of chaos and poetry became the true face of criticism. Moreover, when the modern poetry tried to express the horror and complexities of such a world, the Contemporary critics stood divided in the matter of its judgment on post war poetry, which created disillusionment in the poetry. There were some who raised the modernist adventurers in English poetry to the heavens and hailed them as the harbingers of a greater era of poetry, while there were others who pulled them down as nothing more than pretentious mediocrity undeservedly much made of. The poets who had experienced the horrors of the two World wars were deeply influenced by the disillusionment and frustration. They attempted to show the reality as it was and continued their endeavor to search the values in their poetry. T. S. Eliot, Hopkins, Owen and Eliot and Yeats are among them.

### 1.7 POETRY OF THE THIRTIES

Soon after World War I a number of young aspiring British and Europe poets portrayed works that were contrary from what had ever been written in the past. The poetry had had to conform to set rules as to rhyme, rhythm, metre and contents before the modernist poetry. Modernist poems brought forth a revolutionary change in the literary world.

Their poetry has a number of characteristics:

1. They had the opportunity in the free usage of form. Modern poets opted not to use stanzas, rhyme, metre and they had no limitation on poetical expression.
2. Modern poetry emphasises on the intellectuals rather than to the sentimentalists, as was the case with the romantic age.
3. Modern poets always use the stream of consciousness mode; they let their subconscious play a crucial role.
4. The salient feature of modern poetry of 1930 is: present-day life in the big cities. Most modern poets don't like modern society and express concern and aversion.

Three prominent writers of modern poetry of 1930 in are W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas. B. Yeats started his literary career by writing romantic poems, but when he was about fifty, he became more down to earth. Many of his modern poems are very negative in nature; his poems express the fear that in our century culture and moral values will die and that the world will become filled with selfishness, violence and meaninglessness and absurdism. T.S. Eliot is known by most of the people as the most important literary figure of the 20th century. He was one of the first modern poets and practically all poets of the 1930s were impacted by him and partly became his followers. Besides poetry he wrote literary essays and plays. Eliot writes mostly about the boredom, the loneliness and the emptiness of 20th century life in the modern cities. He is the pioneer of the disillusioned and cynical writers that lived after World War I, who had very negative ideas about the future. His most famous poem is 'The Waste Land'. It shows the conviction that in this modern world people cannot really and fully live: Modern man is carnally alive but spiritually dead. Man's body is alive, but the soul has disappeared; he faces death in life. When he was older T.S. Eliot became a member of the Anglican Church and became convinced that religion gave the answers to most of the problems of modern disadvantages; his later poems show deep religious feelings. Dylan Thomas is Welsh poet, born in Swansea, Glamorgan, educated at Swansea Grammar School. Most of his verse comes from a series of notebooks dating from his schooldays, which have been published as 'Poet in the Making: The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas'. In the early thirties of modern poetry two volumes of poems were published: '18 Poems' (1934) and '25 Poems' (1936). The latter he himself established a reputation as a poet of prominence. Thomas's poetry comes from deeper levels of consciousness and self-

awareness; it is not deliberately intellectual and has no political purpose. A poet like Dylan Thomas has no such aim as 'healing the Waste Land'. Thomas is one of the great poets who gets close to surrealism, means the release of whatever comes up from within, without any conscious control or selection. This idea is related to Freudian psychoanalysis, with its ideas of free association, dreams, intuition, the psyche's irrational expressions. As Stephen Spender expresses later: "It is the voice, not of the doctor, but of the patient that is heard. The poet no longer stands outside the Waste Land: he is the flower." From the Welsh chapel of his boyhood Thomas absorbed the Bible, and came to know Freud. Biblical and sexual imagery are wonderfully intertwined in his poetry. In England in the 1930s, but also later, mostly the poems were written by the poets that identified with the proletariat: the poets either belonged to this class themselves or had strong left-wing sympathies. These writers of 1930 are also known as the 'social' poets used their works to reveal their personal feelings and express their wants for a socialist society, and seldom elaborated on the theme of Eliot's 'The Waste Land'. Among them are four poets of middle-class background that came to the foreground with the opening of this decade: Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, W.H. Auden; young university men, born shortly before the war. They represent the rising generation and have attracted considerable attention.

## 1.8 MOVEMENT POETRY

The term 'Movement' denotes a new development or epoch in literary activity or interest of some specific period. The 'Movement Poetry' was also a new development in the arena of literature of the 1950s which showed its detestation for the established norms in literature of the period. The term 'Movement Poetry' was coined by J.D. Scott in 1954 who was then editor of the periodical, "Spectator" which announced the birth of a new trend in poetry of the 1950s. The term 'Movement Poets' was not applied to any literary school as such, but to a group of poets of the 1950s. The Movement was a group of writers including Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Thom Gunn, John Wain, D J Enright and Robert Conquest. The Movement was essentially English in character as poets from other parts of the United Kingdom were not involved. After the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), British public started to have a normal prosperous life. The war took a toll on everything and five years after its end, people started to have a normal life. Food rations ended; medical care improved; economical welfare was almost at hand. So, life was healing from the pains of the war and people were in the process of forgetting the atrocities of the war. They were about to put the war behind. Even though life was improving on many levels, the arts, however, and literature and theatre in particular, were in a rut.

The literature produced was dominated by the ideas and sentiments of the pre-war times and neither poetry nor novel could reflect the change that took place because of the war. Poets, novelists and dramatists showed a reluctance to let go of Britain's imperial past and an obsession with class held sway. A radical shake-up was needed.

### Characteristics of the Movement Poetry:

Movement Poetry is ironical, down to earth, unsentimental and rooted in a nostalgic idea of English identity. European sympathies were regarded as unmistakable signs of intellectual pretentiousness and moral turpitude. The Movement Poets - were Oxbridge - educated, white, predominantly male (Jennings was the only woman in the group, and she was a late arrival), middle-class, Europhobic and for the most part heterosexual. Even so, they caught the mood of their time, and Larkin and Amis in particular are undeniably major

figures in English literature. The Movement produced two anthologies, Enright 's Poets of the 1950s (1955) and Conquest 's New Lines (1956).

The Movement poetry stayed away from the charm and spell of Thomas Stearns Eliot and Ezra Pound and the high emotion and verbal effusion of Dylan Thomas.

The Movement poets rejected not only the Romantic tradition but also reacted against the experimentation of the modernist poets. The movement poetry lacked spontaneous outburst of feelings and emotion. It appealed more to the head than to the heart of readers.

It was a group of poets who were realist, robust and skeptical. They gave vent to their pent-up feelings in ironic vein. Realism is the keynote of the Movement poetry which sometimes makes the works dull, boring, and dry.

The Movement poets experienced the world as materialistic, banal and evil. They did not lament over the loss of glory and weep for the horror of the wars and boredom like Tiresias in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" but they believed in facing ugly reality with bravely. It is clear that the Movement poetry was less sentimental and more intellectual in nature. It was anti-Romantic, witty, laconic and ironic.

The modernist poetry emphasized a new form, a new way of looking at life, and channel through which the sensibility of the age was to be expressed whereas the Movement poetry rejected every principle of the Modernist poetry. They showed antipathy to the cultural pretensions of Bloomsbury and elitism of the modern age. They adhered to the traditional metrical forms and syntax.

The poets of the 1950s abhorred over-experimentation in form and over-use of figurative language in poetry. They put stress on simplicity and clarity of expression in poetry.

Thomas Gunn's first volume of poetry *Fighting Terms* appeared in 1954 which established him in the literary arena of poetry. The second volume *The Sense of Movement* was published in 1957 that clearly displays Yvor Winters's influence. Thomas Gunn has skillfully observed rationalistic precision and clarity while handling a subject matter of his poetry. His style resembles that of John Donne because it demonstrates a fine blending of far-fetched imagery, economy of words, wit and laconic vein. Some other famous works of Thomas Gunn are "My Sad Captain" published in 1961, "Touch" in 1967, and "Moly" published in 1971.

## **1.9 WRITING TECHNIQUES USED IN MODERNIST LITERATURE**

1. **Experimentation:** Modernist literature employed a number of different experimental writing techniques that broke the conventional rules of storytelling. Some of those techniques include blended imagery and themes, absurdism, nonlinear narratives, and stream of consciousness—which is a free flowing inner monologue.
2. **Individualism:** Modernist literature typically focuses on the individual, rather than society as a whole. Stories follow characters as they adapt to a changing world, often dealing with difficult circumstances and challenges.



3. Multiple perspectives: Many modernist writers wrote in the first person perspective with multiple characters to emphasize the subjectivity of each character, and add depth to the story by presenting a variety of viewpoints.
4. Free verse: Many modernist poets rejected the traditional structure of poetry and opted for free verse, which lacks a consistent rhyme scheme, metrical pattern, or musical form.
5. Literary devices: Many modernist writers rely on literary devices like symbolism and imagery to help the reader understand the writing, and to create a stronger connection between the text and the reader.

### **1.10 INFLUENCE OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY**

The relation between psychology and literature is a bilateral relation. Human's soul makes the literature and literature nourishes human's soul. Human's psychical receptions take into consideration the human and natural life perspectives and provides references of literal works; on the other hand, literature also take into account the life's truths to make clear the perspectives of human's soul. Literature and psychology both, pay attention to fancy, thinks, feelings sensations and soul psychical issues. Past writers and poets by detecting "unwilling conscience" psychical unwilling and reflecting many of psychical contention had found the meaning of this problem in their works.

Literature and psychology are two branches of science that study human soul. Psychology researches human behaviors and their causes while literature depicts human behavior through fiction. These two sciences studying human behavior are interrelated and mutually beneficial. And the basic building block of the correlation between literature and psychology is a literary work. Literary works study human beings and describe their inner world with all its aspects. The reason is that a literary work is at the same time a product of a certain psychological condition. A literary work supports psychology in terms of depicting human psychological conditions, as we see in the example of Dostoevsky's characters. At the same time, Jung noted, psychology also provides insights into literature by exploring mental processes.

A literary work benefits from psychology in terms of successfully presenting characters, expressing their moods, and bringing the reader into the psychological dimension of human reality. Psychology and study of literature meet in their focus on phantasies, emotions and human soul. Thus there exists a two-way relationship based on mutual interaction between literature and psychology, in the form of evaluation of a literary work with the resources of psychology and obtaining psychological truths from a literary work.

Psychological content appears in a wide range of literary forms, from poetry to short stories, plays and novels. However, the most explicit reference to the human mind is to be found in psychological novels which deal with individuals' inner experiences, thoughts, feelings, emotions and introspections. Centuries ago, Aristotle fashioned a term that brought literature and psychology face to face: catharsis (psychological or mental purification of the feelings). From that time onwards, literature and human psyche have been correlated either by various writers, philosophers, critics, or by means of several techniques or movements. Not only was it tragedy that combined the elements of psychology with literary production, it was also novel, poetry, short story and even some psychoanalytical theories that brought psyche and literature together.

A century before Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, formulated his psychoanalytic developmental theory, the English poet William Wordsworth wrote about nature and nurture, "The Child is father of the Man." It is commonsense knowledge that from birth on the child undergoes physical maturation (e.g., sexual maturation) and the development of body, mind, and character (e.g., psychological growth, social interaction, and adaptation). Therefore, the literature is significant to reflect psychological condition of in this real world.

As it is seen, even though the relationship between literature and psychology goes back to the earlier centuries, it really developed only in 20th century with Sigmund Freud's discoveries in the area of psychoanalysis. Psychological content in literary works covered a broad area of genres from poetry to short story, from novel to drama, however the most open exposition of the human mind can be seen in novels. Not only S. Freud (1856-1939) did psychological studies related to literature, literary works and literary critics; studies in this area were done after him by other leading psychologists.

Two notable approaches exist in literary criticism, and both are used a great deal today in elegies of a given text, a) the study of psychological elements within the work itself, without relating these in any way to the origin or history of the work; b) the study of possible myth and archetypal patterns in the work. Psychoanalytic literary criticism is based on the argument that if literature is the expression of the author's „persona“, human behavior must be analyzed to find the interaction of the conscious and unconscious elements of the mind in it. There are three phases in the development of psychoanalytic literary criticism.

The first one is the psychoanalysis of the author. According to Ernest Jones, the author's psychological condition affects his work because of the purpose of the art is the secret gratification of a forbidden infantile wish. The second phase is the psychoanalysis of the reader. Norman Holland pointed out that reading recreated the reader's identity and therefore, his defenses, expectations, frustration, and transformations, and recreated during the activity of the reading.

### 1.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Trace the evolution of Anglo – American poetry, thematically and stylistically during the World War times.
2. Write short notes on the following :
  - a. World War and Poetry of Disillusionment
  - b. Modernist Features in Poetry
  - c. Common Themes in 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Poetry

### 1.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Thwaite, Anthony, (2011 ed.) Twentieth Century English Poetry, CUP
2. Rosenthal, M.L. (2004 ed.) The Modern Poets : A Critical Introduction, Oxford University Press.

**Prof. B. Karuna**

## LESSON-2

# W.B.YEATS: SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

- 2.1 Poem: Sailing to Byzantium
- 2.2 Summary
- 2.3 Themes in Sailing to Byzantium
- 2.4 Self Assessment Questions

### Introduction

“Sailing to Byzantium” was first published in 1928 in the collection called “The Tower”. Byzantium is the old name of Constantinople or Istanbul which was once the capital of Roman Empire. According to Yeats, the Christian Byzantium which influences the scene after the fall of Rome was an ideal place of culture and wisdom.

“Sailing to Byzantium” is a short poem of thirty-two lines divided into four numbered stanzas. The title suggests an escape to a distant, imaginary land where the speaker achieves mystical union with beautiful, eternal works of art.

### 2.1 POEM: SAILING TO BYZANTIUM BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

#### 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 enameling  
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.

**2.2 SUMMARY**

The title suggests an escape to a distant, imaginary land Byzantium where the speaker thinks that he can escape the conflict between burning desire and a wasted body. Byzantium in the poem is an imaginary city of the poet's mind.

The country that the speaker is in does not suit the old. It is full of bounty, with fish in the water and birds in the trees. The young and reproductive are caught in the earthly cycle of life and death. They do not heed ageless and intelligence. An old man can be mere pathos. To escape this fate and to get away from his too-vital country, the aged speaker has sailed to Byzantium. Once arrived, he calls out to the elders who are part of God's retinue. He asks them to move in a gyre and take him away to death. He has a living heart fastened to a dead body, and as such cannot live.

Once the speaker has died, his body will no longer be organic, but fashioned of metal, like the statues that preserve dying emperor, or perhaps instead molded into a mechanical bird, which will sing to the lords and ladies of Byzantium.

In the first stanza, the poet describes, the natural world, where the young of all species- birds, fishes, and people are busy loving, reproducing and commending the flesh. As an old man, the poet at once celebrates the fertility and joyful images of teeming fish, birds and people but despairs of their temporal ignorance.

In the second stanza Yeats describes the predicament of the old man more closely 'An aged man' is no more than a scarecrow, a tattered coat upon a stick' without much physical vigor. Hence the old must seek Byzantium; that is, the country of the old; it is reached by

sailing the seas, by breaking utterly with the country of the young; all passion must be left behind; the soul must be free to study the emblems of unchanging things.

In the third stanza Yeats now appeals to the sages who stand in God's holy fire and who have thus been purged of the last remnants of sensuality. These sages look like the figure represented in the gold mosaic of a wall. The poet wants them to come out of the holy fire and to descend upon him with a hawk-like movement. He wants them to become the "singing masters of his soul" and to purify his heart. In other words he wants them to teach him to listen to spiritual music, as distinguished from the sensual music. The poet after getting rid of all sensual desires would like to be transformed into some object of art having an eternal value. The third stanza presents the speaker standing before a golden mosaic, pleading the Byzantine sages and "God's holy fire" to illuminate his soul. He realizes that his heart is trapped inside a fleshy creature that will soon die: the poet wants to leave this world and enter the world of timeless art through his song-poetry.

In the fourth stanza Yeats has renounced his earthly body, he would not like to be re-born in the same or in any other earthly shape. He will reject all physical incarnations, because all living beings are subject to mortality and death. He would like to become something eternal and imperishable. He would take the shape of the golden bird, the kind of bird which Grecian goldsmiths are believed to have designed for the pleasure of an emperor. As a golden bird, a work of art, he would be beyond decay or death and would therefore be unlike the "dying generations" of real birds. As a golden bird, he will be placed on a golden bough, and he will appear to be singing songs of all times to an audience of the lords and ladies of Byzantium. His song, when he becomes a golden bird, will be that of spiritual ecstasy and he will be surrounded, not by the young lovers and other animal creatures of the sexual cycle, but by an audience that is elegant and abstract. In Byzantium, he will have no age; past, present and future are all one there.

The poem's major theme is the transformative power of art; the ability of art to express the ineffable and to step outside the boundaries of self. Some concrete details of the poem might be read autobiographically, such as the speaker's desire to leave his country, references to himself as an old man, "a tattered coat upon a stick", and having a heart "sick with desire". The speaker feels the desire to sail to Byzantium and metaphorically to transcend the sensual music of Ireland. He wants to transform his own consciousness and find mystical union with the golden mosaics of a medieval empire.

### **2.3 THEMES IN SAILING TO BYZANTIUM**

Life gives way to death. Youth turns into age. Change, it seems, is always in the air. Frustrated by the cruelty of natural cycles, the speaker of "Sailing to Byzantium" tries to initiate a new dynamic by leaving his homeland in search of spiritual rebirth. For once, he's going to control the transformations that shape his life – and sailing to Byzantium is only the first step of many. The possibility of spiritual cleansing leads into the imagined possibility of physical rebirth, as well. Though he will die just like all humans, the speaker imagines a time when he can live again in art.

Growing old just isn't all that it's cracked up to be. "Sailing to Byzantium" begins as a meditation on the things which age leaves behind: bodily pleasure, sex, and regeneration. As death approaches, the speaker turns towards the possibility of rebirth as a potential solution for the trauma of watching his own body deteriorate. The line between spiritual and physical rebirth becomes blurred as the speaker imagines placing his soul into an art object, something that can outlast all mortal creatures.

Tennyson once wrote a pretty great poem about "nature, red in tooth and claw." In other words, nature can be pretty brutal. In Yeats's poem, that's certainly the case. No matter who (or what) you are, if you have a body, you're going to start decaying pretty quickly. The second we're born we begin to die. Most importantly, this means that there's absolutely no distinction between humankind and all the other creatures creeping, crawling, and flying around the planet. If you're Yeats, the natural world is for the birds. Seriously, humans have the ability to be more than just flesh...it just takes a little work.

## 2.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Is the speaker of this poem actively seeking his own type of transformation? If so, why does he ask the sages to do all the work of consuming his heart? Does this matter?
2. What role does gold play in the speaker's imagined rebirth?
3. Does the speaker actually want to be reborn as an art object, or is this a metaphorical rebirth? What brings you to this conclusion?
4. Why is the sort of transformation which occurs in the natural world such a bad thing?
5. Is the speaker of the poem an old man? How can you tell? If he's not, how does this change your reading?
6. Which does the poem value more: youth or agelessness? What textual evidence allows you to draw your conclusion?
7. Does age matter in Byzantium? If so, how?
8. How does this poem define old age?
9. Is Byzantium part of the natural world?
10. What is the relationship between art and nature in this poem?
11. Is the speaker of this poem seeking spiritual or physical transformation? Are the two the same thing? Why or why not?
12. How would you describe the "soul" of a piece of artwork?

## 2.5 REFERENCE

1. Jeffares, Alexander Norman, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*
2. Cleanth Brooks, "Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium'"

**Prof. G.M. Sundaravalli**

## LESSON-3

# W.B.YEATS: A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

### 3.1 Poem: Prayer for My Daughter

### 3.2 Summary

### 3.3 Critical Appreciation

### 3.4 Self Assessment Questions

### 3.5 References

#### Introduction:

“*Prayer for My Daughter*” is a beautiful personal poem by William Butler Yeats reflecting his gloomy mood and a fear of a disturbing future. The poem was composed in 1919 and appeared in 1921. It was written during the World War I, thus it reflects the post-war agitation that was prevalent during that time. Though the war ended but Ireland was still in disturbance. William Butler Yeats’ daughter Annie was born that time and the poet was worried for her future. He is worried that his infant daughter has to face the challenges and hardships of the future and how best would she be able to fight them. The poet suggests some characteristics that she must undertake which can sustain her future and keep her safe and happy.

