MODERN LITERATURE-III
(1850 - 1950)
(DEG05)
(M.A. ENGLISH)

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INTRODUCTION

BACK GROUND TO MODERN LITERATURE (1850-1950)

The period of Modern literature from 1850-1950 is bifurcated into the Victorian age and the first half of the 20th C. For the literary convenience of graphing out the chronological evolution of British Literature, the Victorian age is bracketed in between 1837-1900. Considering the year of accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, this was the age of unlimited progress and complacency in all the fields. The British empire was a reality and the whiteman's burden and the colonizing mission has brought rich dividends. The overall prosperity of the British empire has paved the way for aggressive nationalism and the era of rising imperialism. These developments were attributed to the glorious queen Victoria. Faith in the queen, in the authority and faith in the religion and the progress of science are the tenets which were held with greater emphasis.

The Victorian era is the period of rapid social transformation. The Industrial revolution dismantled the supremacy of aristocratic class and landed gentry and destroyed the old agricultural England. The emerging new class clamoured for emanicipation and subjected the Victorian social fabric to greater pressures. The rise of democracy and liberalism was seen in the freedom which women acquired. The evolution of science and the spirit of questioning empahasised the reason rather than questioning. Darwin's origin of species in 1859, the celebrated theory of evolution contradicted the account of Man's origin given in the Bible. The initiation of Darwin has led to different philosophical, analytical adorations by Huxley, Spencer, Mill etc. Caught in the influence of the clap trap of surging propositions man developed a gloomy view of life. This conscious pessimism became an influential force in literature. The tide of pessimistic thought from Europe has further inflamed pessimism. In the midst of crumbling old order and the new evolution that reconciled the spirit of Victorian compromise has evoloved, The Victorian compromise lead to the idea of literature for enlightenment and instrution . There were was a tacit understanding for depiction on the stage and for the imagination.

The Victorian age is considered the golden age in the literary History of England.The end of Romantic movement resulted into abundant out put of literature. The big gallery of poets and novelists responded to the plenty of leisure enjoyed by the public with stimulating thought and criticism. The literary output of Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browining, Mathew Arnold, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray is immeasurable. There were also eminent writngs from Rossetti, Fitzgerald, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot and George Meredith. The world of criticism was dominated by Ruskin, Carlyle, Stuart Mill and Cardinal Newman. Jeremy Bentham's popular philosophy Utilitarianism was critically analysed in the writings of Ruskin and Carlyle. Carlyle's typical literature has proclaimed the insufficiency of social ideals and prophesized the necessity of faith. Victorian writers were dissatisfied with the Romantic impulses and hence they delved into the depths of nostalgic reminenscences. Mathew Arnold lost himself in the world of Greek culture. Robert Browning brought back the Italian Renaissance alive, while Walter Pater applied life to the second century Christian era. On the whole literature of this period was critical of the age. Literature came to the aid of Religion and science and upheld the idealistc view of life. The application of Darwin's law of evolution has changed the conception of man towards himself. It developed the appetites of reading

and analytical perspectives of the Victorian public. The defusion of education has dismantled the high literary standards and the public has starved for reading something new . To quench the reading appetites popular fiction and popular journalism have cropped up. It is only Charles Dickens who succeeded in quenching the reading appetites by creating a class of readers.

OXFORD MOVEMENT:

Oxford movement in Victorian literature is a significant movement, which has influenced the controversial perspectives of literature. This is a movement for religious reform. The aim is to rehabilitate the dignity of the church and to liberate it from the grasp of secular authority. It is called 'Oxford' because some of the Oxford professors and scholars were the force at the back of it. The movement was suspicious of growing liberalism in religion and politics. It was a reaction to the tremendous expansion of physical science and rationalism. John Cable, one of the disciples of Wordsworth, Professor of poetry at Oxford was the real founder of 'Oxford Movement'. Kable has heralded two phases of Oxford Movement: 1. the high church revival in the bosom of Anglicanism distinct from Roman Catholicism and (2) its importance of the past. The spirit of the movement was displayed in the pamphlets called 'Tracts for the times' . The movement was also inspired by E.B. Pusey who developed Puseyism. John Henry Newman was the chief Protagonist of the movement. He broke completely with Protestantism and returned to the bosom of Roman Catholicism. He aspired to return to the spirit of middle ages. Newman transformed the spiritual struggle into an entirely intellectual movement with his controversial writings.

POETRY

Mathew Arnold called Victorian age 'deeply unpoetical age'. In addition to the well known Victorian poets the The New Cambridge Bibliography (1969) has listed out 193 poets from 1883 to 1900. Another book by Arthur Miles's Poets of the century (1891-97. 1905-'07) has listed about 190 poets, 42 of them women. Considering the cataloguing of the number of poets, Victorian poetry is not an impressive achievement as the Romantic poetry or the Seventeenth century poetry. While examining the previous periods, the literary historian isolated the single strains and considered them as principal achievements. During the Victorian period, this seems to be of different state. We find the major poets like Tenyson, Browning and Arnold side by side with poets like Clough, Swinburne and Hopkins. In Victorian poety one finds Parnassinism and anti-Parnassianism, escapism and realism, frivolity and utility, activity and lethargy, religiosity and secularity, solidarity and alienation, elitism and populism, ruralism and Urbanism, obscurity and clarity, euphony and cacophony. This rich diversity arose in the wake of the decline of both classical and Romantic visions.

Victorian poets and critics continued to maintain the opinions that poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge. It is the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all science. Victorian poetry has clearly defined the image of the poet and the function of poetry. Victorians called expressive poets who relied on emotions, private experiences as 'subjective poets'. The 'objective poets' considered the work projected from himself and the distant. Robert Browning conceded that greatness was possible for either type of poet but thought that subjective poet has the better chance to achieve success. Another type of poets the 'visionary poets' tried to supplement the usefulness of poetry to the centrality of life. To substantiate this Browning's friend W.J. Fox wrote: " Poetry is the

weapon of strife in the social conflict". Many felt that poetry could fill the vacuum caused by the disappearance of the view of higher states of religion. Many of the poems are self consciously articulated themes in which the craft of poetry remains identical with all the poets. Browning considered the role of the poet in his poems Pauline (1833), Paracelsus (1835) and Sordello. Alfred Lord Tennyson's In Memoriam is an accessible poem in this perspective as it presents the image of mourning poet. Many readers felt that the poem spoke for them. In Mathew Arnold's Empedocles the poet is given a subsidiary role alongside the philosopher. The Scholar gipsy and Thyrsis are also concerned with poets role. While The Scholar gypsy has presented wandering scholar in the pursuit of knowledge, Thyrsis celebrated poets friend Arthur Clough. The Victorian poets have evinced great deal of self-confidence in their role as guides and prophets.

Victorian poets have not wished to violate the concepts of generes. The accurate experiences and diagnosis of life was mapped out by the genres and the poets have not crossed the boundaries of Pastoral elegy and lyric to certain extent. Even though, pursuit of the past was necessarily seen as a subscription to escapist ideology and a taste for fantasy. Victorian poets have redefined it as an exercise of self definition and self knowledge. The Victorian poetry is dominated by reverie, nostalgia, longing and melancholy. Characteristically, Victorian poets have created complete imagined worlds in the past for their characters to move in. Many of the Victorian poets have considered the theme of love as an antidote to the seven deadly sins and promoted the idea that love ennobles men and women into praiseworthy states. The exciting fresh poem of courtship is Meredith's Love in the Valley. Victorian poetry promoted the inward looking tendency to celebrate the domestic virtues. The elegiac note in the Victorian poetry extended the boundaries of usual objects of lamentation: friends, lovers, members of the family to exhibit the general regret. In Memoriam was the most important elegy during this period. Victorian satire has not creeped into the poetic tradition in a big way. Satirical poems of Bulwer Lytton's The New Timon (1846), Alfred Austin's The Season (1861) are mediocre works and are not regarded as party of any main stream work. During the Romantic movement the study of nature was regarded as a significant one to which many turned for spiritual guidance. In the Victorian poetic tradition the study of nature was inextricably bound with the exploration of religion and science. The study of Nature remained as a perennial source of subjective inspiration to Victorian poets. Tennyson, Browning and Arnold created an embracing enthusiasm for natue, while Swinburne and Meredith divested nature from its supernatural and transcendental character. The loss of faith became a major poetic subject in the Victorian age. The popular belief is that Victorian skepticism was nurtured by Darwinism. The Biblical criticism and the philosophical positivism were the two forces that influenced Victorian poetry. As the very word 'civilization' implied 'city' , the city has been a key topic for many of the Victorian poets. The negative images of the city received new accentuation and reorientation by the Victorian poets.