#### 3.1 POEM: PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

##### I

ONCE more the storm is howling, and half hid  
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid  
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle  
But Gregory’s Wood and one bare hill  
Whereby the haystack and roof-levelling wind,  
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;  
And for an hour I have walked and prayed  
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

##### II

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour,  
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,  
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream  
In the elms above the flooded stream;  
Imagining in excited reverie  
That the future years had come  
Dancing to a frenzied drum  
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

**III**

May she be granted beauty, and yet not  
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,  
Or hers before a looking-glass; for such,  
Being made beautiful overmuch,  
Consider beauty a sufficient end,  
Lose natural kindness, and maybe  
The heart-revealing intimacy  
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

**IV**

Helen, being chosen, found life flat and dull,  
And later had much trouble from a fool;  
While that great Queen that rose out of the spray,  
Being fatherless, could have her way,  
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.  
It's certain that fine women eat  
A crazy salad with their meat  
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

**V**

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;  
Hearts are not had as a gift, but hearts are earned  
By those that are not entirely beautiful.  
Yet many, that have played the fool  
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise;  
And many a poor man that has roved,  
Loved and thought himself beloved,  
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

**VI**

May she become a flourishing hidden tree,  
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,  
And have no business but dispensing round  
Their magnanimities of sound;  
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,  
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.  
Oh, may she live like some green laurel  
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

**VII**

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,  
The sort of beauty that I have approved,  
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,  
Yet knows that to be choked with hate  
May well be of all evil chances chief.  
If there's no hatred in a mind  
Assault and battery of the wind  
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.



**VIII**

An intellectual hatred is the worst,  
So let her think opinions are accursed.  
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born  
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,  
Because of her opinionated mind  
Barter that horn and every good  
By quiet natures understood  
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

**IX**

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,  
The soul recovers radical innocence  
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,  
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,  
And that its own sweet will is heaven's will,  
She can, though every face should scowl  
And every windy quarter howl  
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

**X**

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house  
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;  
For arrogance and hatred are the wares  
Peddled in the thoroughfares.  
How but in custom and in ceremony  
Are innocence and beauty born?  
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,  
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

**3.2 SUMMARY****Stanza 1:**

A violent, dreadful storm is blazing outside. The poet says that the 'haystack and roof-leveling wind' is blowing directly from the Atlantic but is obstructed by just one naked hill and the woods of Gregory's estate. The poet then introduces her infant daughter who is sleeping in her cradle, well protected from the assaults of the dreadful storm that is raging outside. The poet keeps pacing the cradle up and down while praying for her daughter because a storm has been raging in his soul too. He is worried for his daughter's future and his mind is full of apprehension for the future of humanity.

**Stanza 2:**

In the following stanza, the poet describes the condition of the place the poet dwells in. The poet can hear the shrill sound of the sea-wind that is hitting the tower and below the arches of the bridge which connects the castle with the main road and in the elms above the flooded river. The poet has been praying for over an hour and he is disturbed by the shrill sound of the sea-wind. He is haunted by fear. The poet imagines the future, in course of his excitement

and fear; that the future years have come out of the sea and it is dancing to the crazy beat of the drums. Like every affectionate and caring father, the poet is anxious for his infant daughter.

**Stanza 3:**

Now the poet talks about what he is praying for his daughter. He says he is praying that his daughter may be granted beauty but not so much that it disturbs or distracts others. The poet says that women who are very beautiful forget their natural kindness and are unable to accept sincere love. Thus, they fail to have an appropriate life partner and hence they remain unsatisfied.

**Stanza 4:**

Here the poet refers to the Greek mythological character, Helen. Helen was the beautiful daughter of Zeus and Leda. She eloped with Prince Paris of Troy which led to the destruction of Troy. Aphrodite also married Hephaestus and betrayed him later on. In the same manner, Maud Gonne too had rejected Yeats' proposal and had married a foolish man and was not happy with him. Yeats says that beautiful women are too proud and foolish and therefore they suffer and lead a miserable life.

**Stanza 5:**

The poet prays for his daughter that she should have something more than just bewitching beauty. She should be courteous. The poet believes that hearts can be won by the virtue of courtesy; even those who are not beautiful can win hearts by their courtesy. Maud Gonne was very beautiful and Yeats was a fool to believe that she loved him too. Later on he realized his mistake and he ultimately understood that it was courtesy and not beauty that won his heart.

**Stanza 6:**

The poet pleads that the soul of his daughter should flourish and reach self-fulfillment like a flourishing tree. Like the linnets, her life should be clustered around happy and pure thoughts. These little creatures are symbols of innocence and happiness that make others happy too. So he wishes his daughter to be happy within as well as keep others happy too.

**Stanza 7:**

The poet then talks about his own mind and heart. He says that on looking into his own heart, he finds hatred which has come because of the experience of life and the sort of beauty he loved. He prays for his daughter to keep away from such evils and says that if the soul is free from any kind of hatred, nothing can ruin one's happiness and innocence.

**Stanza 8:**

The poet feels that intellectual hatred is the worst kind of hatred. He considers it as a great flaw in someone's character. So he wants his daughter to shun any such kind of hatred or strong bitter feelings for anyone. He wants his daughter to avoid the weaknesses that Maud Gonne had. Maud Gonne's good upbringing and charming beauty proved useless when she chose a worthless person for a husband.

**Stanza 9:**

The poet says if his daughter is free from this intellectual hatred, she will be a happy soul. She will have inner peace within herself. She will be able to keep herself and others happy even when she is going through hardships and misfortunes.

**Stanza 10:**

In the final stanza of "Prayer for My Daughter", the poet prays that her daughter gets married to a good, aristocratic and decent family. He prays that she would get a husband from such a family who would take her to a house where the aristocratic traditions are followed. He wants his daughter to live a life on high, spiritual values. Arrogance and hatred should not be entertained there. He believes that in the atmosphere of custom and ceremony, real beauty and innocence can take place.

**3.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION**

As the poem reflects Yeats's expectations for his young daughter, feminist critiques of the poem have questioned the poet's general approach to women through the text's portrayal of women in society. In *Yeats's Ghosts*, Brenda Maddox suggests that the poem is "designed deliberately to offend women" and labels it as "offensive". Maddox argues that Yeats, in the poem, condemns his daughter to adhere to 19th-century ideals of womanhood, as he focuses on her need for a husband and a "Big House" with a private income.

Joyce Carol Oates suggests that Yeats used the poem to deprive his daughter of sensuality as he envisions a "crushingly conventional" view of womanhood, wishing her to become a "flourishing hidden tree" instead of allowing her the freedoms given to male children. This was after Yeats was rejected in marriage by Maud Gonne. In Oates' opinion, Yeats wishes his daughter to become like a "vegetable: immobile, unthinking, and placid."

Majorie Elizabeth Howes, in *Yeats's Nations*, suggests that the crisis facing the Anglo-Irish community in "A Prayer for My Daughter" is that of female sexual choice. But, she also argues that to read the poem without the political context surrounding the Irish Revolution robs the text of a deeper meaning that goes beyond the relationship between Yeats and the female sex.

**3.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. What message does the poet want to convey through the poem, "A Prayer for My Daughter"?
2. Please give a critical appreciation of "A Prayer for My Daughter" by William Butler Yeats.
3. What is the background and main theme of the poem "A Prayer for my Daughter" by W.B. Yeats?
4. Why is the poet so much worried about the future of his new-born daughter?
5. What virtues does the poet want his daughter to be blessed with?

**3.5 REFERENCE**

1. Holderman, David. *The Cambridge Introduction to W.B. Yeats*, Cambridge University Press (2006)

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# LESSON-4

## W.B.YEATS: THE SECOND COMING

### 4.1 Poem

### 4.2 Summary

### 4.3 Critical Analysis

### 4.4 Self Assessment Questions

### 4.5 References

#### Introduction:

**The Second Coming** is a poem composed by Irish poet W. B. Yeats in 1919, first printed in *The Dial* in November 1920, and afterwards included in his 1921 collection of verses *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. The poem uses Christian imagery regarding the Apocalypse and second coming allegorically to describe the atmosphere of post-war Europe.<sup>[1]</sup> The poem is considered a major work of Modernist poetry and has been reprinted in several collections, including *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*. The poem was written in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War and was at first entitled "The Second Birth".

#### 4.1 POEM

##### The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

#### 4.2 SUMMARY

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening “gyre” (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold”; anarchy is loosed upon the world; “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned.” The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst “are full of passionate intensity.”

Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; “Surely the Second Coming is at hand.” No sooner does he think of “the Second Coming,” then he is troubled by “a vast image of the *Spiritus Mundi*, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx (“A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun”) is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker’s sight, but he knows that the sphinx’s twenty centuries of “stony sleep” have been made a nightmare by the motions of “a rocking cradle.” And what “rough beast,” he wonders, “its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

#### 4.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

In The Second Coming poet’s mind was filled with gloom in consequence of the side-spread murder and bloodshed in Ireland in the course of the Easter rebellion of 1916. The Irish civil war that followed the great war of 1914-1919 and various other events in Europe added to that gloom.

The poem is the outcome of a state of mind troubled with ominous forebodings. The title of the poem suggests a new manifestation of God to man. The Christian era draws to its close; now that its ‘great year’ of two thousand years is ending. We do not know what the new shape of things will be but it must be terror-filled for us by virtue of the simple fact that it will entitle so revolutionary a change.

In the first stanza the poet describes the present state of the world—its political upheavals, the chaos and cynicism of modern civilization, the haphazard brutality of contemporary culture. The first image, of the falcon (hunting hawk) losing touch with its keeper as it flies out of range of his call or whistle, summarizes all this. The fixed point, the central belief or idea, around which our civilization (like a falcon) had revolved (i.e. Christianity) has lost its power, it can no longer hold society in an orderly structure like a wheel around it (a structure which Yeats depicts as a series of gyres, or outward-spiraling circles). Instead, things are flying away, falling apart; our civilization is disintegrating.

In the second stanza the poet declares that all this chaos, confusion and disintegration must surely be the sign of revelation, a “Second Coming” of the Messiah is at hand. And even as he says this, he experiences the extraordinary vision which is the poem’s climax. He sees a vast image out of ‘*Spiritus Mundi*’ (the world-spirit or what the psychoanalyst Carl Jung would call the racial unconscious), a sphinx-like creature, “a shape with lion-body and the head of a man,” moving inexorably across the desert. Having had such a vision, Yeats has had, as he guessed he would, a revelation—“that twenty centuries of stony sleep/Were vexed to

nightmare by a rocking cradle”—that is, two thousand years-sleep of pre-Christian man was roused and troubled by the first coming, the coming of Christ. This moves the poet to wonder now, two thousand years later, as he waits for the second coming of such and earthshaking new spirit, “what rough beast, its hour come round at last/ Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born.

Thus, the Second Coming here is not really a second coming of Christ himself, but of a new figure—in this case cruel, bestial, pitiless—who will represent the new era as Christ symbolized the old. Yeats was sure that the twentieth century, of which he had seen the calamitous beginning—World War on the continent and at home the ‘troubles’—would make the end of the primary, objective Christian civilization, and the beginning of a new antithetical, subjective civilization. Thus a new, rough beast is going to take Christ’s place in the cradle at Bethlehem, where it will “vex” man’s old sleep to a new nightmare.

The poem is one of those few compositions which can be understood if we have some knowledge of Yeats’ philosophy of history. Yeats believed that history runs in cycle. He equates it with the motion of swiftly rotating gyres or cones. The gyres rotate rapidly round a fixed center. Their circumference widens as they rotate and at last disintegration sets in. The disintegration starts at the circumference and gradually involves the center as well.

Eventually, The Second Coming is based upon the cyclic philosophy of gyres and reincarnation but, allowance being made for this parable convention, can be taken as a direct prophecy of imminent disaster.

#### 4.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the tone of “The Second Coming”? In the first stanza, what vision of the world does the poet express? How does he describe the state of things?
2. What do you think Yeats means by the first two lines: “Turning and turning in the widening gyre / The falcon cannot hear the falconer.” Look up the word “gyre,” particularly Yeats’ use of the word. Consider what Yeats suggests about the world situation with the image of the falcon that cannot hear the falconer.
3. What is the tone of the first few lines of the second stanza? How would you describe the emotion of this voice? What is the “second coming?” What is it about the second coming that the poet seems to beseech? How does the second coming become darkly ironic by the end of the poem?
4. Starting on the fourth line of the second stanza, describe the poet’s vision. What is the “vast image” he sees? How do you interpret what he sees, and what it represents?
5. The poem was written in 1922, not too long after the end of World War I. Even though many thought it was the war to end all wars, what does Yeats seem to prophecy in this poem? What type of future does he seem to envision?

#### 4.5 REFERENCES

Haugheny, Jim (2002), *The First World War in Irish Poetry*, Bucknell University Press

## LESSON-5

# W.B.YEATS: AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

### 5.1 Poem: Among School Children

### 5.2 Form

### 5.3 Analysis

### 5.4 Summary

### 5.5 Self-Assessment Questions

### 5.6 Reference

#### Introduction

“Among School Children” by W.B Yeats is considered as one of the most difficult poems. The subject of the poem revolves around the interpretation of matter and spirit. It was composed by Yeats after visiting a convent school in Waterford, Ireland in 1926. The poem reflects on the theme of meditation of life, love and the creative process and stands out for the poignancy and profundity that it holds.

#### 5.1 POEM: AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

##### I

I walk through the long schoolroom questioning;  
A kind old nun in a white hood replies;  
The children learn to cipher and to sing,  
To study reading-books and histories,  
To cut and sew, be neat in everything  
In the best modern way — the children’s eyes  
In momentary wonder stare upon  
A sixty-year-old smiling public man.

##### II

I dream of a Ledaean body, bent  
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she  
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event  
That changed some childish day to tragedy —  
Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent  
Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,  
Or else, to alter Plato’s parable,  
Into the yolk and white of the one shell.

##### III

And thinking of that fit of grief or rage  
I look upon one child or t’other there  
And wonder if she stood so at that age —  
For even daughters of the swan can share  
Something of every paddler’s heritage —

And had that colour upon cheek or hair,  
And thereupon my heart is driven wild:  
She stands before me as a living child.

#### IV

Her present image floats into the mind —  
Did Quattrocento finger fashion it  
Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind  
And took a mess of shadows for its meat?  
And I though never of Ledaean kind  
Had pretty plumage once — enough of that,  
Better to smile on all that smile, and show  
There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

#### V

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap  
Honey of generation had betrayed,  
And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape  
As recollection or the drug decide,  
Would think her Son, did she but see that shape  
With sixty or more winters on its head,  
A compensation for the pang of his birth,  
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

#### VI

Plato thought nature but a spume that plays  
Upon a ghostly paradigm of things;  
Solider Aristotle played the taws  
Upon the bottom of a king of kings;  
World-famous golden-thighed Pythagoras  
Fingered upon a fiddle-stick or strings  
What a star sang and careless Muses heard:  
Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird.

#### VII

Both nuns and mothers worship images,  
But those the candles light are not as those  
That animate a mother's reveries,  
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.  
And yet they too break hearts — O presences  
That passion, piety or affection knows,  
And that all heavenly glory symbolise —  
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

#### VIII

Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.  
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.  
O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,



Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

## 5.2 FORM

Ottava Rima – 8 Stanzas with 8 lines, regular rhythm, regular rhyme scheme of abababcc. A Roman numeral heads each stanza. The form Ottava Rima was traditionally used for heroic or epic poetry; it is likely no co-incidence that this form is chosen for this particular poem of ‘epic reflection’. “Among School Children” by W.B Yeats is well known for the gracefulness and the flexibility of the language it holds. There is also a dramatic coherence in its construction. The excellence of language of the poem is peculiarly Yeatsian. No matter how prosaic his words are, they are also luminous and noble.

## 5.3 ANALYSIS

### Stanza 1:

The start of the poem is presented realistically with Senator Yeats carrying out one of his public duties by visiting a convent school (in Waterford). This event did indeed happen in real life. The atmosphere seems relaxed and agreeable and the children seem undisturbed by their important visitor. The tone is humane and acceptant.

Important quotes: ‘sixty-year-old smiling public man’ – reference to Sailing to Byzantium with the description, and ambiguous reaction to, age. The ‘public’ man is referring to his status as an Irish Senator, although as a well-known poet, his views and poetic verses were also appropriated by others (especially for political means). This poem (alongside Sailing to Byzantium) is ironically one of Yeats’ most private poems – it is a poem of self-reflection, rather than of overt political metaphor.

### Stanza 2:

Yeats is portrayed as not wholly concentrating on the schoolroom but instead his thoughts are elsewhere and in comparison with the ‘I walk’ of stanza one, it is replaced by ‘I dream’. The poetry now becomes more urgent as the rhythm is broken at the line endings (enjambment). ‘A Ledeian body’ relates to the child being dreamed of which is Maud Gonne – the ‘Ledeian’ theme (Leda/Helen/Swan) is often used as a metaphor for Maud throughout Yeats’ canon (see blog page on Yeats’ women). This stanza evokes a scene of ‘youthful sympathy’. The two images of Maud and Yeats’ unity are offered, first the ‘sphere’ (attributed to Plato’s writings) and then the earthly image of ‘the yolk and white of an egg’. These two images start off the emerging argument of the poem, which is concerned with Platonic and alternative ways of seeing reality.

### Stanza 3:

Yeats is shown as looking at the girls in the school-room and wondering whether Maud ‘stood so at that age’. The memory of her drives his heart so ‘wild’ that she appears to ‘stand before me as a living child’. The rhyming couplet makes this an authoritative statement – the poet’s imagination is triumphant over time and circumstance.

**Stanza 4:**

Yeats compares 'her present image' with the imagined sight of the beautiful, young Maud which seems to 'float into mind'; the verb float which is used gives the situation a spectral quality – the present is less powerful than the past. Yet the present is the reality, however grotesque and disturbing Maud is described. Yeats references her to the 14th century painting of the Italian 'Quattrocento', which suggests a hollow-cheeked ethereal beauty far from youthful vitality. Yeats implies that he was once handsome but abandons the fruitful idea by using a cutting caesura to emphasize wishful thought. He says that it's 'better to smile on all that smile' at him, the ageing man, and to show that he can bear the process of ageing without complaint. The scarecrow imagery is reminiscent of 'Sailing to Byzantium' where he describes old age as 'a tattered coat upon a stick'. However here Yeats is trying to avoid bitterness.

**Stanza 5:**

Here Yeats shows how bitterness is hard to avoid and he looks at the ageing man from a different perspective, that of the mother. Yeats questions whether the sufferings of women in childbirth are compensated for by such a 'shape with sixty or more winters on its head?' He presents an argument to the effect that 'all things spoil over time'. It raises slight theological questions – If Jesus had not been crucified, would his teachings have been corrupted by bitterness and age?

**Stanza 6:**

In this stanza Yeats mentions three famous philosophers, who might be expected to answer the difficult, ongoing questions so far raised about human identity and worth:

- 1) 'Plato' the idealist, dismissive of nature
- 2) 'Soldier Aristotle', more of a materialist, but remembered here as the tutor of Alexander the Great, whom he punished with 'the taws' (a Scottish word for a schoolmaster's leather strap)
- 3) 'Pythagoras' the mathematician and astronomer who believed in the music of spheres – music unable to rouse the interest of the 'careless muses'.

The stanza ends with the same scarecrow imagery repeated throughout the poem, 'old clothes upon old sticks' which dismisses all the three philosophers as no more than scarecrows since their ideas have failed to save them from the humiliations of the ageing body. Again, this makes a subtle nod to the value (or questions the value) of Christian belief.

**Stanza 7:**

The transition to stanza 7 is abrupt by immediately questioning why we are in the world of 'nuns and mothers?'. Yeats suggests that mothers are able to survive the sufferings of labour because they are sustained by an image of the child which they can worship just as a nun is sustained by contemplating the 'repose' of a statue. 'And yet they too break hearts' implies that all worship of this kind is an attempt to go beyond the human; after the broken heart, there may be peace. However this vision is repudiated in the ecstatic vision to which the

poem now moves with rhythmical power achieved by the enjambment going onto stanza 8. The representations of this 'heavenly glory' known to 'passion, piety or affection' – interpreted as the emotions of lover, nun and mother in their perfection mock 'man's enterprise' (the pun on enterprise is either just simply to live or in order to live takes courage).

### **Stanza 8:**

The final stanza begins with a declaration about a state of perfect being in which 'labour' is transferred into 'blossoming or dancing'. The labour being Adams curse, but also that of Mothers, in both cases involving effort and suffering due to the Fall in the creation of Adam and Eve. Blossoming and dancing are two evocative images of vital beauty. Here, all the usual antinomies of human existence are actually resolved:

- 1) The body is not sacrificed to the soul
- 2) Beauty is not created by despair
- 3) Wisdom is not won by arduous toil.

This is an idyllic state but the imagery of nature makes it an earthly paradise. The stanza ends with two rhetorical questions:

- 1) 'The chestnut-tree' is a whole living creature, the 'blossom' is inconceivable without the great roots.
- 2) 'The dancer' in the dance is an indissoluble unity. Once the 'dance' is over, the figure that emerges is no longer 'the dancer', only an ordinary human body.

## **5.4 SUMMARY**

The poem Among School Children was composed after the poet's visit to a convent school in Waterford Ireland in 1926. This poem moves from a direct consideration of the children to Yeats' early love, Maud Gonne, and then to a passionate philosophical conclusion in which all of Yeats's platonic thinking blends into an exalted hymn of praise to the glory and the puzzle of human existence.

As Yeats entered the school, he was received by an old nun who conducted him through different classes. The children in the classes looked with wonder at the sixty year old smiling public man (poet). At the sight of children, he is reminded of Maud Gonne; his beloved as she must have been a student like the girls who stood before him at the time. He recalls a particular day when she had told him how trivial incidents and reproof from the teacher would make her unhappy and turn the entire day into the cheerless void.

The poet had listened to her account and expressed sympathy, till he completely identified with her: it was as if there two selves seemed to blend into one like the yolk and

white of an egg. At this point, there is an allusion of the myth that claims that man and woman were originally one, but since they forcefully separated, they always attempt to come together.

The poet thought keeps visualizing the image of Maud Gonne and he looks upon this girl and imagines that Maud Gonne, too as a child very much like the girl now standing before him. No doubt her beauty was classical like that of Helen, the daughter of the Leda. The color of the cheeks and the hair of one particular girl reminded him of the complexion of his beloved; his imagination runs wild and he sees her as if she were actually standing before.

The poet then recalls the feature of Maud Gonne in her old age. Her cheeks were hollow; she was old and decrepit and looked as if she subsisted on the wind and shadows in place of water and solid food. Even so, she was still a good model of a work of art. Naturally poet is reminded of his own old age. He was quite good looking once. Though not as beautiful as Leda but it is useless to brood over youth and beauty that was now a thing of the past. One must always remain cheerful and keep smiling, showing to the world that even if one has grown a scarecrow, one is a comfortable kind of scarecrow. Old age and death are awful realities. One should accept the inevitable and make the best of a bad situation.

In the sixth stanza the poet ridicules great philosophers of the world in a light hearted vein. Plato, the famous philosopher regarded the world as unreal, a mere reflection of ideas. On the other hand, Aristotle was a practical minded man of action and, as the tutor of Alexander, must have chastised that great conqueror frequently. Yet another philosopher Pythagoras declared that he was 'golden thighed'. He was a great musician himself and could listen to the music of the spheres or the musical sounds emanating from the movement of planets in their orbit. But all the outstanding knowledge and wisdom of these renowned men could not prevent the natural process of ageing. Their philosophies notwithstanding, they grew old and broken like a scarecrow with the passage of time.

Passionate loves, loving mother and pious nuns all cling to illusions, phantoms pure and simple. Their fondness for cherished images makes them blind to hard and harsh reality. The beloveds are not at all as good and beautiful as they are imagined, sons never as handsome and dutiful as believed or supposed, and the God is in heaven never as just and merciful as generally understood. And yet this worship of images continues unabated. The fact is that the images stand for glorious ideals which are hardly ever attained. These idols mock at all human efforts. They are mockeries of the heart as great philosophers are mockeries of the intellect. None of them can change the facts of life or influence the course of nature.

The last stanza is an emphatic re-affirmation of the poet's maxim that life is an organic whole made up of opposites. Just as chestnut tree is neither leaf blossom or bole but the sum total of all three, so also man is neither mind nor body nor soul but an untitled entity of the three. Life becomes really fruitful and labor is truly rewarding when the diligence of the scholar does not make him clear eye. Just as a dancer cannot be isolated from the dance, so also the body cannot be separated from the soul. Harmony between the two is indispensable for self-fulfillment for the bloom, and beauty of the tree of life.

### 5.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. The poem takes place in a schoolroom where Yeats establishes a dichotomy between the youthfulness of schoolchildren and his own aged, dreamy mindset. Describe in detail?
2. Analyze the philosophy of life in the poem “Among School Children”?
3. Critically appreciate: The difference between looking and seeing separates the two worlds Yeats walks between; in the hall of school children he looks at them, but sees her. Yeats writes, “I look upon one child or t’other there/And wonder if she stood so at that age” (19). He continues, “And thereupon my heart is driven wild:/She stands before me as a living child” (24)?
4. Narrate the varied themes in the poem “Among School Children”?

### 5.6 REFERENCE

Poems of W.B. Yeats: The Tower literature essays are academic essays for citation

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# LESSON-6

## THE WASTE LAND - T.S. ELIOT

### Objectives of the Lesson:

- To introduce aspects of modern poetry to students
- To enable the student to have an idea of T.S Eliot's poetry
- To make the student familiar to the origin of the poem *The Waste Land*

### Structure of the Lesson:

#### 6.1 Introduction to Modern poetry

#### 6.2 Introduction to T.S.Eliot

#### 6.3 Perspectives of T.S.Eliot

#### 6.4 Symbols and images

#### 6.5 Genesis of Waste Land

#### 6.6 The Waste Land section I text

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION TO MODERN POETRY

The chief feature of the twentieth century literary scenario is complete deviation from the traditional values. The outlook was mostly scientific rather than romantic; it is not aesthetic but realistic. The motto is not art for arts' sake, it is art for Life's sake. Art became a kind of moral propaganda and writers became preachers. It is regarded as an age of experimentation in literary forms and conventions. There was a decline in the belief in religion and classical learning.

**The Age of interrogation and anxiety:** modern age is also known as age of reason

First half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the most turbulent period. There is a sharp and clear departure from the self – complacency, compromise and stability of the Victorian Period. It is also called the age of anxiety and interrogation because of the changes in social, moral, political, economic & scientific fields. Loss of faith in religion led to immorality and reason became the touchstone. Growth of industrial and technical progress led to increase of competition which resulted in failure frustration, anxiety and cynicism. All these are reflected in the literature of the period.

**Art for life's sake:** Most of the writers deviated from the established order of art for art's sake. Their notion was '*art for life's sake*' for the sake of community. There was growing interest in the poor and the working class. The middle class standards were set aside. There was more concentration on the affluent and poor sections. The Victorian writers – Dickens, Thackeray, Kingsley criticized the injustice towards the poor but did not criticise the social system. The modern writers criticized the lapses of society.

**Impact of socioeconomic conditions on literature**

Industrial expansion, disintegration of agricultural life, break-up of rural life, emphasis on urban life, change of social relationships, increase of material and competitive spirit influenced the literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Marxism was the more powerful influence on life and literature. Freud's theory of psycho analysis influenced the literature of this period. Sexual immorality was treated as normal as against the Victorian writers. These new theories led to the stream-of-consciousness novel introduced by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

**Impact of the two world wars:** After effects and depression after the W.W.I and the W.W.II created problems like unemployment. A Number of books were written on the two World Wars. The futility and hollowness of war was exposed in many poems.

**Influence of Radio, Cinema and T.V** Radio, stories and Plays were nearer to the common man. Film techniques were used by many writers.

Other influences such as telegraph, cheap printing, and journalism resulted in the deterioration of standar literature. Cheap editions of classics and modern books were available. The increase of public and circulating libraries brought literature close to the common man. As a result cheap literature without aesthetic values began to sprout. On the whole the modern age is an exciting age, that reveals the intellectual ability of the writers and the popular culture and literature.

**6.2 INTRODUCTION TO T.S. ELIOT**

T.S. Eliot, the greatest modern English poet, was an American by birth and an Englishman by adoption. Born at St. Lous, Missouri, U.S.A., he became a naturalized British subject in 1927. As such he had the blending of the best of the American blood and English intellect. He combined in himself strange and opposing characteristics. He came to possess a many-sided personality. He was a classicist, an innovator, a critic, a social reformer, and a mystic – all combined into one. He was a professed classicist and an uncompromising upholder of tradition, and at the same time an innovator in many an intellectual and aesthetic field. Though a great and acute thinker, he had a spiritual approach to life, a quality which is rare in the twentieth century dominated by science and materialism. Of all the modern English poets he had done most to make his age conscious of itself and aware of the dangers inherent in modern civilization.

He was closely connected with Ezra Pound and the Imagist group during the early years of his residence in London. His early poetry owes something of these writers, but much more to his intensive study of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, Baudelaire and French symbolists and Dante.

**Influences on T.S. Eliot**

“A writer depends,” Eliot wrote, “on the accumulated sensations” of the first twenty –one years. The earliest influence was his mother in whose writings there are the qualities of a true poet. Mrs. Eliot took comfort from her youngest son's literary promise and looked forward to the day when he would take his place among the country's most prominent writers and win the acknowledgment she would have most desired to win. The family guessed at an early date that T.S. Eliot had unusual abilities and exerted all their care to foster them and guard him against pitfalls.

The young writers of Harvard were greatly influenced by Baudelaire whose cadences Eliot has borrowed freely on several occasions. Baudelaire's influence on his imagery is obvious in his poems.

Eliot was also influenced by the imagist poets T. E. Hulme and Ezra Pound. He combined their precise little pictures with the vaguer imagery of the Symbolists.

More profound was the influence of Ezra Pound whose magnificent reserve, skilful characterization, and the variety of his moods impressed Eliot. 'The Waste Land' owes its severe editing to the powerful influence that Ezra Pound had on Eliot.

Among the poetic influences that went towards the making of Eliot's poetic mind, Dante must be given a very high place, for throughout his life Eliot has clearly had a reverence for him both for the grand simplicity of his style and with an ever-growing realization, the profundity of his genius.

In 'The Fire Sermon,' the third part of *The Waste Land* the influence of Buddhist ideal is evident where Eliot urged purgation through self-denial, and detachment from the world.

Donne and the other metaphysical poets and the dramatists of the first-half of the seventeenth century also contributed much to the making of Eliot as a poet.

Eliot's poetry is typically American in that it is a mingling of so many traditions. So varied are the strains in his poetry that he is claimed to be a European poet. He became an English citizen and an Anglo Catholic, but the American influences are not to be overlooked.

Eliot's personality was to a great extent shaped by Harvard. He entered Harvard in Harvard's golden era, where great men were lecturing. He claimed that poetry is a combination of English and American traditions. "But in its sources, in its emotional springs it comes from America."

### 6.3 PERSPECTIVES OF T.S.ELIOT

#### 1. Eliot's Classicism

In 1928, Eliot declared that his general point of view has become "Classicist in literature, royalist in politics and Anglo Catholic in religion." In his preoccupation with form, in acceptance of an already existing poetic background and traditional symbols in his technique of allusion and quotation as indicative of his acceptance of an objective symbolism, in his use of classical mythology as the background which will provide imagery and symbolism, in his eagerness to eliminate the excessive blurring of the object, which was the result of Romantic diffuseness, in all these, Eliot reveals his aspiration for conventional classicism. Eliot was the first to combine in his poetry "the manner of Augustan with the purpose of Metaphysical wit." His admiration for the poetry of Dryden and the Metaphysicals is but an indication of his classical bent. Another gift that he imbibed from the classical school is his preoccupation with the formal problems of poetry and his desire for verbal precision.

As a poet Eliot is a classicist and traditionalist. Referring to the classicism of Eliot, Maxwell observes in *The Poetry of T.S. Eliot*: "A characteristic of classicism is its acceptance of an already existing poetic background, whose function is to provide the poem's incidental symbolism. This can be seen most clearly in *The Waste Land*, where a blending of traditional European and Eastern thought is the necessary background to his interpretation of the contemporary problem. The basic symbolism is taken from the Grail legend, and, particularly in the last section, Eliot introduces the journey symbol, which is a well-defined feature of European legend.



The one major theme in the poetry of Eliot is Redemption of time and the possibility of spiritual rebirth. Basically, it is not different from the Christian conception of sin, atonement, redemption and spiritual resurrection. It is equally allied to the rationalistic idea of science, that nothing material is subject to utter destruction. Everything undergoes a transformation under the influence of time.

Eliot saw the illustration of this idea even in the vegetation rituals and fertility rites of primitive cultures and the mystery religions of the ancient world, from which early Christianity absorbed so much of its own ritual and symbolism. The primitive imagination conceived of the cycle of the seasons as the life of a god who controlled the energies of nature, and who nevertheless had to submit to the power of death. But the death was not permanent; it was followed by a resurrection. World is dictated by an order of birth, growth, decay and also the promise of a spiritual metamorphosis. All religions accept this cardinal law of nature when they accept the immortality of the human soul as the central tenet of religious belief.

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot is intensely aware that the possibilities of rebirth cannot be dismissed as an historical anachronism: that the truth of the experience is eternally present and that the living of it plunges the whole man into a process of disintegration and conflict.

#### **6.4 ELIOT'S SYMBOLS AND IMAGES**

In his poetry Eliot, in his own words, 'occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist.' This 'private world,' so intensely real to each of us individually, can hardly be communicated. So the poet resorts to symbols and images which will help to create an 'objective correlative' of his own vision or experience in the mind of the reader, and rhythms which would "penetrate far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word."

In the use of symbols, Eliot was very deeply influenced by the French symbolists like Mallarmé and also the English metaphysicals. In *The Waste Land*, for example, the basic symbol is reinforced by other devices, the cumulative effect of the setting and its relation to the human-beings, the contrast of words and ideas, the delicately phrased indecisions, repeated in their various aspects.

#### **ELIOT AS A MODERN POET**

##### **A General Estimate**

T.S. Eliot has been described by one of his admirers as one first holding the key of modern poetry in his open hand and then unlocking its door. As he flings open the door, we enter a strange world of people who have as if just escaped from the broader and vaster life outside and found a retreat into this new Inferno. It is said that human nature seldom changes and these denizens of Eliot's Inferno are basically similar to their predecessors in the realm of poetry. But in giving them vitality and individuality, Eliot has evolved a new pattern in poetic technique and achieved a remarkable position in the history of poetical innovation.

Eliot began by rejecting the romantic faith. He believed that romantic poetry was essentially escapist, and it is for those who demand of poetry a day-dram, or a metamorphosis of their own feeble desires and lusts, or what they believe to be intensity of passion. Eliot was profoundly conscious of his age which was "a war-like, various and tragical" one. Life was chaotic, and in his early poetry up to 'The Waste Land' he has given us the most

convincing presentment of social aimlessness; has made concrete for his contemporaries, the paralysis and decay of his generation.

Eliot is a modern poet not merely because of the novelty of his themes and his keen observation of his time, but chiefly because he has evolved a new method of poetic communication. He saw the deep significance of the relationship between poetry and the rhythm and idiom of ordinary speech. He also brought to the use of poetry the suggestiveness of the symbolist technique. While reviving classicism, Eliot's poetry has also made full and proper use of science and psychology, two of the modern interests of man. It is interesting to note how deeply psycho analysis and psycho-therapy has influenced Eliot's themes.

### **Techniques used in The Waste Land:**

T.S. Eliot used in his poetry techniques such as objective correlative, montage imagism, symbolism, existentialism, classicism poetic shorthand and use of conversational style.

### **Origin and the sources of inspiration for the Wasteland:**

Eliot borrowed the ideas from various sources to write *The Waste land*.

- Jessie L Weston's book "From Ritual to Romance".
- James Fraser's book *The Golden Bough*
- Ovid's *Metamorphosis*
- St. Augustine's *Confessions*
- The Holy Bible
- Dante's *Divine Comedy*
- Buddha's *Fire Sermon*
- Indian *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*
- The *Bhagavad Gita*

### **The Wasteland: Introduction**

*The Wasteland* was published serially in the magazine "The Dial". It was brought in the form of a book in 1922. The poem is dedicated to Ezra Pound, Eliot's guide and master whom Eliot considers 'a better craftsman'

There is an epigraph to the poem which explains the plight of Sibyl of Cumae, a prophetess who was given the boon of immortality. She is about thousand years of age and suffers from the problem of old age. Imprisoned in a cage and questioned by a visiting boy "Sibyl what do you want? She replies I want to die". Her life is like "life in death and death in life" Eliot seems to compare her life with that of the modern people whom he calls the Waste Landers. The life of Londoners according to Eliot is similar to Sibyl, awaiting death without any hope of rebirth.

Tiresias is the chief spokesman in the poem and the mouthpiece of T.S. Eliot. He is the hero and the observer who is immortal. He belongs to both past and present - a character taken from the Italian poet Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Tiresias lead the life a man and woman. He was cursed to become a woman and live for seven years. After seven years he became a man. He was cursed to become blind but was given the prophetic power.

The poem is divided into five sections

- I The Burial of the Dead
- II The Game of Chess
- III The Fire Sermon
- IV Death by Water
- V What the thunder said

## 6.5 GENESIS OF THE WASTE LAND

The Waste Land gave the world a mild shock, a shock that had a curative effect, to a war crazy world. It was a great positive achievement, and one of the first important in the history of English poetry. War does something to heighten the sympathetic sense of each other in people who might otherwise practice a mutual disregard. Eliot was to be a Londoner in the two wars. London of the First World War and the glimpses it gave of people, suffering and courage led to a heightening of his poetic powers, awakened him to the futility, horror and boredom, beneath human existence and *The Waste Land* was the result.

It is true that the immediate sense of the ugliness, the emptiness and aimlessness of man's spiritual estate during the post-war years, was responsible for the genesis the *The Waste Land*; Eliot spoke with the voice of the lonely prophet in a corrupt city. It is a poem which reflects the post-war struggle for re-orientation. Eliot tells us that the figure of Tiresias, "although a mere spectator and not indeed a character is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem." This note indicates clearly what the poem is, an effort to focus and inclusive human consciousness. The effort in ways suggested above, is characteristic s of the age; and in an age of psycho-analysis. Tiresias is an appropriate impersonation; for a cultivated modern is intimately aware of the experience of the opposite sex. But Tiresias is blind, so the ancient seer seems, therefore to represent eye of the mind, a universal contemplative consciousness, almost 'historical sense' itself. As such "it is the inner reality which subsists, through all experience that he sees, which unites past and present, men and women, the "characters " in the poem and the 'I' who is its mouthpiece.

'Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse  
Oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum  
Illi purti fivrtrny:

Respondebat illa:

For Ezra Pound

*il miglior fabbro*

### I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruelest 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 Starn bergersee  
 With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
 And went on in sunshine, 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 girl'.  
 -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.  
*Od' 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 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,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sights, 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: Stetsons!  
'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?  
'Oh 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 frere!'

## 6.6 SECTION I: THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

The title of the section refers to the burial of the service of the God in the church. The first four lines "April is the cruellest month.....rain" is an inverted reference to Chaucer's prologue to Canterbury tales where April is the sweetest month. In this section Eliot mentions three obstacles in the spiritual pilgrimage of modern man: sex or guilt love, gambling or fortune seeking, frustration or spiritual suicide. Eliot manages to refer to mythology in real life to explain these obstacles in real life.

Sex and guilty love:

Life style of German princess, Mary Larisch and that of a Hyacinth girl as representations of modern life are portrayed. The myth of Tristan and Isolde from an opera in German by Richard Wagner is as an example of guilty love.

Gambling:

Madam Sosotris, a replica of sibyl is a modern a fortune teller with a pack of cards originally. There were 21 cards in the pack with the pictures representing material life, nature's elements, virtues and vices. The tarot cards of the madam sosotris consist of the pictures of Phoenician sailor, Belladonna, Lady of the rocks, Lady of situations, the one eyed merchant. She practices fortune telling basing on the pictures on the cards as it was prohibited in England.

Spiritual death:

Eliot refers to the people of London in particular and Europe in general. He calls London "unreal city", a phrase borrowed from Baudelaire's "the seven old hen". On a winter morning Tiresias observes a crowd of people passing quickly over the London bridge. All of them are busy moving towards their work places before it is nine. Tiresias recognizes one of them as Stetson and questions him about his spiritual growth. Stetson fails to respond to the question on sprouting of spiritual seed which is an indication of spiritual death and the barrenness of spiritual activity in the life of modern man.

# LESSON-7

## THE WASTE LAND - II

### Objectives of the lesson

- To make the student to understand the poem *The Waste Land*
- To give a critical appreciation of *The Waste Land*-sections II, III, IV, V

### The structure of the lesson

- 7.1 Section II- A Game of Chess
- 7.2 Summary of A Game of Chess
- 7.3 Section III - The Fire Sermon
- 7.4 Summary of The Fire Sermon
- 7.5 Section IV - Death by Water
- 7.6 Summary of Death by Water
- 7.7 Section V- What the Thunder said
- 7.8 Summary of What the Thunder said

### 7.1 SECTION II-A GAME OF CHESS

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 wings)  
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  
Where 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 tonight. 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 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 it's time  
Now alber'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 and think of poor Albertf,  
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 IT'S 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.  
You 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 IT'S 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 IT'S TIME  
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME  
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.  
Ta, ta Goonight, Goonight.  
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

## 7.2 SUMMARY OF SECTION II: A GAME OF CHESS

The title of this section "a game of Chess" is taken from the Thomas Middleton's play "women beware women". In the play the daughter in law is seduced by the Knight while the mother-in-law is engaged in a game of chess.

Eliot refers to two instances of sexual corruption from upper middle class and the lower class. From upper middleclass a woman, a rich Belladonna similar to the sexy queen Cleopatra is portrayed. She is seen burning with lust, sitting before the mirror, in rich make-up to receive her lover. The room is decorated with carved scenes of seduction from the past – the sorrowful fate of Philomela as presented in Ovid's "metamorphosis". The rich lady is nervous and fails to act and speak when her lover arrives. Her lover appears as if paralysed and blank, as if incapable of either physical or spiritual action. They both talk aimlessly. Tiresias observes that it is their routine and they are like rats running aimlessly among the dead bones. Their day begins at 10-00 AM with hot water bath and is followed by the time killing game of chess till late in the night, waiting for the lover.