A brief polemical assessment of Victorian poetry is to concentrate on popular works. The single work which stands as the colossus astride is The Ring and the Book(1868-69). Aurora Leigh and Idylls of the King (1859-85) which incorporated lyric, tragedy, romance and epic were also complex narratives of social and political significance. Idylls of the King transformed Tennyson's repeated theme of loss into a symbolic mythos of changing order. Aurora Leigh was considered a canonical Victorian statement of women's claim to social equality. The Ring and the Book with its method-

ological awareness and cultural construction found the centrality in the Western history. In all this the Victorian poetry has effectively constructed the role of historical marginality and differentiation between Romantic phenomenology and post modern differentiation.

FICTION

Recent criticism of Victorian literature has revealed the cordial relation that existed between Victorian culture and Fiction. For many readers Victorian novel remained to be the most accessible and beloved form of masterpiece. The account of the rise of Victorian novel offers a complicated response. Readers of the Victorian fiction experienced and recognised the element of disruptive history. In contrast to the novels by early Romantic period the novels are marked as highly social indicators. There are various classification in the Victorian fiction: the novel of high society or 'silver fork' novel; the novels of lower class and criminal life or 'Newgate novel'; the budding social realist novel, focusing on factory and industrial urban life; the novels of middle class or 'domestic realism'. The two prominent figures who made it easier to discuss the rise of the Victorian novel and its imagined readers are Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens. Criticism has ranked Carlyle to the social critics roster. Before turning to essay Carlyle wrote historical novel French Revolution in 1837. Oscar Wilde considered 1837 French Revolution the greatest novel of the 19th century. Carlyle's Sartor resartus was also considered a prophecy of social vision. Charles Dickens continued the legacy of Carlylean imperative of turning to the wider social world in placing the individual consciousness within the progress of history. To most critics Victorian novel is the spontaneous response of Charles Dickens The Pickwick Papers (1837) and Oliver Twist (1838). The process of social movement has been made visible with his *Pickwick papers, Nicholas Nickleby, Barnaby Rudge, Martin Chuzzlewit, Bleak House, Little Dorrit, The Tale of Two Cities, and David Copperfield.* It is to be observed that the social, political, trivial and local interests of the novel 1830s are banished by late 1840s and many of the concerns are addressed explicitly to the readers. William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* is a novel that directly accentuated the relationship with the readers. The original subtitle 'pen and pencil sketches of English society' and its original title ' A novel without a Hero' offered a critique of heroes and hero worship. This conventionality of social representation was followed by George Eliot and other writers. George Eliot's *Adam Bede, Felix Holt, Middle March, Daniel Deronda* are hardly novels without a hero. Eliot's *Middle March* presents a heroine trapped by her own plot with a larger consciousness. The novel's complete title *A Study in Provincial life,* forces us to recognise Dorothea's struggle to consciousness is part of social struggle for reform in 1830. It also makes a mark of failure to educate women for moral and speculative genius. Though the setting of the novel of was the time of the first Reform Bill, it leads us into the social debates of the second Reform Bill. The circumstances and consequences of the Second Reform Bill led Mathew Arnold to write *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and Thomas Carlyle to write *Shooting Niagara* (1867).

In general the Victorian novel while being considered a successful production raised questions about the nature of fiction. Victorian novel expanded the sweep of human history placing the individual consciousness into the aerena of world historical events.