The second instance is from a lover of middle class. It is about a couple Lil and Albert. Albert who is in the army visits his wife and children occasionally. Lil, mother of five children literally escaped death at the sixth delivery. She took a pill to abort the next child which resulted in her decayed teeth. The elderly lady advises her to get a new pair of teeth and appear beautiful when her husband arrives. Albert comes and thanks the elderly lady. This is an example of degeneration of values, importance given to sexual rather than spiritual matter. The women indulge in vain talk until the barmaid tells them to leave till midnight bidding. Though compared to Ophelia's farewell in Hamlet, Eliot suggests the hollowness in the farewell of the modern ladies.



### 7.3 SECTION III-THE FIRE SERMON

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
 Clutch and sink into the west 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  
 Musings 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  
 Cccccccc  
 Twit twit twit  
 Jug jug jug jug jug  
 So rudely forc'd  
 Tereu

Unreal City  
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon  
 Mr Eugendies, 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 Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back  
 Turn upwards 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 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 patronizing 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 a chatter from within  
Where fishermen lounge at noon: where the wealls  
Of Magnus Martyr hold  
Inexplicable splendor of Ionian white and gold.  
The river swats

Oil and tar  
 The barges drift  
 With the rurning 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 Ldeicester

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. Riochmond 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 fpeople who expect  
 Nothing.’

la la

The Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning  
 O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
 O Lord Thou pluckest Burning

#### 7.4 SUMMARY OF SECTION III: THE FIRE SERMON

The Fire Sermon was preached by Lord Buddha against the fires of passion, hatred and infatuation. Eliot seems to suggest that the world is burning with hatred, sorrow, misery and lust. Eliot illustrates this through four different characters.

He describes the scene on the bank of the river Thames, which is full of litter thrown by the loitering heirs of the city directors on summer nights. Tiresias laments that it is no more "Sweet Thames" as in Spencer's poems but it has become a symbol of lust in the modern context. He refers to Mrs. Porter and her daughter who wash their feet in soda water and run on the banks of river Thames. Tiresias sings a song and requests the river to flow softly till his song ends.

Tiresias meets the one-eyed merchant Mr. Eugenides from Turkey who comes to London to enjoy the weekend. For him, business and religion are like two eyes. Tiresias feels that his one-eye, that is business is open and the second eye, religion is always blind.

Tiresias observes the life of a typist and a house agent's clerk who belong to working class. The typist lives in a small apartment, comes home in the evening bored and tired and waits for her lover who is a house agent's clerk. They indulge in sexual activity but she is indifferent towards him. After his departure, she switches on the gramophone casually and says "I'm glad it is over." Eliot seems to suggest that there is no affection or love in their relationship.

Tiresias next describes the plight of the Thames daughters who are poor and are cheated by the rich. They sing songs of betrayal as they row the boat. The song of the three Thames daughters refers to the burning temptation of human beings. This section ends with the message that temptation and lust can be conquered through suffering and pain through the fire of love.

#### 7.5 SECTION IV- DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,  
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the 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.

#### 7.6 SUMMARY OF SECTION IV: DEATH BY WATER

Water is the traditional symbol of purification and regeneration but in the modern world it is regarded as a source of destruction. Eliot refers to the drowned Phoenician sailor, Phlebas who was young, tall and handsome, who was caught in the whirlpool of business, profit and loss. Because of lack of spiritual authority there seems to be no rebirth after his death. Tiresias refers to death by drowning and no rebirth because of moral degradation. In this very short section, the emphasis is on death, not on rebirth.

**7.7 SECTION-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 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 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 wing  
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 rooftree  
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  
D A  
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  
D A  
*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  
 D A  
*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 at least set my lands in order?  
 London Bridge is falling down failing down falling down  
*Poi ascose nel foco che gli affina*  
 Quando fian uti chelidon ---O swallow swallow  
 Le Prince a Aquitaine a la tour abolie  
 These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
 Why the Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
     Shantih shantih shantih

## 7.8 SUMMARY OF SECTION V: WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

Eliot himself said that this is the best part and justifies the whole poem. In the beginning Eliot refers to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Though Jesus is dead he lived in the hearts of the people. In the twentieth century people are killing him once again through their indifference which is worse than evil. Then Eliot refers to the journey in search of the Holy Grail where there is no water, no rains, rocks are cracked every where it is barrenness. The journey to Emmaus in search of spiritual quest was very difficult. Similarly, the journey of modern humanity towards spiritual values is difficult and aimless. The experience of the journey is explained in the water song in the next 29 lines which is regarded as the best lines in the Waste Land. The song seems to indicate that only rocks dominate the Waste Land and there is no possibility of saviour. The presence of God is not perceived by the Waste Landers or the people of twentieth century. There is reference to the destruction of Europe after First World War.

Eliot refers to a similar situation of draught in India when Ganga is sunken and people pray God. God appeared in the form of thunder and uttered the sound 'Da'. It was understood by the gods the human beings and the demons in the three different ways. The human beings understood as Datta which means to give. Dedicating oneself to a noble cause leads to spiritual satisfaction.

The demons understood it as "Dayadhvam" – to sympathise with others. The message is to be compassionate and sympathetic with others and not self centered.

The gods understood it as "Damyata" –self control or discipline which leads to better life. Finally, Tiresias refers to falling of the London Bridge which is a symbol of spiritual and social disintegration. He recalls lines from Dante's purgatorio and preaches mankind purgation. The ending reminds of teachings of Upanishads- if Datta, Dayadhvam, and Damyata are practiced by human beings peace or shanti can be achieved. Though the poem has a note of despair, it ends with a message of hope for the modern Waste Landers. Eliot laments on the degeneration and degradation of values, morals and spirituality in the society.

# LESSON-8

## THE WASTE LAND- III

Objective of the lesson

- To explain the various aspects of *The Waste Land*
- To enable the students to study the Themes of *The Waste Land*

Structure of the lesson

**8.1 Section I critical analysis**

**8.2 Section II critical analysis**

**8.3 Section III critical analysis**

**8.4 Section IV critical analysis**

**8.5 Section V critical analysis**

### 8.1 SECTION I CRITICAL ANALYSIS

#### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The basic symbol used in *The Waste Land* is taken from Miss Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. In the legends that she deals with, the land has been blighted by a curse. The crops do not grow, and the animals are cursed by sterility. The condition of the land is summed up by an enchanter connected to the plight of the land who has been rendered important by sickness or injury. The curse can only be removed by the appearance of a Knight who will ask the meaning of the various symbols which are displayed to him in the castle. The shift in meaning from physical to spiritual sterility is easily made.

The poem is built on a major contrast, a device which is a favorite of Eliot's and used in many of his poems. In *The Waste Land* the contrast is between two kinds of life and two kinds of death. Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death may be life-giving, an awakening to life. The poem occupies itself to a great extent with this paradox, and with a number of variations on it. The most obvious, and ironically dramatic are the series of 'scenes' from modern life, The fact that men have lost the knowledge of good and evil keeps them from being alive and is the justification for considering the modern Waste Land as a kingdom in which people do not even exist. The people are hollow men, shape without form, shadow without substance.

This theme is reflected by the epigraph taken from the 'Satyricon' of Petronius where a drunken scoffer is deriding the heroic past. He speaks of the Cumaean Sibyl, most famous of prophetess to whom Apollo granted a life of as many years as the grains of dust in her hand. But she forgot to ask for eternal youth, and so shriveled to nothing. Here the speaker claims that he has seen her, hanging in a jar and that when her acolytes asked, "What do you want?" she replied: "I want to die." The statement reflects both her scornful attitude of the Contemporary world towards 'tradition' and the despairing personal wish for death which is one aspect of the emotional pattern of the poem.



## 8.2 SECTION II CRITICAL ANALYSIS

### THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

The conflict in the poem is presented in the opening lines where in the image, rhythm and association, the themes are given their first statement. The theme of the attractiveness of death or, of the difficulty in rousing oneself from the death in life in which the people of *The Waste Land* live, is developed in this first section. Nature awakens to new life and fertility in its eternal cycle. April, the month of rebirth, is not the most joyful season but the cruelest. The Sweet showers of April offer no glad welcome to the spring. The poet's feelings towards both Winter and April, towards the stagnation of the life which he is living and towards a rebirth is doubtful, mixing memory and desire. He is impelled to apathy and oblivion by Winter. The possibility of renewal, the thought of being stirred into potency and growth, the compulsion towards it felt in the rhythm of the first four lines, and combined and mingled with a sense of fear and reluctance which drive him back to safe forgetfulness. Then without transition the poem shifts to a rhythm of release and lightness. But it is a release into an artificial and sophisticated world where seasons reflect but the change of scenery. It is a world of sports and travel, of the light superficial chatter of a rootless cosmopolitan culture, a world inhabited by tourists, rolling stones which are no part of the rhythm of the life-cycle. We are introduced to some of the basic types who inhabit *The Waste Land*. There is no release for them, they live in an atmosphere of tension.

In the next sequence there is again the same dreading sense of paralyzed hope. With the image of water a freshness and buoyancy is given to the rhythm and the fragment of the sailor's song in the first Act of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* and the image of fertility in the hyacinth girl with her arms full and her hair wet suggest an agreeable change. The Hyacinth garden brings the echo of fertility festival: the picture of the girl, that of Spring and abundance, and an exquisite promise. But the conclusion is the torture of a tantalizing vision, seen and felt, with the power of creative response, of speech, movement, interpretation, even realization withheld, "I was neither living nor dead and I knew nothing."

With the entrance of Madame Sosostris and her 'wicked pack of card' we are introduced into a variation of the same life-death theme, tinged by the alternating tones of satiric levity and serious significance. Her reality is dead, her occupation shady. She practices her occult trade under the ever-present fear of the police. Her voice is muffled and indistinct. She introduces us to characters and themes which are developed later, and comments on them in the jargon of her trade, even though their true significance is unknown to her. The protagonists' card is the drowned Phoenician sailor, and she warns him to beware of death by water, so Madame Sosostris' warning is solely on the level of the destruction possibilities hidden in the water symbol.

There is one line which is profoundly significant and which gives one hint of supreme value. Looking at the cards, Madame Sosostris says, "I see crowds of people walking round in a ring." The crowd of humanity, aimless and blind as they are, are brought into the poem and the horror of life in the modern city is vividly suggested. The city was a maternal symbol to the ancients, but it is now utterly barren. It is 'unreal' because it is cut off from both natural and spiritual sources of life and because it has nothing of the old sense of 'community.' Each individual exists in drab loneliness and the mass that 'flowed' over London Bridge, has no more human identity than the river flowing under it. It is our city, America's city, every nation's city, unreal, aimless, hopeless. The figures remind us of the figures in Dante's *Limbo*, 'hopeless. The figures remind us of the figures in Dante's *Limbo*, who were not given the privilege of baptism or the figures in the anteroom to Hell.

Stetson is the name for millions of citizens who have buried reality, 'who have made through cowardice the great refusal,' who are afraid to be sincere, and face the truth of themselves.

### 8.3 SECTION III CRITICAL ANALYSIS

#### THE GAMES OF CHESS

The second part entitled 'The Game of Chess' deals directly with the artificiality and lack of human or meaning in the central fertility symbol, in the marriage relation of men and women.

Eliot refers us to Middleton's play, "Women beware women with its chess playing scene.' There the game is used to distract the attention of a simple woman while the duke seduces her daughter-in-law, and the seduction is described ironically in terms of the moves of the pieces on the board. The picture of a woman's boudoir, created in the most lavish and luxuriant profusion of sense-impressions, prepares the reader instinctively to hear of a passion which matches the richness of its setting. But the two dramatic scenes that follow, illustrate two aspects of the terrible emotional barrenness of 'the modern world. In each, the woman reminds the reader of the 'lady of situations' in the first section, for both give a picture where any fruitful relationship is absent. In the male and female, enacting the tragedy of negative frustration, in this voluptuous setting, we are introduced once again to the living death of The Waste Land.

"I think we are in rat's alley, where the dead men lost their bones and also by the precision and deadliness of the three cornered checkmate which permits no escape."

"What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten

And if it rains, a closed car at four

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 up the door."

The barman's constant reminder of "hurry up please, it's time' serves as an ominous refrain reminding, that if any choice is to be made, it must be before the final good-night makes it too late. The perfect cockney setting which is a brilliant contrast to the previous games played in a wealthier setting, also serves to suggest the underlying theme 'unwanted children.' It points to the same routine, the same monotony, the same people going round in circles, the same conclusion to unreal reality as in the first section of The Burial of the Dead. The cockney voices, vulgar and insensitive to the ears, speak of marriage, unfaithfulness, fertility and abortion exactly in the same tone as of a set of new teeth or a Sunday dinner. Abortion, the deliberate destruction of life, has meaning only in terms of spoiling a woman's looks. The good-nights of the group modulate into the voice of the mad Ophelia, the preface to another death by drowning, but a death which is self-destruction, the end of frustrated love, not a baptism and regeneration to a new birth.

### 8.4 SECTION IV CRITICAL ANALYSIS

#### THE FIRE SERMON

Speaking of the The Fire Sermon, Eliot remarks that the collocation of Buddha and St. Augustine, "the two representations of Eastern and Western asceticism as the culmination of

this part of the poem is not an accident.” Both these great religious teachers see the destructive elements in life in terms of fire. The broken prayer of the protagonist that he may be a brand, plucked from the burning, leads on naturally to the next section, the possibility of the purification.

Buddha tells his disciples that all things, received as impressions through the senses or through the mind are on fire “with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair.” The only way to salvation or ‘*nirvana*’ is to become ‘free from attachment.’ The ‘fire’ described in this with the quotation from St. Augustine, “To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears,” forms the background of this part of the poem.

The section opens with an echo from Spenser’s Prothalamion, its scenes of nymphs and lovers preparing gaily for a wedding on the river bank, haunt the picture of autumn desolation; the scene describes the pollution of the stream by the modern promiscuous lovers of the summer nights.

Instead of the song, luring Ferdinand towards Miranda or the hunting horns bringing Actaeon to Diana, it is the horns of the motors which herald the loves of Sweeney and Mrs. Porter and the fragment of a vulgar ballad.

The brown fog of the Winter noon, again clouds and distorts reality, and in it the protagonist meets Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant. He brings nothing but his merchandise; he is ‘oneeyed,’ because she has an eye to business he has an eye to business only, his merchandise; he is one-Eyed,’ because he has an eye to business only, his language is the ritual of commercial transactions. His invitation is to share promiscuous pleasures. His cult may be that of sexual perversion.

The next passage, the scene of the typist and the young man carbuncular offers one more example of the debased attitude towards

Sexual relations between men and women. Part of the irony of the whole section is that it is not the fire of lust at all which is illustrated, but merely the complete indifference towards chastity. The introduction of Tiresias at this point weaving his consciousness of the past through it all, points to two levels of meaning and the suggestion of debased ritual is caught and emphasized by the entrance of the formality of rhyme to describe its cheap tawdriness. The music and rhythm of love is degraded to this and it is this music which accompanies the poet in the unreal city. The line from the *Tempest*-

“This music crept by me upon the waters”

Marks a swift transition. The city becomes for a moment the marks a swift transition. The city becomes for a moment the unit of public communal life.

In the brief section, ‘Death by Water,’ the Sibyl’s words, ‘wish to die’ are an undercurrent throughout. The whole rhythm indeed, the quiet drifting peace of it suggest the pull towards final forgetfulness. Yet the central figure, which is a composite of the Phoenician sailor and the merchant, points in the other direction. It suggested, at the same time, both the disintegration of the old life, and the mystery and half-heard message of the new. He insists too on the inseparability of life and death in the regeneration;

It is no accident that this memory of the inseparability of life and death, forms the transition to the next and final section of the poem. In the first part of Part V, three themes are employed; the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous, and the present decay of Eastern Europe. There is no peace at all in this section. The knight may have taken the decision to set out on his quest, to initiate to submit to his trials.

but the outcome is all uncertain, the ordeals only too present. In this part of the poem, there are no actors in the contemporary Waste Land. The drama has become purely an inward one of tortured personal consciousness, flung back and forth between hope and despair, haunted by landscapes of horror, lit only by a flash of lightning, refreshed only by the damp gust bringing rain. But the poem does not end with the coming of rain. The Chapel Perilous is reached, but what happens afterwards, is ambiguous, and at the end the Fisher King, though the arid plain is behind him, is still fishing, still questioning if any achievement is ahead.

“ He who was living is now dead  
We who were living are now dying  
With a little patience.”

What the poet means is that Tammuz, Adonis, Osiris, Dionysus, Christ, are no longer alive in the modern world. Mankind whose life was fertilized and enriched through these symbolic concepts, no longer responds to them feeding a little life with dried tubers. But it may be a reference to the time between the death of the God and his resurrection – the time he spends in the underworld or, for the disciple the period of initiation with the combined waiting and suffering which ‘patience’ implies. Certainly, the protagonist is on his way to the Chapel Perilous and his journey is through a drought more parching and agonizing than anything felt before in the poem. The peace of ‘Death by Water’ and the hope of resurrection seems

Completely cancelled or relegated. There is not only water but no sound of water, no oasis to relax, no caravan to bear the burden. There is not even silence. He is tortured by ‘dry sterile thunder without rain and there is not even solitude; hostile figures sneer and snarl at his endeavor as he struggles up the sandy road or has the nightmare sense of constriction in a cave:

“Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit  
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit.”

There is only the vision, which may be a desert mirage, of the hooded figure of the risen God who accompanied the disciples to Emmaus.

Eliot tells us is the theme of ‘the Present decay of Eastern Europe, the birthplace of all the religions of the ancient world.’ The passage quoted from Hermann Hesse in the notes by Eliot, says that already at least half of Europe is on the way to chaos.

Eliot’s note on the conclusion ‘*Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*’ is that ‘the peace which passeth understanding is our equivalent to this world, which is an echo of the formal ending of ‘Upanishads.’ The word ‘formal’ is significant. It was the convention of classical poems that all poems, even elegies, should end on a note of relief. Just as the lines which bring relief at the end of a tragic poem, do not detract from the grief of the poem, this ending note of ‘Shantih’ does little to relieve the atmosphere of the Waste Land, coloured far more strongly by the image of destruction, ‘London Bridge is falling down, falling down,’ or the sense of futility that runs throughout. ‘Give, sympathy, control and peace are abstract ideas couched in foreign tongues not yet translated into his own inner experience. The surrender is made, but it still appears a surrender to death and the possibility of rebirth is still without substance or outline.

## 8.5 SECTION V CRITICAL ANALYSIS

### THE THEME OF THE WASTE LAND

The Waste land like Matthew Arnold’s Scholar Gipsy offers a criticism of life in the sense of an interpretation of its problems. In both there is a painful consciousness of the sickness and the fever and the fret of contemporary civilization but The Waste Land goes

beyond a mere diagnosis of the spiritual distempers of the age; it is a lament over man's fallen nature, a prophecy and a promise. Unlike Arnold, who suggests a cure of escape from the feverish contact of modern life, Eliot vaguely hints at the possibility of rebirth. Obviously there is no assurance of this redemption, but there is at least the awareness that it is the only way out.

The conclusion of the poems gives no assurance of any sort but the basic symbol used in the poem is one of restoration into life though after hazardous quests. The legend of the Holy Grail which originated in fertility cult tells how a questing knight saved the Waste Land from drought and barrenness, occasioned by the old age of the ruler, known as the Fisher King. The knight must restore the latter's youth by riding to the Chapel Perilous and there questioning the Lance and the Grail, symbols of the male of female principles. Eliot's poem is an allegorical application of this story to modern society and religion. Our civilization is the Waste Land; we can obtain youth and life giving rain only by journeying far, questioning our condition and learning a hard lesson. To enforce his premise, Eliot uses symbols drawn from kindred myths and religions.

Part I, entitled, 'The Burial of the Dead,' emphasizes the inevitable dissolution which must precede new life, and begins with a lament over the loss of fertility in what should be a spring season and illustrates this by reproducing typical chatter of cosmopolitan idlers, passing thence to symbols of our barrenness. The decay of love in the modern world is then suggested. The section ends with a vision of London as an unreal city, in a nightmare of memories. In the lines,

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden  
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?"

the connection with the fertility cult is established.

In Part II, 'A Game of Chess,' the title of which recalls the dramatic irony of Bianca and the fatal power of woman, he cleverly draws us to two types of modern women in contrasted literary styles. After a picture of a luxurious boudoir which rivals Keats, he gives the petulant conversation of its occupant and her eternal question:

What shall we do tomorrow?  
What shall we ever do!

In the next quest the tone of disgust deepens. The sordidness of urban pleasures suggest the flames of lust, hatred and infatuation in which mankind is burning. With intense agony of soul, he finally alludes to the repentance of Saint Augustine and the teaching of the Buddha

After a short section, emphasizing the brevity of sensual life, the several themes are recapitulated in Part 5, and the way of escape vaguely hinted at. Our sterility is again asserted:

"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."

In this desert, we suffer illusions; where two walk there goes a shadowy third. There are murmur and lamentations. When we reach the Chapel Perilous, it seems empty but as we doubt betraying Christ, and the cock Crows twice, God gives a sign by thunder bringing rain.

Self-surrender, Sympathy, Self-control – these three are the ways to salvation.

The poet speaks of setting his own house in order though London Bridge is falling down. He must pass through the fire of purification. He must pass through the fire of purification. He is haunted by images of desolation and a shower of literary allusions shows him slipping into frenzy. But like a charm of healing rain, he repeats the message of the thunder and ends with the blessing "*Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*"

It may be pointed out that in 'The Waste Land,' Eliot's attitude was more negative than positive, analytic rather than synthetic.

# LESSON-9

## POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

### Objectives

After going through the lesson , you will be able to:

- understand the life of Dylan Thomas
- analyse various influences on his writing
- critically examine his poems rescribed for your study

### 9.1 Introduction to the Poet

### 9.2 Influences and the Nature of His Poetry

### 9.3 Prescribed Poems

### 9.4 Themes in the Poetry of Dylan Thomas (with reference to the poems prescribed for study)

### 9.5 On line Sources

### 9.6 References

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE POET

Welshman Dylan Thomas was born on 27<sup>th</sup> October in 1914. He left the school at age 16 to become a reporter and writer. His most famous poem, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," was published in 1952, but his reputation was solidified years earlier. His father, David John Thomas, was totally Anglicized and a teacher of English literature at Swansea Grammar School. He was atheistic in the extreme, a lifelong opponent of religion, whether pagan or Christian, who was always 'railing against God.

Dylan's mother, on the other hand, was a staunch Christian chapel-goer. Her road to salvation was narrow and Non-Conformist but undeviating. She imposed some of her religious influence on her gifted son. Florence Thomas gave Dylan his totally unformulated love of God, in complete contrast to his father's explicit atheism.

When he was around 16 years of age, he started copying his early poems into what would become known as his notebooks—a practice that continued until 1934 and contributed to several of his first collections (beginning with *18 Poems*, published in 1934).

Thomas soon found success: His poem "And Death Shall Have No Dominion" was published in 1933 in the *New English Weekly*, marking his first international publication. The event sent Thomas to England in the summer of 1933 to meet with editors of various English literary magazines. (He would move to London for 10 years shortly thereafter.)

His first published efforts brought Thomas critical praise and honors, including the 1934 Poet's Corner Prize. *18 Poems* drew heavily from the notebooks of collected poems that Thomas wrote as a youth, and it would set off a string of notebook-inspired works such as *Twenty Five Poems* (1936), *The Map of Love* (1939) and *Deaths and Entrances*(1946).

Also notable of this period was that it marked the beginning of the poet's lifelong struggle with alcohol abuse.

Thomas's star rose in the literary world, and his path was unique: Unlike other popular poets of his day, he shied away from tackling intellectual and social issues, instead producing work reminiscent of the Romantic period, with an emotionally charged lyrical approach.

### **Marriage and Later Years**

Thomas married Caitlin Macnamara in 1937, and the couple went on to have two sons and a daughter. But while his fame was rising in literary circles, his business sense was lacking, so he and his family lived in relative poverty. To support his family, Thomas worked for the BBC and as a film scriptwriter during World War II (he was exempted from fighting due to a lung condition), but he continued to struggle financially—unable even to keep up with the taxes that he owed.

Thomas began doing reading tours to bring in income, and his readings were more like flamboyant performances than staid poetic events. He toured the United States four times, with his last appearance taking place at the City College of New York in October 1953. A few days later, after a long drinking bout at Manhattan's White Horse Tavern, Thomas collapsed at the Chelsea Hotel. He died in a New York City hospital not long after, on November 9, 1953, at the age of 39. Three causes of death were given during Thomas's postmortem examination: pneumonia, swelling of the brain and a fatty liver.

## **9.2 INFLUENCES AND THE NATURE OF HIS POETRY**

David John Thomas was steeped in the diverse and poetic language of Shakespeare, which he often recited to his small son. These sonorous recitations undoubtedly had a lasting effect on Dylan. Long before he began writing, he fell in love with words—powerful, vigorous, and beautiful in their manifold meanings. A great reader, he loved the verses of William Blake and George Herbert. These and the Romantics of the early 19th century shaped his future work.

Critics observe that Dylan Thomas was influenced by W. B. Yeats, Wilfred Owen, Hart Crane, and James Joyce and even by Gerard Manley Hopkins. He exhibited a variety of nostalgic influences within his poetry. Like Hopkins, Thomas uses phrases and syntactic constructions highly reminiscent of Hopkins. Thomas was very familiar with some of the French Symbolists, and his interest in them was biographical as well as aesthetic.

For a while, in the early 1930s, a number of poets were particularly present in his thoughts. He wrote about Baudelaire and Verlaine in an article for the 'South Wales Evening Post' in January 1933. His poetry displays characteristics that cannot fail to suggest the influence of the Symbolists, including coloured audition and, more generally, synaesthesia.

In several poems, Thomas presents himself as a visionary who sees beyond life. Thomas has taken the concept of signatures quite literally, by seeing nature not only as a reflection of the eternal world but almost as a surface on which the word of God is written.



Religion figures largely in his work, but it would be a mistake to assume that his God is the merciful being of the New Testament, or even the stern desert deity of the Old. In his writings we may detect the dark presence of primeval gods; the pagan gods of the Celts who were cruel, violent, and savage in their retribution. Certainly, there is little promise of future salvation in his work. Death is inimical, inevitable. He wrote, in an introduction to one of his books of verse, that his poems were written to the glory of God—but we must never visualize his God as the one with which we are familiar. His poetry at times appears metaphysical as it does not fit into the frame work of any rigid definition.

Thomas saw biology as a magical transformation producing unity out of diversity, and in his poetry he sought a poetic ritual to celebrate this unity. He saw men and women locked in cycles of growth, love, procreation, new growth, death, and new life again. Therefore, each image engenders its opposite. Thomas derived his closely woven, sometimes self-contradictory images from the Bible, Welsh folklore and preaching, and Freud. Thomas's poetry is notable for its musicality, most clear in poems such as *Fern Hill*, *In Country Sleep*, *Ballad of the Long-legged Bait* or *In the White Giant's Thigh* from *Under Milkwood*.

Dylan Thomas attached great importance to the use of imagery, and an understanding of his imagery is essential for an understanding of his poetry. Thomas' vivid imagery involved 'word play, fractured syntax, and personal symbolism.' Thomas' poetic imagery shows the use of a mixture of several techniques, the most prominent being the **surrealistic**, **imagistic**, and **metaphysical**. Thomas as a resourceful "language-changer", like **Shakespeare**, **Dickens**, **Hopkins** and **Joyce**, shaped the English language into a richly original mélange of rhythm, imagery and literary allusion.

### 9.3 PRESCRIBED POEMS

#### a. Do not go gentle into that good night

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

**Summary in Brief:**

The poem is a protest against the idea of accepting death quietly. It discusses the various ways to approach death in old age and advocates struggling against death until the last breath.

Stanza –wise Summary:

**Stanza 1:**

The first stanza begins the poet requesting his father not to be soft on death. The poet encourages his father to resist death in a gentle way. The use of the word ‘rage’ in line shows the poet exhorting his father to imply a forceful resistance to death.

**Stanza 2:**

The second stanza describes the attitude and feelings of philosophers and scholars towards death. As death is inevitable, they do not accept death passively. Scholars are known and measured by their words. They are not concerned if their words fail to affect people. They know they still have a long way to go, their many words are still left unspoken or unwritten and their goals have not been yet accomplished. Therefore, they hold on to life till the very end to achieve their goals.

**Stanza 3:**

In the third stanza, the poet describes how moralists or men who live an upright life face death. Dylan Thomas believes that true goodness is composed of fighting the inevitability of death with all your might and force.

**Stanza 4:**

In the fourth stanza, the poet describes the reactions of wild men, who spend their life in action (their whole life and they forget to realize that they are mortal) towards death. They waste their lives in adventures and excitements. They do not give in because they hold on these adventures to perhaps correct some of their mistakes.

**Stanza 5:**

The fifth stanza is about the attitude of grave men. These men realize that even though they are weak and losing their sight, they can still use their strength to fight against death. These men know they are going to die and so they see the world with twinkle in their eyes, wanting to see as much as they can before leaving the world.

**Stanza 6:**

The final stanza is about the poet addressing his father. The poet asks his father to bless him or curse but to cry with a lot of passion that is to fight fiercely against death. He pleads him not to give in to death but to fight against with all his might.

**b. Fern Hill**

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs  
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,  
    The night above the dingle starry,  
    Time let me hail and climb  
    Golden in the heydays of his eyes,  
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns  
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves  
    Trail with daisies and barley  
    Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns  
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,  
    In the sun that is young once only,  
    Time let me play and be  
    Golden in the mercy of his means,  
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves  
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,  
    And the sabbath rang slowly  
    In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay  
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air  
    And playing, lovely and watery  
    And fire green as grass.  
    And nightly under the simple stars  
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,  
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars  
    Flying with the ricks, and the horses  
    Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white  
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all  
    Shining, it was Adam and maiden,  
    The sky gathered again  
    And the sun grew round that very day.  
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light  
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm  
    Out of the whinnying green stable  
    On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house  
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,  
    In the sun born over and over,  
    I ran my heedless ways,  
    My wishes raced through the house high hay  
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows  
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs  
    Before the children green and golden

Follow him out of grace,

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me  
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,  
    In the moon that is always rising,  
    Nor that riding to sleep  
I should hear him fly with the high fields  
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.  
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
    Time held me green and dying  
    Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Summary: *Fern Hill* is an autobiographical poem in which Thomas uses the memories of childhood days in order to explore the theme of a journey from innocence to experience.

The poem can be divided into two parts representing innocence and experience like the world of William Blake: the first three stanzas are related to the poet's childhood experience s, when he uses to spend his summer holidays at his uncle's farm (Fern Hill, it is in Wan sea in Wales) but the last three stanzas are about an awakening in the child which signifies the loss of the world of innocence.

The loss of the innocence is characterized by the myths of fall of the first human beings (Adam and Eve). The world of innocence (child) as described in the first three stanzas is like the Garden of Eden. This is a world in which the child is in complete union with the nature.

In the last stanza the poet once again contemplates on the memoirs of his childhood but this time the awareness, becomes dominant. In the last line the poet refers to his chained situation in the world of experience. Now he is in chains and green color is withered now. Thus, this poem is the journey from childhood to manhood and during manhood, the man suffers from agony.

### **c. And death shall have no dominion.**

And death shall have no dominion  
Dead man naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon;  
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea  
They lying long shall not die windily;  
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,

And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan't crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Though they be mad and dead as nails,  
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,  
And death shall have no dominion.

Summary:

“And Death Shall Have No Dominion” celebrates the undying and everlasting strength of the human spirit. It is through this spirit that humans can claim victory over death and ‘death shall have no dominion.’

Stanza wise Summary:

### **Stanza 1:**

Each stanza begins and ends with the title of the poem, ‘And Death Shall Have No Dominion.’

The poet conveys that in death, all are one. Race and skin color no longer have any meaning after the death of a person. The dead body reunites with nature. In death, everyone is naked and shall be one. Death has no discrimination. The poet goes on to say that after death, men become part of constellations, something bigger than he was, when he was alive. Those who have drowned in the sea of human sorrow shall rise again and taste joy. Moreover, lovers who were lost will be united after death. Finally he uses the final lines, ‘and death shall have no dominion.’

### **Stanza 2:**

The second stanza of ‘And Death Shall Have No Dominion’ takes the reader to a graveyard which is located on the sea floor. The poet says that one can find the souls of the sailors or the others who lost their lives in the sea. According to him, these people died courageously. Their lives have tortured them, the wheel of time has tested them but none of these could break them.

### **Stanza 3:**

The final stanza talks about the land, along the seashore. The poet begins the final stanza by saying that the dead are no longer disturbed by the materialistic world and the physical elements that made up their homes. In the same way, death becomes powerless as humanity regains purity and recollects hope, disregarding pain and hatred. In this way, death can be overcome and ‘death shall have no dominion.’

The poet believed that the dead are never lost to us but they live on through the beauty of their memory and spirit. The struggle does not end, it continues.

**d. The force that through the green fuse drives the flower**

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees  
Is my destroyer.  
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose  
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

The force that drives the water through the rocks  
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams  
Turns mine to wax.  
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins  
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool  
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind  
Hauls my shroud sail.  
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man  
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;  
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood  
Shall calm her sores.  
And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind  
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb  
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

**Summary:**

This is a carefully sculptured poem of four stanzas and a coda.

This short lyric in four stanzas of five lines each creates much surprise with its crispness and subtle sense of thought. Two lines at the end which form the 'coda' or conclusion do not form a couplet as they do not rhyme, but they sum up the theme of the lyric and thus form a suitable conclusion to it.

The lyric is difficult to understand because of its epigrammatic terseness and condensation. Much more is suggested than overtly mentioned, and the reader must read between lines to understand its full significance.

The poem is mostly talking about life, death, and the way time connects the two. Nature and humanity are also compared and contrasted a good deal.

Stanza 1 : Time destroys by pushing life along at such a pace that the living things are worn out and broken by the pace of their development--at the end of stanza 1, the speaker tries to talk to a "crooked rose"and mentions how his own youth is "bent".

Stanza 2: Time moves the waters, also, in the same rough way that it produces plant growth. The water doesn't flow on its own power over the rocks; it is driven right *through* the rocks. The running water is compared to the speaker's own bloodflow. The speaker feels time draining him like a vampire, like it drains the mountain springs.

Stanza 3: The speaker addresses the role of the Divine in the processes of Time. Unfortunately, though the divine presence can heal and can avert destruction, it also brings about death eventually.

#### **Stanza 4:**

This stanza is a puzzling one, because the poet talks about life, love and time.

In the final couplet the poet speaks about love and death. And along the way, the speaker notes his own loss of choices and his loss of speech, since he can barely convey his sense of growing panic and inevitable doom.

### **9.4 THEMES IN THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS ( WITH REFERENCE TO THE POEMS PRESCRIBED FOR STUDY)**

1. Life and Death
2. Time and Life
3. Innocence and Experience
4. Mortality and Immortality

### **9.5 ON LINE SOURCES**

[www.dylanthomasboathouse.com](http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com)

<http://britishheritage.com/britains-last-romantic-poet-dylan-thomas/>

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/dylan-thomas>

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/dylan-thomas>

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poet/dylan-thomas>

<http://www.dylanthomas.com/dylan-thomas-trails/west-wales/fernhill/>

<http://www.biography.com/people/dylan-thomas-9505719#marriage-and-later-years>

<http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com/media/9985/Dylan-Thomas-Essay-Nathalie-Wourm.pdf>

### **9.6 REFERENCES**

1. Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Constable, 2nd ed., 1908), pp. 10-36, and Peter Quennell, *Baudelaire and the Symbolists* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), pp. 66-98. Thomas got to know Peter Quennell personally from at least 1937, but there is nothing to suggest that he had read him in 1933 (see Coll. Lett., p. 258). The book, however, included essays and reviews that had appeared in

The Criterion, Life and Letters and The New Statesman, increasing the likelihood of Thomas having come across certain aspects of it.

2. FitzGibbon, The Life of Dylan Thomas (London: Dent, 1965)
3. William York Tindall, A Reader's Guide to Dylan Thomas (1962; New York: Octagon, 1981),
4. Walford Davies, Dylan Thomas (Milton Keynes: Open U. P., 1986)
5. John Ackerman, Dylan Thomas: his life and work, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996)

**Dr. Vijaya Babu Koganti**



# LESSON-10

## POETRY OF THOM GUNN

### OBJECTIVES OF THE LESSON:

- To know and identify the qualities of Movement Poetry in Thom Gunn.
- To critically appreciate the poetic style and themes in the prescribed poems.
- To analyze re-interpret the prescribed poems in the content of the Contemporary Society.

### STRUCTURE OF THE LESSON

#### 10.1 Introduction to Author

#### 10.2 Text of the poem “In Santa Maria Del Popolo”

#### 10.3 About the Poem “In Santa Maria Del Popolo”

#### 10.4 Critical analysis of the poem “In Santa Maria Del Popolo”

#### 10.5 Text of the poem “On the Move”

#### 10.6 About the Poem “On the Move”

#### 10.7 Summary of the Poem “On the Move”

#### 10.8 Text of the Poem “My Sad Captains”

#### 10.9 Critical Analysis of the poem

#### 10.10 Self Assessment Questions

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION TO AUTHOR

Thomson William Gunn was born in England in 1929. He had the saddest childhood memories of witnessing the separation of his parents at an early stage and loss of his mother due to suicide. His passion for the literature increased due to his mother's insistence on reading the works of Christopher Marlowe, John Keats, John Milton and Lord Tennyson. Thom Gunn was praised for his works “Fight Terms” and for his selections of his verse in his writings. During his early stage of establishing himself as a writer, he was mainly associated with ‘The Movement.’ He had the greatest experience in collaborating with poets like Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes and the other members of the movement. He has given utmost importance to purity of diction and actual tone. He aspired the world to see the poetry with fresh eyes. During 1960s and 1970s, Gunn’s poems became increasingly bold in its exploration of drug taking, Homo sexuality and also in the poetic form.

### 10.2 TEXT OF THE POEM “IN SANTA MARIA DEL POPOLO”

*(The Conversion of St. Paul)*

Waiting for when the sun an hour or less  
Conveniently oblique makes visible  
The painting on one wall of this recess  
By Caravaggio, of the Roman School,  
I see how shadow in the painting brims

With a real shadow, drowning all shapes out  
But a dim horse's haunch and various limbs,  
Until the very subject is in doubt.  
But evening gives the act, beneath the horse  
And one indifferent groom, I see him sprawl,  
Foreshortened from the head, with hidden face,  
Where he has fallen, Saul becoming Paul.  
O wily painter, limiting the scene  
From a cacophony of dusty forms  
To the one convulsion, what is it you mean  
In that wide gesture of the lifting arms?  
No Ananias croons a mystery yet,  
Casting the pain out under name of sin.  
The painter saw what was, an alternate  
Candour and secrecy inside the skin.  
He painted, elsewhere, that firm insolent  
Young whore in Venus' clothes, those pudgy cheats,  
Those sharpers; and was strangled, as things went,  
For money, by one such picked off the streets.  
I turn, hardly enlightened, from the chapel  
To the dim interior of the church instead,  
In which there kneel already several people,  
Mostly old women: each head closeted  
In tiny fists holds comfort as it can.  
Their poor arms are too tired for more than this  
-- For the large gesture of solitary man,  
Resisting, by embracing, nothingness.

### 10.3 ABOUT THE POEM

The poet explores the concept of annulled existentialism through religion in his poem "In Santa Maria del Popolo". He remains in the "The Church of St. Mary of the People" to imagine the celebrated painting of the transformation of Saul (who later known as St. Paul). The painting is very high and the image of Saul being fallen from his horse is portrayed. The rays of the sun lend life to the painting and enhances the purpose of transformation. The image of Saul lying on the ground emerges and the face of Saul appears to be preserved. The focus of the painter is completeness of surrendering of Saul to God.

Saul who appears in a seizure seems to be active while the others around him stand paralysed. The Renaissance period saw the heights of flourishing of art, and there was also a complete dominance of religions that relegated art irreverently to the background. This explains the phrase the sun being "conveniently oblique;".

The poet deliberately expresses that the painter left some details openly missing. For example, we observe Ananias baptizing Saul and leading him to have the purification of the heart from all evils. The painting only manifests the gesture by Saul that speaks volumes that it was difficult to understand the painter behind this work of art; as this was also the painter who had given the city-folks like the prostitutes and cheats who were murdered for money by ruffians. Moreover, the speaker parts his attention from the painting to people at prayer in the

gloomy interiors of the church. He particularly notices the women who were engaged in innate prayer in kneeling position.

In which there kneel already several people,  
Mostly old women: each head closeted  
In tiny fists holds comfort as it can.

Their world-weariness at the moment, renders them incapable of getting what Saul really communicated. The image of Saul standing isolated was symbolic gesture, as his followers were completely separated from him, in the sense that they could never truly follow his foot prints. The poet concretely expresses the view that nullity is what great saints and holy priests perceive, what they produce in the process is nothing else, but holiness. The ultimate results are futility in life. Charles Tomlinson tells “Gunn resolved to seek the heroic experience in Nihilism.”