DRAMA

The first half of the Victorian age was completely a barren period for Drama. Even though many of the poets tried Drama, the standards remained deplorably low. The popular forms of Drama: melo-

drama, farces and sentimental comedies lost the literary qualities. Towards the middle of the century Realism received considerable impetus form the works of T.W. Robertson (1829-71). He is inseparably connected with the revival of modern drama. His plays were *society, Caste and school.* Henry Arthur Jones and Sir A.W. Pinero did much to introduce naturalism into the English Drama. A good number of foreign influences did much to the revival of drama. The Norwegian Dramatist Henrik Ibsen gave an enormous impetus to the realistic movement and to the deeper study of character. Even though, Ibsen's influence was rather late in London, Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy and Granville Barker initiated the realistic drama of ideas. The account of the revival of drama can never be complete without acknowledging the contribution of Bernard Shaw. Shaw has presented a fresh principle of characterization. He has presented intellectually daring women in *Candida, Mrs.Warren's Profession* and *St.Joan.* The Impossible villains were presented as the tools of society. The exploration of Shavian dramaturgy teaches us that Shaw is a consummate dramatic artist. During this period important theatrical developments were created outside London. The Irish National Theatre in Dublin was a significant development. The idea of national drama was born in the minds of W.B. Yeats. In 1904 the Abbey Theatre was constructed in which Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory were the directors. Synge and Lady Gregory developed a new comedy. To Catalogue the main trends in the Victorian drama one has to observe that melodramatic romanticism and remote historical themes disappeared infavour of actual English life. With the treatment of reality to the core Drama became a canvass of new and revolutionary ideas. The new revolutionary ideas created a battleground to dismantle the traditional conventions. The concepts of love and sex were scientifically treated. Shaw has tared off veils of prudery and the new dramatists took definite view of life. Dramatists became aware of the depressing circumstances in which the poor were compelled to dwell. The squalor and the misery of the cities, the terror of modern civilization and the class war in actual life were authentically represented on the stage. In many ways it was the new Augustan period for the Drama where reason rather than imagination, commonsense rather than Romantic nonsense dominated life and literature which were carried accurately in the first half of the Twentieth century.

CRITICISM

As against the Romantic criticism of the older generation, literary criticism in the Victorian age was expected to serve the ends of life and promote a better understanding of critical values. A brief survey of Victorian criticism reveals the fact that criticism falls into three distinct stages: the early Victorian, the mid Victorian and the later Victorian. The early Victorian era (1835-56) is a barren period for Victorian criticism. The period devoid of outstanding work of literary criticism. Keble and Brimley are the only worthy critics. Though, Macaulay, Carlyle and Stuart Mill belong to this phase they are not literary critics. But their critical output was historical, social and philosophical. The Middle Phase (1860-80) belongs to the outstanding criticism of Mathew Arnold and Ruskin. Both the critics stood for the principle of Art for Life's Sake. Mathew Arnold's writings Essays in criticism are landmarks in the history of literary criticism. Arnold advocated that poetry should be the criticism of life and felt that criticism should offer and propogate the best that is thought and written. He provided the classic resistance. The classical norms of 'high seriousness' and 'grand style' are models of excellence and perennial source of inspiration. Ruskin conveyed that art's greatest ideas are achieved by a synthesis between art and morality. In the third phase (1880-1910) the cult of art for art's sake acquired prominence. Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde were the prominent exponents of this criticism.

This school of thought has sought refuge for art from the ugliness and harshness of reality. This process of evaluating the art is considered to be individualistic and impressionistic. The ultimate source of inspiration for this school is the idealistic philosophy of Immanuel Kant. It has revived under the influence of French critic Gautier and symbolist Baudelier. This phase also belongs to number of university scholars like Leslie Stephen, Edward Dowden, George Saintsbury and David Mason who collected the facts in a scientific and systematic way.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Trends of the Victorian age continued to persist in the first half of the 20th century. Hence, it was very difficult to make a definite line of demarcation between Victorian and 20th century. It is the new era for the abundant output of modern literature. Particularly, it is an age of great poetry. The new poetry is the poetry of revolt and its best exemplified in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land became a land mark in predicting the decadence of modernity. The Waste Land reflected the tragic gloom and despair of the postwar world. Poetry was experimented with Impressionism, Imagism and surrealism. Pre-Raphalities continued the view of Romanticism. Georgian and Edwardian poetry also continued the Romantic strain. The poetry of Walter De La Mare, John Masefield, Edward Thomas stood for the continuation of Roamance. W.B. Yeats has been called the greatest love poet of the 2oth century and his extensive symbolism considered to be of obscure nature. Headed by Ezra Pound Imagists aimed at clarity of expression in conveying intellectual and emotional complexes. The surrealists expressed the subconscious or even the unconscious without any control by the conscious. The modern poetry increased the complexity and bafflement of the reader.