#### 10.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

“In Santa Maria del Popolo” consists of four stanzas. Each stanza contains eight lines in iambic pentameter, having the rhyme scheme of ababcdcd. The title of the poem portrays the well-known church in Rome, Italy, which has the painting, the new birth of Saint Paul by Caravaggio (1573-1610). The painting bestows the moment in the biblical story recorded in Acts Chapter 9, in which Saul of Tarsus is blinded when he sees a bright light from heaven when he is on the way to Damascus. He falls to the ground paralyzed. Obeying the instructions given by Christ in his vision, he goes to Ananias. Thereafter, he is healed of his blindness by Ananias and becomes a follower of Jesus and eventually becomes Saint Paul. The poem, focuses on the painting’s location and, therefore, on the poet’s experience of viewing the painting.

The poem opens with the narrator who keeps on waiting in the dim lit church for the light to strike the painting in just the way it is. His mastery over the art makes gives him more clarity on what he has sought out of the painting. The light of the church is fortuitous because it demonstrates something essential about the painting: “how shadow in the painting brims/with a real shadow, drowning all shapes out.” Only the horse’s back and the “various limbs” of the fallen rider are highlighted. These dominant physical details seem to put in doubt “the very subject” of the painting, supposedly the conversion of Saint Paul.

The second stanza of the poem describes the painting. Then the poet begins to elucidate the painting by interrogating the “wily” painter what he means by “limiting the scene” to the “one convulsion” of Saul submitting himself to God “in that wide gesture” toward the horse.

The following stanza with the mention of Ananias, reminds the audience that Saul’s blindness has not yet been cured nor is he yet converted. The creator of the paint sees not what is supposed to be, but only “what was supposed to be,” including “an alternate/ Condors and secrecy inside the dermis.” This enigma somewhat has been clarified when the second half of the stanza mentions Caravaggio’s models, “pudgy cheats” and “sharppers” who may have led to the artist’s death in a brawl.

The poem by turning away from the painting, “hardly enlightened”. In the “dim interior” of the church, the painter observes old women praying, their arms “too tired” to

make the “large gesture of the solitary man”. Unlike Saul, or perhaps the narrator, they cannot make the heroic act of “Resisting...nothingness” by “embracing” it.

### 10.5 TEXT OF THE POEM “ON THE MOVE”

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows  
Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds  
That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,  
Has nested in the trees and undergrowth.  
Seeking their instinct, or their poise, or both,  
One moves with an uncertain violence  
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense  
Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:  
Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boys,  
Until the distance throws them forth, their hum  
Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.  
In goggles, donned impersonality,  
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,  
They strap in doubt – by hiding it, robust –  
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardiness  
Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts  
They ride, direction where the tyres press.  
They scare a flight of birds across the field:  
Much that is natural, to the will must yield.

Men manufacture both machine and soul,  
And use what they imperfectly control  
To dare a future from the taken routes.

It is a part solution, after all.  
One is not necessarily discord  
On earth; or damned because, half animal,  
One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes  
Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.  
One joins the movement in a valueless world,  
Choosing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,  
One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:  
The self-defined, astride the created will  
They burst away; the towns they travel through  
Are home for neither bird nor holiness,  
For birds and saints complete their purposes.  
At worst, one is in motion; and at best,  
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,  
One is always nearer by not keeping still.

## 10.6 ABOUT THE POEM

“On the Move” is one of the most influential poems of Thom Gunn. The poem has been extracted from “The Sense of Movement.” The poem is elucidated as “A Sociological footnote.” This poem goes for further explanation that the jeopardy of the advanced and artificially created environment equipped with machines and technology where everything leads to an end of human knowledge and wisdom. In this poem Motorcyclists are portrayed as a very reckless entity and unstoppable energy in the East. The poem focuses on the urge to keep going while emphasizing the hyperactive tension and dynamic energy that they symbolized. The poem explores more about the realization of the “Boys” astride their motorcycles to existential issues about the meaning of life. The poet praises the boys who try to realize the essence of perils of modern mechanical life which is led not according to the will of the humans but according to the will of the machines and mechanisms. The poet keeps on a note that there is huge difference between Human life and animal life. Throughout the poem, he emphasizes on the contrast between animal life and human life. The poet tells that birds go by their mission whereas humans don’t. The poem describes about the development and growth that give reference to physical action, but also to growth, whether intellectual, philosophical, spiritual, or otherwise.

## 10.7 SUMMARY OF THE POEM “ON THE MOVE”

The bird with flamboyant plumage, “scuffling in the bushes” symbolises its restless movements as it seeks some hidden treasure. The bird represents motorcyclist - groups because of their uncontrolled energy and inclination to grow in communities. In this poem the poet expresses that these modern motorcyclists look for the instinct that stays within them, or they look for self-possessed, or they look for both. Here the poet says some people focus on an unnecessarily fast or ineffective pace and most of the people express their unrestrained animal instincts though they know those instincts bring them bad fortune.

The motorcyclists come on motorbikes as quickly as bees for honey, they go very fast across the road appearing smooth. In this poem “the Boy” represents the motorcyclist gang who tease lonely ladies with their lustful activities and arrogant behaviour, a hegemonical statement of their modality. The sound of the bikes travelling in sync creates a fear among the people when they hear them. The bikes have complete control over their energy and wear glasses. The dust on their jackets is like a victory symbol and shows their arrogance. They want to communicate with their attitudes and bike sounds which tells the people that they are superior to others hence they no longer can communicate peacefully.

Their energy lacks no clear destination; it is not being directed in the right direction. There is no ‘exact conclusion.’ They just roam where their bikes carry them, with no proper purpose or plan in life. They just create a frightful behaviour among the carefree birds with their mad adventurist skills. According to Gunn, willpower should be given to natural forces (instinct). This is perhaps Gunn’s “voluntary commitment to the irrational,” as Martin Dodsworth put it.

Men can be both subjective (soul) as well as objective (machine). They use the one they can (at least imperfectly) control to carve out the future based on the ‘taken courses’ (conservative, inherited or the routes of experience). It is only a minor solution to the existential perspective. When one acts according to his or her impulses, it cannot be labelled as a conflict. If he is half-animal, he cannot be damned. Modern man lacks directive instincts

due to his consciousness about his social surroundings. According to the poet one should live up to his wishes and desires.

Everyone comes together for a brief moment in that they understand the fact that they 'have come to leave.' In such a scenario, the 'self-denied' and 'manufactured will' are rendered unchanged; they just burst into. The towns they pass through are ultimately neither a home for the bird which represents striving for a goal or 'holiness' (religious dictums). Birds and saints both achieve their goals in the end. When the urge to achieve the goal is satisfied, individuals lose their joy because there is nothing to look forward to. The one in perpetual motion, on the other hand, never reaches an absolute. He is neither static nor has he arrived at any destination: the journey itself becomes the destination.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

### 1<sup>st</sup> Stanza

In this stanza, Thomas Gunn compares human beings with birds when it comes to groups. The blue jay searches in the bushes for some hidden treasure which matters to it a lot. There is a specific and definite purpose for the flock of birds flying through the fields. Swallows build their nests in low-lying trees and bushes and every bird has been guided by their goal or by the necessity and for the destination for which they were brought into this world. Now, the poet incorporates these gangs into the poem, writing, "One moves with an uncertain violence," implying that one is speeding on one's bike out of their attitude for showing their supremacy by raging violence, which could result in fearful accident which could lead them to the way of death. The motorist drives without any definite purpose erratically because he is completely perplexed, and the dust has raised and fallen on him.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza

Thomas Gunn wants to explain a vision of motorcycle gangs coming from a long and top of the road to a closer shot. He presents it so effectively, as though he is watching them for so long. He imagines the gangs coming and he compares them to flies. When he sees them from afar, they appear as small insects like flies at day, as they have worn the black coats that are roaming in the heat. When he sees the bikers in the distance, he expects everything from bad to the worse. Then, as they get closer, the faraway sound of humming changes into thunder sound, accompanied by the bikes sounds emitted by vehicles. He explains that they are driving them while 'held by the calf and thigh' which are strong and healthy. He also describes how the gangs appear. These people wear goggles to protect their eyes from dust and sun rays. He refers to them as people who don't belong to any place. The dust on their Jackets is a symbol of the trophy which they won for purposeless roaming. Their sound is deafening, but they can sense meaning in the noise they have produced.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza

The poet explains how the spoiling and the misuse of scientific discoveries. He claims that they are not bored on their journey. They have no proper plan for which they ride. They have no idea where they reach. The swallows have nests, but these motorists do not have any proper destination or goal. They proceed along the path. They travel on road that their vehicles are capable of. They travel aimlessly through the fields. These birds act on their

desires and wants, but these gangs don't act upon them. They have no idea where they are going. The poet is referring to scientific discoveries, particularly machinery. He claims that men created both machines and their personalities. They just think on the present, leaving the future to chance.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Stanza

The poet is referring to the current status of the bikers. He refers to himself as a "half animal." He claims that they lack instinct and that without a proper purpose, they continue on without a definite goal or a target or plan. They are solely interested in the present going with high speed. Its high speed disturbs the flight of birds and humans on their way to their destination. Accidents and losses are attracted by speed. He claims that no one sleeps since "one wakes afloat on movement." One (Motorbike gang) lives in a world devoid of values. They do not require a destination. It is always moving in the direction of.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Stanza

The poet explores how these motorcyclists travel and where they might go. They sit astride and accelerate their vehicles to an unknown destination mysteriously. He use the phrase "self-denied" to speak to the motor cyclists. They pass through towns where there are no bird nests and holy houses. It is because saints and birds both have a purpose and definite goal and are moving in that direction. However, these fast-moving vehicle motorcyclists have no plan, goal and purpose, thus they are fleeing them. They claim that they should always be on the go. They are smudged with dust and just want to have fun with the speed. They are at their worst when they are in motion. They are always moving. As a result, they are always closer to the final rest (death).

### 10.8 TEXT OF THE POEM

One by one they appear in  
the darkness: a few friends, and  
a few with historical  
names. How late they start to shine!  
but before they fade, they stand  
perfectly embodied, all

the past lapping them like a  
cloak of chaos. They were men  
who, I thought, lived only to  
renew the wasteful force they  
spent with each hot convulsion.  
They remind me, distant now.

True, they are not at rest yet,  
but now that they are indeed  
apart, winnowed from failures,  
they withdraw to an orbit  
and turn with disinterested  
hard energy, like the stars.

### **10.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM“MY SAD CAPTAINS”**

The poet pays tribute all his friends who have given an inspiration to him through “My Sad Captains, “a few with historical/ names.” And the poem is a supplementary poem that depicts a similar idea to “considering the snail”. ‘The legends find themselves reliving their fame in the past but can’t withstand a purpose in a society at present. These legends who were deeply engaged in experience once seemed to him to have lived only to “renew the wasteful force they/ spent with each hot convulsion”; yet now they exist “apart” from life, “winnowed from failures,” and indeed above life, “and turn with disinterested/ hard energy, like the stars.”

“They remind me, distant now” is an absolute reality to be accepted by the captains that they have to be a distant memory to most of the people. Captains were known as the leaders who were at the best to guide their followers or people to their destination with ease and safe in their lie but now no longer, they can guide anyone and therefore reasoning for their distance memory they have become.

### **10.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. What are the salient features of Thom Gunn’s Poetry?
2. Write an essay on the major features of Movement poetry found in Thom Gunn’s poems.
3. Thomas Gunn’s poetry deals with “.... human catastrophe with the great themes of life and death, coherently, intelligently, memorably”. Substantiate.

**Prof. B. Karuna**



# LESSON-11

## SELECT POEMS OF TED HUGHES

### Objectives of the Lesson

- To familiarize the students with the biographical details of the poet
- To get the students acquainted with the themes of the poems
- To make the students appreciate the poetic technique
- To sensitize the students about the imagery in the poems
- To encourage the students' critical analysis and evaluation of the poems

### Structure of the Lesson

#### 11.1 Ted Hughes's Biography

#### 11.2 Ted Hughes's Animal Poetry

#### 11.3 Select Poems with commentary

##### 11.3.1 Select Poem: 'Wodwo'

##### 11.3.2 Select Poem: 'Thrushes'

##### 11.3.3 Select Poem: 'Jaguar'

##### 11.3.4 Select Poem: 'Out'

#### 11.4 Imagery in the poems of Ted Hughes

#### 11.5 Glossary

#### 11.6 Self-assessment Questions

#### 11.7 Reference Books

### 11.1 TED HUGHES'S BIOGRAPHY

Ted Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire in 1930. After serving as in the Royal Air Force, Hughes attended Cambridge, where he studied archaeology and anthropology, taking a special interest in myths and legends. In 1956 he met and married the American poet Sylvia Plath, who encouraged him to submit his manuscript to a first book contest run by The Poetry Center. Awarded first prize by judges Marianne Moore, W.H. Auden, and Stephen Spender, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) secured Hughes's reputation as a poet of international stature.

According to poet and critic Robert B. Shaw, "Hughes's poetry signaled a dramatic departure from the prevailing modes of the period. The stereotypical poem of the time was determined not to risk too much: politely domestic in its subject matter, understated and mildly ironic in style. By contrast, Hughes marshalled a language of nearly Shakespearean resonance to explore themes which were mythic and elemental."

Hughes's long career included unprecedented best-selling volumes such as *Lupercal* (1960), *Crow* (1970), *Selected Poems 1957-1981* (1982), and *The Birthday Letters* (1998), as well as many beloved children's books, including *The Iron Man* (1968). With Seamus Heaney, he edited the popular anthologies *The Rattle Bag* (1982) and *The School Bag* (1997). Named executor of Plath's literary estate, he edited several volumes of her work. Hughes also translated works from Classical authors, including Ovid and Aeschylus. An incredibly

prolific poet, translator, editor, and children's book author, Hughes was appointed Poet Laureate in 1984, a post he held until his death. Among his many awards, he was appointed to the Order of Merit, one of Britain's highest honours.

The rural landscape of Hughes's youth in Yorkshire exerted a lasting influence on his work. To read Hughes's poetry is to enter a world dominated by nature, especially by animals. This holds true for nearly all of his books, from *The Hawk in the Rain* to *Wolfwatching* (1989) and *Moortown Diary* (1989), two of his late collections. Hughes's love of animals was one of the catalysts in his decision to become a poet.

Hughes's interest in animals was generally less naturalistic than symbolic. Using figures such as "Crow" to approximate a mythic everyman, Hughes's work speaks to his concern with poetry's vatic, even shamanic powers. Working in sequences and lists, Hughes frequently uncovered a kind of autochthonous, yet literary, English language. According to Peter Davison in the *New York Times*, "While inhabiting the bodies of creatures, mostly male, Hughes clammers back down the evolutionary chain. He searches deep into the riddles of language, too, those that precede any given tongue, language that reeks of the forest or even the jungle. Such poems often contain a touch—or more than a touch—of melodrama, of the brutal tragedies of Seneca that Hughes adapted for the modern stage."

Hughes's posthumous publications include *Selected Poems 1957-1994* (2002), an updated and expanded version of the original 1982 edition, and *Letters of Ted Hughes* (2008), which were edited by Christopher Reid and showcase Hughes's voluminous correspondence. The publication of Hughes's *Collected Poems* (2003) provided new insights into Hughes's writing process. Sean O'Brien in the *Guardian* noted, "Hughes conducted more than one life as a poet." Publishing both single volumes with Faber, Hughes also released a huge amount of work through small presses and magazines. These poems were frequently not collected, and it seems Hughes thought of his small-press efforts as experiments to see if the poems deserved placement in collections.

Though Hughes is now unequivocally recognized as one of the greatest poets of the 20th century, his reputation as a poet during his lifetime was perhaps unfairly framed by two events: the suicide of Plath in 1963, and, in 1969, the suicide of the woman he left Plath for, Assia Wevill, who also took the life of their young daughter, Shura. As Plath's executor, Hughes's decision to destroy her final diary and his refusal of publication rights to her poems irked many in the literary community. Plath was taken up by some as a symbol of suppressed female genius in the decade after her suicide, and in this scenario Hughes was often cast as the villain. His readings were disrupted by cries of "murderer!" and his surname, which appears on Plath's gravestone, was repeatedly defaced.

Hughes's unpopular decisions regarding Plath's writings, over which he had total control after her death, were often in service of his definition of privacy; he also refused to discuss his marriage to Plath after her death. Thus it was with great surprise that, in 1998, the literary world received Hughes's quite intimate portrait of Plath in the form of *Birthday Letters*, a collection of prose poems covering every aspect of his relationship with his first wife. The collection received both critical praise and censure; Hughes's desire to break the silence around Plath's death was welcomed, even as the poems themselves were scrutinized.

Though marked by a period of pain and controversy in the 1960s, Hughes's later life was spent writing and farming. He married Carol Orchard in 1970, and the couple lived on a

small farm in Devon until his death. His forays into translations, essays, and criticism were noted for their intelligence and range. Hughes continued writing and publishing poems until his death, from cancer, on October 28, 1998. A memorial to Hughes in the famed Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey was unveiled in 2011.

## 11.2 TED HUGHES'S ANIMAL POETRY

Hughes's animal poems are among the best in his work, and among the finest in the whole range of English poetry. The imagery in these poems has its own appeal. The imagery shows Hughes's enormous powers of observation and an exceptional capacity to embody his observations in words. In almost every poem, Hughes has pictured most vividly the various physical features of the particular animal he is dealing with. In the poem *The Jaguar*, for instance, the animal concerned is depicted as brimming with energy, thus offering a contrast to some of the other animals in the zoo. The jaguar has eyes which are sharp and penetrating, and which are almost blind because of the fire of rage in them. The jaguar is deaf of ear because of "the bang of blood in the brain." Here, then, is an example of Hughes's visual imagination, and his capacity to record his impressions in the kind of language which no other poet has ever used in this context: "by the bang of blood in the brain"; "the drills" of his eyes, "his stride is wildernesses of freedom"—these are striking words and phrases.

The poem *Thrushes* is also characterized by the same kind of vivid and realistic imagery. Here the violence and ferocity of the birds has most vividly been conveyed to us through the use of forceful vocabulary and striking combinations of words. The symbolic significance of the imagery in these animal poems can simply not be ignored. It is the symbolic significance which imparts to this imagery a certain depth and profundity. Hughes does not write about animals as if he regarded them as mere animal. He finds in them certain qualities which link them to human life. The symbolic animal imagery thus yields a significance which can enhance our understanding of ourselves. Hughes believed that the strength of animals lay in their instinct and precise function. The animals, according to him, are much more adapted to their environment than human beings.

The Nature-poems of Ted Hughes have beautiful vivid graphic imageries. The freezing cold of October month in England is very difficult to endure both for humans and for animals. But when animals can bear to stay without shelters humans cannot get relief even inside of the houses. Animals are closer to the elementary forces of Nature and human beings shun coming into contact of nature. The animal-poems of Ted Hughes have a humanitarian note about them. These poems betray the empathy of the poet despite his attempt to make distance from his creation. Besides, there is a naturalistic vitality in the poems of Ted Hughes. He has presented the animals with the characteristics of man but the animals have much more vigour than humans. Thus the animal-poems of Ted Hughes form a class of their own in English literature. The poems prescribed here will bring out these features of his poems with unmistakable vividness.

## 11.3 SELECT POEMS WITH COMMENTARY

### 11.3.1 Select Poem: 'Wodwo'

#### Text of the Poem:

**Wodwo**

What am I? Nosing here, turning leaves over  
Following a faint stain on the air to the river's edge  
I enter water. Who am I to split  
The glassy grain of water looking upward I see the bed  
Of the river above me upside down very clear  
What am I doing here in mid-air? Why do I find  
this frog so interesting as I inspect its most secret  
interior and make it my own? Do these weeds  
know me and name me to each other have they  
seen me before do I fit in their world? I seem  
separate from the ground and not rooted but dropped  
out of nothing casually I've no threads  
fastening me to anything I can go anywhere  
I seem to have been given the freedom  
of this place what am I then? And picking  
bits of bark off this rotten stump gives me  
no pleasure and it's no use so why do I do it  
me and doing that have coincided very queerly  
But what shall I be called am I the first  
have I an owner what shape am I what  
shape am I am I huge if I go  
to the end on this way past these trees and past these trees  
till I get tired that's touching one wall of me  
for the moment if I sit still how everything  
stops to watch me I suppose I am the exact centre  
but there's all this what is it roots  
roots roots roots and here's the water  
again very queer but I'll go on looking

**Commentary:** 'Wodwo' is the title poem of Hughes' first collection of 'adult' poetry since Plath's death, though it also contains stories and the transcript of a radio play written in the early '60s. Sir Gawain, in his journey through the Wirral, fought with, among other creatures of that remote region, wodwos. Etymologically the word simply means 'wood-dwellers'.... [The word's] uncertainty of status—man or beast or monster or goblin—is precisely what attracts Hughes. In 'Wodwo', the speaker is himself a wodwo finding himself at large in a world inhabited by other creatures whose relation to himself he does not in the least understand, without roots ('dropped out of nothing casually'), not knowing why his nose leads him to water or his hands pick bark off a rotten stump.... [He is] seeking to discover the circumference of himself. 'Very queer,' he concludes, 'but I'll go on looking.'

Hughes himself called a wodwo 'some sort of goblin creature'. This ambiguity surrounding the word is the basis of the poem. It begins 'What am I?' and the whole poem seems to be a riddle, an enigma. The poem is essentially a soliloquy in which the creature tries to ascertain what it is as it wanders through a forest. It is written in 28 free-verse lines with a minimum of punctuation. Apart from one solitary comma in the first line and a full stop in line three, the only punctuation used is the question mark (and this sparingly). Phrases flow into phrases and several readings may be required to sort out the natural rhythm of the poem. The language is simple and conveys the basic questions that the wodwo is asking itself.

The Wodwo is reminiscent of the creatures of Anglo-Saxon mythology, such as the marsh-living monster Grendel in *Beowulf*. Hughes's device of having the reader perceive the world through the Wodwo's awareness exemplifies his belief that poets have a shamanistic nature. Their small, individualized self is unimportant; they can enter the awareness of another creature at will. The poem gives a glimpse into the very primitive consciousness of the Wodwo. The lines "I've no threads/ fastening me to anything I can go anywhere/ I seem to have been given the freedom/ of this place what am I then?" hint that the Wodwo is on the brink of beginning the journey to a human type of self-awareness.

Since it is not tied to the earth as are the plants, it has freedom to pursue answers to its endless questions. The "wodwo," which is the speaking persona of the poem, wants to know its identity and its place in the world where it seems to have been "dropped / out of nothing." Here, Hughes refutes the possibility of any prior knowledge of the truth of one's existence. In a way, Hughes is a wodwo in all his poems, asking these same questions of the world in which he finds himself, looking at that world and its creatures to discover where he ends and the other begins, and what relationship exists between 'the endless without-world of the other' and the 'other' within—the pitch dark where the animal runs.' If he can come to terms with the facts of life and the fact of death, he will become the still centre within the violence.

### 11.3.2 Select Poem: 'Thrushes'

#### **Text of the Poem:**

#### **Thrushes**

Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn,  
More coiled steel than living - a poised

Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs  
Triggered to stirrings beyond sense - with a start, a bounce,  
a stab  
Overtake the instant and drag out some writhing thing.  
No indolent procrastinations and no yawning states,  
No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab  
And a ravening second.

Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained  
Body, or genius, or a nestful of brats  
Gives their days this bullet and automatic  
Purpose? Mozart's brain had it, and the shark's mouth  
That hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak of its own  
Side and devouring of itself: efficiency which  
Strikes too streamlined for any doubt to pluck at it  
Or obstruction deflect.

With a man it is otherwise. Heroisms on horseback,  
Outstripping his desk-diary at a broad desk,  
Carving at a tiny ivory ornament  
For years: his act worships itself - while for him,  
Though he bends to be blent in the prayer, how loud and  
above what  
Furious spaces of fire do the distracting devils  
Orgy and hosannah, under what wilderness  
Of black silent waters weep.

**Commentary:** The poem “Thrushes” paints a picture of birds as efficient, instinctive killing machines. The poet is observing some thrushes on his lawn; the observations lead him to contrast them to human beings, such as himself, whose best acts seem produced by the suppression of such energies as the birds display, and at enormous cost.

The poet looks at the thrushes hunting for food, such as worms, slugs, and beetles, in his yard. Normally, thrushes are associated with domesticity or song, certainly with nature tamed. Instead, Hughes sees them, no less than the hawk in his poem “Hawk Roosting” (also in *Lupercal*), as ruthless killers. Each bird is doing its natural thing in its pride of life as it drags “out some writhing thing,” which it devours in “a ravening second.”

He wonders what motivates this single-minded ruthless purpose. Is it, he asks, the way they are programmed to some point of evolutionary perfection? Have they been taught by equally skillful elders, or is there some survival of the species instinct, driven by “a nestful of brats”? Perhaps it is genius: an almost indefinable term, but one which reminds him of the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who seemed to have superhuman ability to produce perfect music apparently without trying.

The poem *Thrushes* is also characterized by vivid and realistic imagery. Here the violence and ferocity of the birds has most vividly been conveyed to us through the use of forceful vocabulary and striking combinations of words. The thrushes are terrifying; they are

more coiled steel than living creatures; they have a dark deadly eye. They operate suddenly, with a bounce and a stab, dragging out some writhing insect which is to serve as their morsel of food. There is nothing sluggish about their movements. “Nothing but bounce and stab and a ravening second”. They have a bullet and automatic purpose, and they are no less full of energy than Mozart’s brain and the shark’s mouth. The swiftness of purpose of these thrushes is contrasted with the dilatoriness and procrastinations of human beings.

The final stanza turns to human preoccupations; war and the alliteration of ‘heroisms on horseback’ help us to focus on the fact that we seem to need animals to help us to become heroes. The ‘heroic’ businessman, single-mindedly ‘outstripping his desk-dairy’, or the artist, ‘carving at a tiny ivory ornament’ and finally, the devout and prayerful. We all seem to need something upon which to focus our minds, otherwise we have the fearful, the uncontrollable, the unknown, waiting just outside our orderly lives. This is a very good example showing how Hughes passes on easily from the concerns of animals to the human affairs.

### 11.3.3 Select Poem: ‘Jaguar’

#### **Text of the Poem:**

#### **The Jaguar**

The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun.  
The parrots shriek as if they were on fire, or strut  
Like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut.  
Fatigued with indolence, tiger and lion

Lie still as the sun. The boa-constrictor’s coil  
Is a fossil. Cage after cage seems empty, or  
Stinks of sleepers from the breathing straw.  
It might be painted on a nursery wall.

But who runs like the rest past these arrives  
At a cage where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized,  
As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged  
Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes

On a short fierce fuse. Not in boredom—  
The eye satisfied to be blind in fire,  
By the bang of blood in the brain deaf the ear—  
He spins from the bars, but there’s no cage to him

More than to the visionary his cell:  
His stride is wildernesses of freedom:  
The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel.  
Over the cage floor the horizons come.

**Commentary:**

"The Jaguar" is about a trip that Hughes made to the zoo. In the poem, he describes the animals in a zoo and their behaviour. It compares the apes, parrots, tiger, lion and a boa constrictor to the jaguar, which is an animal that lives differently to the others in the way that it views its life. The poem begins by describing the apes 'yawning' and 'adoring their fleas', and the fact that they are in the sun adds to the sleepy air. I think this line was deliberately chosen to convey the monotonous lull of everyday life in the zoo and set a drowsy mood. The second line has a rather different tone; it tells of the parrots that 'shriek as if on fire'. Parrots do shrieks, so this is literal, but it gives a connotation of pain or perhaps boredom. Also, they strut themselves like cheap tarts so that visitors of the zoo will feed them, which indicates that they are losing their dignity to food. Line three speaks of the tiger and lion, which are apparently "fatigued with indolence". Once again, suggesting the tone of sleepiness and possibly boredom, and the idleness of the animals. The animals are tired, and in the wild they would probably be more likely to be hunting rather than lazing about in the middle of the day.

The second stanza repeats again the same monotonous lull of the animals, this time a boa constrictor. The word "sun" is used again, so the warm, drowsy image returns, so are the animals. The following lines describe the boa-constrictor which has a coil in its tail, which supposedly "is a fossil". The end of the second line of stanza two is: "cage after cage seems empty" which signifies the monotonous appearance of the cages, which hold very little activity as all the animals in there are barely moving. Basically, the animals are dull and not a very piquant sight for visitors. The next line uses the alliteration "stinks of sleepers" which doesn't really mean that the sleepers literally stink, just that there is a strong 'scent' of sleepiness in the air, as if there is no activity to interest the visitors. Some of the sleeping animals themselves are hidden under straw, so the author uses another metaphor and suggests that the straw is breathing. These animals, which in the wild could be threatening and very dangerous, are not acting on their usual instincts and instead are choosing to lie about in a kind of stupor that makes them appear harmless and approachable and generally unnatural. Hence, describing them harmless enough to be painted on a nursery wall.

The third stanza begins with the following line: "But who runs like the rest past these arrives". The use of the word 'but' is quite effective as it immediately breaks the tone and the reader knows that something different is about to be described. Already it is evident that this animal is living more as it would in its natural environment, which is quite refreshing in comparison to the droning lifestyles of the other animals encountered earlier. The cage at which the creature arrives is observed by a crowd, which "stands, stares, mesmerised". The people are captured by the animal and in awe of it. The crowd appears to be standing and staring very suddenly in amazement, which is in sharp contrast to the other animals, when the crowds were not captivated at all, instead finding the animals somewhat dull and not enchanting in the least. The jaguar is certainly dissimilar to the other animals in every way that has been described. It is swift and angry whereas the other animals were sleeping or "fatigued with indolence". The jaguar is "hurrying enraged through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes". The jaguar is in captivity so literally imprisoned and the darkness that surrounds him is not the darkness that a free jaguar encounters but rather the hostile darkness that surrounds a prisoner. He is running after his eyes, which are metaphorically described as drills because they are so piercing and striking. The jaguar is not following a sound or smell, in fact he is following nothing but his eyes and therefore his instincts.



Stanza three finishes this, and the next stanza completes the sentence with: "On a short fierce fuse". The three words depict the short temper of the jaguar and therefore its powerful and corruptive nature quickly but accurately. The second line says that the eye of the jaguar is "satisfied to be blind in fire", meaning that the jaguar is ignorant of suffering, by his own choice. The image of fire is not dissimilar to that of the sun, but fire is more threatening to people than the sun as the sun is obviously too far away to cause immediate pain but fire is fierce and foreboding and therefore a powerful image. The following line is: "By the bang of blood in the brain deaf the ear" which is alike the image prior to it of the ignorance of suffering, so the jaguar chooses to ignore the throbbing blood that he can sense. His eyes are blind in fire and his ears deaf to his pounding blood. The final line of the fourth stanza outlines the actions of the creature – he 'spins' from the bars in his animosity rather than swing from them in a nonchalant fashion. The conclusive line is part of this sentence also and declares that there is "no cage to him". This metaphor indicates the jaguar's view of his life in captivity – he doesn't seem to see himself as trapped like the other animals appear to, rather a creature of free will who acts as he wishes.

The next stanza opens with the ending to the preceding sentence with the words "More than to the visionary his cell". Although the cell is there, it is not an issue to the jaguar. He may do whatever he wants within the confinements of the cage and this is the way he perceives his life. This is a clever contrast to the image of the other animals like the tiger and lion, who lie sleeping under straw in their cages. These animals seem to envisage their cages as suppressing whereas the jaguar succeeds in forgetting his confinement. This is reinforced by the preceding sentence, which describes his stride as "wildernesses of freedom". This again discusses the wide open spaces that the jaguar feels he occupies, as he is just held inside the walls of his cell and they won't hold him back from being what he is – a creature of the wild who hunts for survival. His individual stride is enough to strengthen his hopes, or so it seems, as his walk is wildernesses of freedom, of courage depicted in this movement. "The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel" boasts the penultimate sentence.

The jaguar is a ruler, a king in his own right, and he has the power to transport himself back to his homeland in his mind. He is free to reign over the world in which he lives, and he still seems to believe he lives in his homeland due to his abject ignorance of the cage. The final line also delineates this: "Over the cage floor the horizons come." The jaguar is seeing his homeland, where he was free to "run like the rest" and see the horizons on the vast plains. He believes he can see the country and so the cage floor is unimportant and serves only to accommodate the deserts or forests of his country. The jaguar is in command of his own private country as he sees it, but in reality he is only the ruler of his own cell. The poem presents jaguar as a powerful, and majestic presence.

#### 11.3.4 'Out'

Text of the Poem:

##### **Out**

##### *1 The Dream Time*

My father sat in his chair recovering  
From the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud,  
Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking  
In the colors of mutilation.

His outer perforations  
Were valiantly healed, but he and the hearth-fire, its blood-flicker  
On biscuit-bowl and piano and table leg,  
Moved into strong and stronger possession  
Of minute after minute, as the clock's tiny cog  
Labored and on the thread of his listening  
Dragged him bodily from under  
The mortised four-year strata of dead Englishmen  
He belonged with. He felt his limbs clearing  
With every slight, gingerish movement. While I, small and four,  
Lay on the carpet as his luckless double,  
His memory's buried, immovable anchor,  
Among jawbones and blown-off boots, tree-stumps, shell-cases and  
craters,  
Under rain that goes on drumming its rods and thickening  
Its kingdom, which the sun has abandoned, and where nobody  
Can ever again move from shelter.

## 2

The dead man in his cave beginning to sweat;  
The melting bronze visor of flesh  
Of the mother in the baby-furnace—

Nobody believes, it  
Could be nothing, all  
Undergo smiling at  
The lulling of blood in  
Their ears, their ears, their ears, their eyes  
Are only drops of water and even the dead man suddenly  
Sits up and sneezes—Atishoo!  
Then the nurse wraps him up, smiling,  
And, though faintly, the mother is smiling,  
And it's just another baby.

As after being blasted to bits  
The reassembled infantryman  
Tentatively totters out, gazing around with the eyes  
Of an exhausted clerk.

*3 Remembrance Day*

The poppy is a wound, the poppy is the mouth  
Of the grave, maybe of the womb searching—

A canvas-beauty puppet on a wire  
Today whoring everywhere. It is years since I wore one.

It is more years  
The shrapnel that shattered my father's paybook

Gripped me, and all his dead  
Gripped him to a time

He no more than they could outgrow, but, cast into one, like iron,  
Hung deeper than refreshing of ploughs

In the woe-dark under my mother's eye—  
One anchor

Holding my juvenile neck bowed to the dunkings of the Atlantic.  
So goodbye to that bloody-minded flower.

You dead bury your dead.  
Goodbye to the cenotaphs on my mother's breasts.

Goodbye to all the remaindered charms of my father's survival.  
Let England close. Let the green sea-anemone close.

**Commentary:** 'Out,' one of the war poems by Ted Hughes, presents the poet's knowledge of war through his father's First World War experiences. The poem is divided into three sections. The first section entitled 'The Dream Time' presents an autobiographical description of Hughes' father sitting on a chair and brooding over his past experiences in the battle field. His worn out spirit has yet not recovered: "From the four-year mastication by gunfire and mud, / Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking / In the colours of mutilation."

Questions of identity are at the heart of 'Out'. It is a war elegy, lamenting how the First World War transformed England's identity. It also reconfigured the individual attitudes towards the country from within. With its tripartite structure, the three sections pose a problem in part one, meditates upon it in part two, and find a resolution in part three. In this poem, Hughes draws attention to the plight of his father, and by implication, a generation of First World War survivors whose traumatic experiences have rendered them inconsolable.

The only identifiable voices in the poem are those of Hughes and his persona, but it would not be unreasonable to assume that they are one and the same. Hughes produces a substitute of himself within the poem, so that he is both the informed poet and the persona informing. He sees himself as an 'immovable anchor' for his father, whose memories and traumas, though actually buried deep in the past, are still present in his mind to haunt him. Hughes's own identity becomes blurred as the double of his father. The question of identifying the self is coupled with a search to locate that self in a place; yet the country whose very identity was fought for has become a washed out, unidentifiable mire akin to the battlefields of the Western Front.

Hughes writes of his father that his 'memory's buried ... / Among jawbones and blown-offboots, tree-stumps, shell- I cases and craters' , but Hughes's younger self is an emblem of fertility, actively interpreting and trying to understand the 'four-year mastication by gunfire and mud' that 'buffeted' his father. Indeed, it transpires that poetry, the very use of words, is the poem's supreme act of substitution, replacing the wordlessness and silence of

his father in an attempt to comprehend his angst rather than to seek a consolation for it. By part three, these seemingly disparate threads become strongly wound together, and it emerges that Hughes's words, his poetry, and his identification with England are deeply disaffected.

Before he reaches this point, however, in true elegiac tradition, Hughes uses part two of the poem as an opportunity to lambast the politics and attitudes which perpetuated the carnage of the First World War. At the outset, it appears that part two is incongruous, as it not only looks different typographically, but it moves from the intimacy of part one to a rhetorical mode. Here, Hughes lampoons those who remained in England and demonstrated an ignorance of the suffering in the trenches:

Nobody believes, it  
Could all be nothing, all  
Undergo smiling at  
The lulling of blood in  
Their ears, their ears, their eyes, their eyes

Though they see the casualties and hear of the attrition, they see 'only drops of water' despite the blood being before their eyes. 'The dead man in his cave beginning to sweat' is an image of the shell-shocked soldier trapped because of a lack of recognition for his plight. His 'recovery' swiftly has him wrapped up by a smiling nurse as he is just another victim of the war, 'just another baby'. Even those supposed to care for the shell-shocked have themselves become hardened to what they see; they too see 'only drops of water' instead of blood.

Hughes's meditation on his father's state of mind leads him to see that the 'reassembled infantryman' and his post-war father are one and the same. Both are used, then discarded without sufficient care or recognition; they may as well be dead. His father's identity, both before and after being a soldier, is unstable. The later man is trying to identify with the man who fought in a devastating conflict; the man in the conflict is trying to identify with his pre-war self. Both feel betrayed by the nation whose identity they fought to protect, a nation which once needed them so badly.

In part three, Hughes attempts to find resolutions for both himself and his father. He begins by deconstructing the symbol of wartime remembrance, the poppy, which as a flower, is also a recurrent elegiac totem:

The poppy is a wound, the poppy is the mouth  
Of the grave, maybe of the womb searching-

For Hughes, the poppy is better associated with pain and death than sombre remembrance. The detrimental effect of the war on his father, not to mention the countless others, leave Hughes regarding the poppy as emblematic of the attitudes expressed in part two of the poem. Furthermore, the flower symbolises a negative image of inertia; the inability to progress. In Gallipoli, his father's paybook, which was placed in his breast pocket, stopped splinters of shrapnel killing him. The image of the serviceable paybook has more immediate relevance for Hughes and his father than the gaudy poppy:

The shrapnel that shattered my father's paybook  
Gripped me, and all his dead  
Gripped him to a time

The poppy represents those who did not survive in the war. Hence, the poet writes:

So goodbye that bloody-minded flower.  
You dead bury your dead.  
Goodbye to the cenotaphs on my mother's breasts.  
Goodbye to all the remaindered charms of my father's survival.

Though it sounds like an elegy, the poem 'Out' does not look for consolation; this is partly because there is none to be found for his father, but also, because in embracing consolation Hughes would see himself as embracing receptivity and convention instead of breaking away from it. This disaffection points to a cultural melancholy at large; 'Out' is both a war elegy and a post-war requiem. It is certainly one of the best poems of Ted Hughes.

#### 11.4 IMAGERY IN THE POEMS OF TED HUGHES

The imagery in these poems is at once graphic and realistic; and the language which Hughes has employed in describing the various animals shows a striking originality and felicity. The emphasis in this imagery is on the vitality or energy of the animals concerned and also on the violence, the fierceness, and the cruelty of most of those animals. This animal imagery, with its emphasis on the destructive powers of certain animals, has largely contributed to Hughes's reputation or notoriety as a poet specializing in the poetry of violence. At the same time, it has to be noted that, while the primary purpose of this animal imagery is to convey to us Hughes's visual impressions of the animals whom he has actually observed, there is a symbolic purpose behind this imagery also.

It is said that The Bible, especially the Old Testament, is one of the principal source books of Hughes's imagery. Hughes draws a number of biblical images on the pre-Christian concepts like Creation and Logos, biblical god, Christ, Adam, Eve, Crucifixion and the serpent. These images often parodies and reverses the familiar Christian concepts. Ted Hughes draws a number of images from external nature and natural things, religious lore, classical learning and cosmic concepts. Apart from religious, cosmic and natural imagery, Hughes also draws images from the world of man: from daily life such as war and domestic life and from the body such as suffering and death. Likewise, animals, myth and folklore and archetypes, serve as source of symbols and objective correlatives of Hughes's own feelings and ideas. Through his nature and animal imagery, Hughes perhaps, attempts to suggest both the malevolent and nurturing aspects of nature and conveys his concept of the primal energies of the natural world that stress the absolute otherness of that world and the relationship between these energies and the divided nature of man.

By exploring the animal energies of these animals, Hughes's probably attempts to seek a re-alignment with the unknown forces governing the universe. S. Hirschberg points out that through his animal poems Hughes immerses himself in the dark, irrational forces around and within him in order to purge himself of the artificial social construct, the personality. Hughes has an obsession for sheer physical power and so his animals are mostly either brutes or deadly predators or at least endowed with those fearful qualities that have a life of their own and an extraordinary capacity to overcome any cataclysm. These beasts, nonetheless, constantly hint at the dark psychotic forces latent in man.

In the poem *The Jaguar*, for instance, the animal concerned is depicted as brimming with energy, thus offering a contrast to some of the other animals in the zoo. The jaguar has

eyes which are sharp and penetrating, and which are almost blind because of the fire of rage in them. The jaguar is deaf of ear because of “the bang of blood in the brain.” He whirls about in his cage which is no cage to him. His stride is indicative of his feeling that he is absolutely free even though the bars of the cage do not allow him to move out of his prison. He feels so free and strong that the world seems to roll like a ball under the thrust of his heel. Here, then, is an example of Hughes’s visual imagination, and his capacity to record his impressions in the kind of language which no other poet has ever used in this context: “by the bang of blood in the brain”; “the drills” of his eyes, “his stride is wildernesses of freedom”—these are striking words and phrases.

Then, in the same poem, other animals too have fire, or they strut like cheap prostitutes to attract the visitors; the tiger and the lion lie still; and the boa-constrictor’s coil looks like a fossil. It is made clear to us that, while man may imprison an animal, he cannot imprison an animal’s energy and instinct, especially the energy and instinct of jaguar. Even in a man-made cage, a jaguar remains true to itself. Evidently Hughes believes that human beings are more caged in their domestic and social environment than animals are in their cages. Similar point is made in the poem *Thrushes*. These birds perform their murderous function instinctively. Their bullet and automatic purpose puts them on a level with Mozart’s brain and the shark’s mouth. But man, by comparison with these birds, proves only his inferiority. Man is here reduced to a physically barren life in his ivory tower, carving at a tiny ivory ornament for years.

Creativity is necessary for survival and it requires both imagination and logic. Hughes sees it as the job of any kind of artist to help release our suppressed creative energies, and he believes that poetry is particularly effective for this purpose. Often, he sees himself as a shaman, a kind of tribal medicine man who makes symbolic journeys to the underworld of the subconscious to bring back lost souls and to cure sick people. The words, the symbols, the images and the musical rhythms of the poetry, are, for him, like the shaman’s magic drum which helps him on his journey. It is these which stir our imagination, and the effect is a magical release of emotional energy. Ted Hughes’ poems are remarkable for this unflinching effect.

## 11.5 GLOSSARY

**Adore:** Regard with honour and deep affection

**Anemone:** Any woodland plant of the genus *Anemone* grown for its beautiful flowers and whorls of dissected leaves

**Boa-constrictor:** a large snake that is native to tropical America and the West Indies, which crushes its prey

**Brat:** A very troublesome child

**Cenotaph:** empty tomb

**Crater:** A bowl-shaped geological formation at the top of a volcano

**Fatigue:** Exhaust or get tired through overuse or great strain or stress

**Furnace:** an enclosed structure in which material can be heated to very high temperatures,

e.g. for smelting metals.

**Gingerly:** in a careful or cautious manner

**Horizon:** a the line at which the earth and sky appear to meet

**Indolence:** Inactivity resulting from a dislike of work

**Mortised:** firmly fixed

**Mastication:** grinding; chewing

**Perforations:** A line of small holes for tearing at a particular place

**Procrastination:** putting off, delaying or deferring an action to a later time

**Queerly:** In a strange manner

**Ravening:** Living by preying on other animals especially by catching living prey

**Remembrance Day:** Holiday (November 11) commemorating soldiers who lost their lives in battle. The practice of wearing red poppies in honor of lost soldiers is common then.

**Shrapnel:** fragments of a bomb, shell, or other object thrown out by an explosion

**Shriek:** utter a shrill screeching sound or words especially in pain or terror.

**Stride:** Walk with long steps

**Stroller:** Someone who walks at a leisurely pace

**Strut:** walk with a pompous or affected stiff erect gait.

**Tart:** (especially of a girl or woman) behave in a provocative or flamboyant way

**Visor:** A piece of armour plate (with eye slits) fixed or hinged to a medieval helmet to protect

the face

**Wilderness:** An uncultivated and still wild region of forest, scrub, bush, desert, etc.

**Writhing:** Moving in a twisting, snake-like or wormlike fashion

## 11.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Bring out the stylistic peculiarities of Ted Hughes' poems.
2. How, do you think, are the animal-poems of Ted Hughes significant?
3. Write an essay on the imagery in the select poems of Ted Hughes.
4. What, do you think, is the relation between the personal and literary aspects of Ted Hughes' life?
5. Attempt a critical exposition of the poems 'Thrushes' and 'jaguar'.

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**Dr. E. Dileep**



# LESSON-12

## SEAMUS HEANEY

Objective of the lesson

- To make students understand modern poetry
- To make students understand the two poems of Seamus Heaney
- To motivate the students to study Heaney's poems –“Digging” and “Punishment”
- To help students to study the poems on their own.

Structure of the lesson

**12.1 Introduction**

**12.2 “Digging” text**

**12.3 “Digging”-summary and analysis**

**12.4 Self assessment questions**

**12.5“Punishment”- text**

**12.6 “Punishment”-summary and analysis**

**12.7 Self assessment questions**

### SEAMUS HEANEY

Seamus Justin Heaney, an Irish poet, playwright and translator was born on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1939. He began his career as a lecturer in Belfast in the early 1960s. Later he worked as a professor at Harvard from 1981-1997. He was also a professor of poetry at Oxford for five years. Heaney was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1995. The Nobel committee described his works as “works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past.” On receiving the Nobel prize after the Irish men of letters like Bernard Shaw and Samuel Beckett, Heaney felt “it is like being a little foothill at the bottom of a mountain range. You hope you just live up to it. It's extraordinary.”

Heaney was acclaimed as “The most important Irish poet since Yeats” “the greatest poet of our age, and as “probably the best known poet in the world”. Heaney died on 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2013.

Literary work: Seamus Heaney published twelve volumes of poetry. He spent his childhood in his father's farm which is a recurring theme in his works. Death of his 4 year – old brother in a road accident disturbed him in his adolescence and this is reflected in several of his poems.

The first volume of poems, “Death of a Naturalist” published in 1966 won several international awards. His creative activity continued for many decades contributing poetry of the highest quality on various themes.

Poetic works of Heaney

Major volumes of poetry

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) Death of a Naturalist | 7) The Haw Lantern      |
| 2) Door into the Dark    | 8) Seeing things        |
| 3) Wintering out         | 9) The sprint level     |
| 4) North                 | 10) Electric Light      |
| 5) Field work            | 11) District and circle |
| 6) Station Island        | 12) Human chain         |

## DIGGING

Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound  
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:  
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds  
Bends low, comes up twenty years away  
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills  
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft  
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.  
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep  
To scatter new potatoes that we picked  
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.  
Just like his old man.

My Grandfather cut more turf in a day  
Than any other man on Toner's bog.  
Once I carried him milk in a bottle  
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up  
To drink it, then fell to right away  
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods  
Over his shoulder, going down and down  
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap  
Of soggy peat, the curt outs of an edge  
Through living roots awaken in my head.  
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests.  
I'll dig with it.

## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

“Digging” and “At a Potato Digging” are two poems of Heaney with the theme of potato Digging which is an important event in the Irish life. Majority of the population get involved in the potato crop which is their major source of income.

Failure of Potato crop for three consecutive years between 1845 and 1850 resulted in migration of people from Ireland to other countries. Hence Heaney chose Digging as a theme of his poems

## 12.2 DIGGING

Seamus Heaney’s poems deal with common themes related to his childhood experiences. Digging is one such poem which expresses the poet’s nostalgia and the memories of his father and grandfather. Digging is a poem which runs into thirty one lines without any pattern. There are Stanzas of two, three, four and five lines.

The poem begins with Heaney’s description of his activity as a poet in contrast to the activity of his father. He introduces himself as a poet sitting by the window, recollecting the sound of the spade of his father digging into “gravelly” ground. It is as if the sound of the spade is echoing in his ears, though it was long ago “twenty years away”.

## 12.3 DIGGING SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The picture of his father bending among “the flower beds” and “stooping in rhythms” is like reminiscence to Heaney. The act of digging was part of Heaney’s life. The act of digging was part of Heaney’s childhood as he explains in the fourth stanza. He describes in detail the routine of his father – using the shaft, rooting out the tall tops, scattering the new potatoes. Heaney explains his personal experience of feeling the “cool hardness” of picking the new potatoes thrown by his father.

In the fifth stanza of two lines Heaney praises the skill of his father and grandfather in handling a spade by referring to them as “old man”.

Heaney recalls memories of his grandfather digging turf/peat. He remembers what a dedicated worker was his grandfather, who hardly wasted a second even to drink milk, digging deeper and deeper to find good turf. The poet feels that whenever he thinks of his father and grandfather the smell of potato mould, the sound made by the spade (squelch and slap), the “soggy Peat”, they awaken the memories in his mind. Heaney ends the poem by conveying the idea that he will dig with the pen that rests between his “finger and thumb”. The idea of digging is continued in the poet’s activity and also as a family tradition. He is going back to his own roots of digging – not with a spade but with a pen. The poem begins with the act of digging and ends with the act of digging but with a difference from physical digging with a spade to metaphorical digging with a pen. The poem is written in first person and with the background of potato digging in Ireland. The skill and dignity of the Irishmen and their work ethics are excellently presented. Not only is the strength of his father and grandfather, but their expertise in digging is highlighted by Heaney. Heaney highlights the effort of his father and grandfather to attain perfection in their work without any compromise. The stamina of the old men is noticeable and appreciable.

Heaney expresses his inability to involve in the physical work like his father and grandfather in continuing the family tradition. But he is strong willed to continue the tradition by digging with the pen – in writing about the greatness of his father and

grandfather. In a way Heaney's contribution can be looked at as greater than that of his father and grandfather. Their physical activity is forgotten with them. Their hard work is neither remembered nor recalled by the present generation. It is through Heaney's poem they become immortal. His pen has the power to honour their contribution and his words make them alive to the posterity.

#### 12.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of Seamus Heaney's poem "Digging"?
2. Explain Heaney's ideas on the profession of his father and grandfather
3. How does Heaney immortalize the tradition of his family.

#### 12.5 PUNISHMENT-TEXT

I can feel the tug  
Of the halter at the nape  
Of her neck, the wind  
On her naked front

It blows her nipples  
To amber beads,  
It shakes the frail rigging  
Of her ribs.

I can see her drowned  
Body in the bog,  
The weighing stone,  
The floating rods and boughs.

Under which at first  
She was barked sapling  
That is dug up  
Oak-bone, brain-firkin:

Her shaved head  
Like a stubble of black corn,  
Her blindfold a soiled bandage,  
Her noose a ring

To store  
The memories of love.  
Little adulteress,  
Before they punished you  
You were flaxen-haired,  
Undernourished, and you  
Tar-black face was beautiful.  
My poor scapegoat,

I almost love you  
But would have cast, I know,

The stones of silence,  
I am the artful voyeur

Of your brain's exposed  
And darkened combs,  
Your muscles' webbing  
And all your numbered bones:

I who have stood dumb  
When your betraying sisters,  
Cauled in tar,  
Wept by the railings,

Who would connive  
In civilized outrage  
Yet understand the exact  
And tribal, intimate revenge.

## **PUNISHMENT**

Introduction :

Punishment is a poem by Seamus Heaney that deals with the Severe, brutal and cruel punishment given to a young girl for committing adultery. Heaney is sympathetic towards the girl as she is not the only criminal – a Man is also involved but he is not punished. Heaney happened to see the dead body of a young girl who was killed on the charge of adultery. On looking at the dead body, Heaney imagines the cruelty of the punishment induced upon the young girl.

### **12.6 PUNISHMENT- SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**

In the first three stanzas Heaney's imagination regarding the suffering that the girl underwent at the time of punishment is vividly presented. He imagines the girl as fragile and weak bearing the pain. The girl was stripped (made naked) before she was hanged. Heaney feels sorry for her as he thinks how horrible she might have felt and how her body shivered with cold.

Heaney further explains the inhuman treatment meted out to her. She was not treated as a human being. It appears that her head was shaved and her eyes were blindfolded. She was given a noose (a loop with a knot) instead of a ring. Her Body was thrown into a bog (a soft, wet muddy ground) with a weighing stone, and the poet could observe "the floating rods and boughs" in the bog. Heaney makes an attempt to create the picture of the girl when she was alive and before she was punished. He feels that her tonsured head is like a "Stubble of black-corn" her noose is a ring and her blindfold a soiled bondage'

In the seventh stanza Heaney presents an imaginative picture of the girl before she was punished. He sees her as an undernourished little girl with pale-yellow (flaxen) hair and a 'tar-black' face which was beautiful. He expresses his sympathy for her by referring to her as "poor scapegoat". He also says that he loved her but feels sorry for his inability to extend his help to save her. He compares his role to that of a Voyeur (an Observer). Being an artist he remained a silent observer helpless in a situation where innocents are victimized. All he could do is to present the incident in an artistic manner being a poet.

In the last two stanzas of the poem the poet seems to refer to his role as a dumb observer to many such atrocities against the weaker sex. There appears to be a specific reference to "your betraying sister" which is an indication to the Irish girls who married the British soldiers. All such Irish girls are treated as betrayers and were brutally punished by the Irish Army. The severity and cruelty of the punishment given to these young girls reminds Heaney of the savagery of the tribal people of the first century. Marrying the British soldiers may be regarded as betrayal, but the punishment appears to be inhuman to Heaney. He wonders how people call themselves civilized and cultured as they still follow the brutal custom of punishing their fellow humans especially women. The particular reference to the cruelty of Irish soldiers is extended to general human nature by Heaney.

### **12.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Analyses the concept of inhumanity as presented in the poem "Punishment".
2. How does the punishment induced upon the girl moved the poet?
3. What role does Heaney as a poet, play in highlighting the atrocities on the weaker sex?

## LESSON-13

# DEATH OF NATURALIST

### Objectives of the lesson:

- To introduce Heaney's poems "Death of a Naturalist" and "Peninsula"
- To help students to study the poems
- To make students familiar with the concepts and the themes of Heaney's poems

### Structure of the lesson

- 13.1 "Death of a Naturalist" -text
- 13.2 "Death of a Naturalist"-summary and analysis
- 13.3 Questions
- 13.4 "Peninsula"-text
- 13.5 "Peninsula"-summary and analysis
- 13.6 Questions

### DEATH OF A NATURALIST

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart  
Of the townland; green and heavy headed  
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.  
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.  
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles  
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.  
There were dragon-flies, spotted butterflies,  
But best of all was the warm thick slobber  
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water  
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring  
I would fill jam-potfuls of the jellied  
Specks to range on window-sills at home,  
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until  
The fattening dots burst into nimble-  
Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how  
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog  
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog  
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was  
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too  
For they were yellow in the sun and brown  
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank  
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs  
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges

To a coarse croaking that I had not heard

Then one hot day when fields were rank  
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs  
invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges

To a coarse croaking that I had not heard

Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.

Right down the dam gross bellied frogs were cocked

On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped;

The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat

Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.

I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings

Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew

That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

### **13.1 DEATH OF A NATURALIST**

#### Introduction

Death of a Naturalist is the title of the first volume of poems written by Seamus Heaney of which "Death of Naturalist is a poem. The poem "Death of a Naturalist" presents a clear and detailed picture of frogs near a flax-dam. It Presents the contrast in the attitude of Heaney towards frogspawn, tadpoles and frogs when he was a young boy. The poem also focuses on Heaney's childhood experience and a feeling of loss of that experience as he grows into adulthood.

### **13.2 DEATH OF NATURALIST: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**

In the poem 'Death of Naturalis't Heaney picturesquely describes the sight of a dam and its surroundings. The dam appears ugly and dirty, rotten with flax (blue flowered plant) and grass. The dampness of the dam combined with the severe heat of the sun spreads a strong smell. Anyone can observe insects of various species like the "dragonflies and spotted butterflies". But, for the young Heaney, the most attractive and fascinating scene is the frogspawn (frogs eggs surrounded by transparent jelly) and the thick slobber (Saliva) that covers the frogspawn. The frogspawn appears like clotted water in the shade of the banks. As a young boy Heaney had the habit of collecting the frogspawn in pots, putting them at different places and observing the process of growth from frogspawn to tadpoles. This was a routine activity in every spring which fascinated the young Heaney.



The next part of frog's life cycle was explained by Heaney's teacher Miss Walls. She enlightened them on how the frogspawn was produced and the duties of the "daddy frog" and "mummy frog". The 'daddy frog' always croaked was called a Bullfrog and the 'mammy frog' laid hundreds of little eggs which is called frogspawn. They also learnt that weather could be predicted basing on the changing colours of frogs – They appear yellow in sun and brown in rain.

There is a sudden change from this pleasant experience and knowledge about Frogs to a horrifying scene which the young Heaney happened to face. On the hot day when the fields were smelling with cow dung, many frogs moved towards the flax-dam probably for coolness. Heaney sensed the anger of the frogs and was shocked to listen to the sound of a coarse croaking which he had not heard before. It was as if the air was filled with this sound as that of a 'bass chorus'.

Down the dam Heaney observed the frogs lying on the grass with their necks 'pulsed like snails' some frogs hopped some sat like "mud grenades" with their heads farting. The sound made when the frogs jumped into the water and the sight of them threatened the young boy as it was sickening and unbearable. He immediately turned back and ran as he was frightened with the scene of so many grown up frogs, making unusual sounds and appearances. He was afraid as he felt that if he dipped his hand the spawn would clutch it. He refers to them as 'the great slime (moist) kings' and feels that they gathered there to take vengeance.

There is a kind of repulsion in his attitude towards a group of croaking frogs. He enjoyed the pleasure of watching the frogspawn and tadpoles but could not bear with the grown up frogs.

The poem opens with description of a flax-dam that 'festers in the heart of the town land'. The sun is presented as brutal because the dam 'Sweated in the punishing sun'. Heaney's ideas are presented from the point of view of young boy's observation. The sense of wonder that pervades through childhood at every minute change in nature is aptly presented. Many onomatopoeic words are used throughout the poem.

### 13.3 QUESTIONS

1. What is Heaney's experience at the flax-dam as a young boy?
2. Explain the change in the attitude of the boy?
3. Critically analyse the poem "Death of a Naturalist"

### 13.4 PENINSULA- TEXT

When you have nothing more to say, just drive  
For a day all around the peninsula,  
The sky is tall as over a runway,  
The land without marks, so you will not arrive  
But pass through, though always skirting landfall.  
At dusk, horizons drink down sea and hill,  
The ploughed field swallows the whitewashed gable  
And you're in the dark again. Now recall

The glazed foreshore and silhouetted log.  
The rock were breakers shredded into rags,  
The leggy birds stilted on their own legs,  
Islands riding themselves out into the fog.  
And then drive back home, still with nothing to say  
Except that now you will uncode all landscapes  
By this; things founded clean on their own shapes  
Water and ground in their extremity.

### 13.5 PENINSULA: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

‘ Peninsula is a poem from Seamus Heaney’s second volume of poems entitled “Door into the Dark”. Many poems in this volume are about Heaney’s thoughts on travelling throughout Ireland and on the continent.

In the poem ‘The Peninsula’, a person spends a day touring the places he saw in his youth. In the very first line of the poem a peculiar idea is expressed. The poet says “when you have nothing more to say, -----“, an indication that a such a situation occurs in the life of every human being. A time may come when words fail to express an idea or a thought. A poet or a writer may also find himself in a position of being unable to express himself . The alternative suggested by Heaney to come out of that situation is “just drive, For a day all around the peninsula,-----”. It may be any peninsula, but Heaney seems to refer specifically to the Irish Peninsula as he had been associated with the Irish landscape from his childhood. A drive around the peninsula does not mean just a physical drive but it is also a drive into the past passing through the ancestral places and recollecting the memories. Heaney presents a vivid and picturesque picture of nature in the next few lines of the poem. He describes the sky as “tall over a runway”\*. It is a drive without arriving at any particular place but a kind of pleasure by going on a long journey into the midst of nature After a day’s long journey, at dusk, it appears as if the sea and bill are one at the horizon, as if the whitewashed gable is swallowed by the ploughed field with sudden descent of darkness. Heaney appeals the reader / observer to recall the image of ‘glazed foreshore’ and silhouetted log, the beauty of the waves when they strike the rocks. He further describes the picture of the ‘leggy birds’ and islands covered with fog. After experiencing the bounty and beauty of nature during the whole day, when a person returns home, the feeling of nothing to say still lurks in his mind, but with a difference. Before the beginning of the journey it is a feeling of liability to express ones thoughts and after a day’s journey in the lap of nature it is the feeling of exploring the landscape and horizon; from the nothingness of expression to the sudden awareness and acknowledgement of natures beauty and secrets; from “nothing more to say” to “nothing to say”. There is a transformation from a state of inarticulateness to a state of bewilderment at the beauty and bountiful nature. The experience moulds the individual by enabling him to “uncode all landscapes”. Every aspect of nature is better understood with a clear vision, with an evolution in mind. Heaney seems to suggest that a person’s surroundings and environment expose him to new experiences and enlighten him with new values.

There seems to be an inseparable link between a man and the place he lives in. Heaney uses extraordinary words and images to explain the theme that certain landscapes form an impression in the mind and remain permanent.

**13.6 QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the experience of the traveller through the peninsula.
2. What difference does the journey show on the mind of the poet?
3. Peninsula is a poem of profound thought. Discuss.