The novel has acquired immense popularity at the beginning of the 20th century. It has eclipsed other forms of literature. Immense variety and complexity was the prominent feature of the modern novel. Traditional novelists like H.G.Wells, Arnold Bennett, Galsworthy propounding the new ideas still followed the Victorian tradition. Novelists like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Wolf probed into the subconscious with revolutionized techniques. The novel is made a vechicle for discussing the baffling socio-economic problems. The decay of the plot and character is the chief character of the modern novel. The psychological probings of the modern novel exteriorized the indepth personalities of the character.

Drama in the 20th century is seen in two dimensions. One is the Naturalistic Prose Drama that dealt with contemporary problems and the other is Poetic drama. G.B.Shaw and Galsworthy are the chief exponents of Poetic Drama. Stephen Philips (1864-1915) with the plays Herod, Ulysses, The Soul of David and Nero brought eminence to the Prose Drama. John Masefield also experimented in this area. Gordon Bottomely (1874-1948) wrote powerful poetic plays. John Drinkwater wrote powerful poetic plays like The Storm, The God of Quiet, A Night of the Trozan War etc. T.S. Eliot has brought the immeasurable eminence to Poetic Drama with his plays and provided powerful stimulus with definite theory and practice.

Twentieth century offered bewildering critical theories. New discoveries in every field of knowledge has revolutionized the critical theories. Critics like I.A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, William Empson have bestowed entirely a dimension to theoretical perspectives. New Criticism mainly

an American movement by John Crowe Ransom, Kenneth Burke, Allen Tate, R.P.Blackmur and Cleanth Brooks is succinctly represented by the high priests of modernism which provided impetus to post modern and post colonial theoretical perspectives.

Suggested Reference Books.

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Lesson Writer
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LESSON – 1

ULYSSES ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

(Detailed Study)

Contents

1. 1. The Victorian Age

The period coinciding with the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 – 1901) is known as the Victorian period in English Literature. In 1837 Queen Victoria ascended the throne and 1887 was the year of her jubilee. This period is commonly divided into three:

(1). 1837 – 1851: The Early Victorian period, which was a time of struggle and growth, and the important milestones are the Chartist Movement, the Corn Laws and the culmination of the Industrial Revolution.

(2). 1851 – 1870: The Mid-Victorian period, when Britain was at her height in wealth, power, and influence.

(3). 1870 – 1901: The late Victorian period, which was a less fortunate period, when other nations, especially the United States and Germany were competing with Britain industrially. The period also witnessed the building up of Trade Unions and the formation of the Labour Party.

The Victorian period, which witnessed vast upheavals in various spheres of human life, was the period of the greatest power, prosperity and influence that the nation had ever known, and also of poverty, discontentment, and disillusion. Culturally, it was the age when change rather than stability came to be first accepted as normal in the nature of human outlook. Ancient foundations of religious

faith were eroded among intellectuals by scientific advances, especially the biological discoveries of Charles Darwin. Darwin's Theory of Evolution, based on the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, enunciated in his *Origin of the species* (1859) had a tremendous impact on the believes and attitudes of the people. Their firm and almost blind faith in religion and God suffered a rude shake. While rapid progress in science made man's day-to-day life increasingly comfortable, it questioned the existence of God but at the same time the scientist could not provide him with a substitute for God, for him to rely on in times of troubles and tribulations. The loss or decline of faith in religion and the absence of a proper substitute for it led to a state of mental conflict and chaos. Unprecedented material prosperity on the one hand and a decline of faith on the other disturbed the mental peace of the people. Culturally and in many ways socially, the Victorian period saw the outset and display of the problems which 20th century has had to solve.

Writers and thinkers, who were sensitive to the situation, responded to it in variant ways. The educated classes and their leaders sought to establish guiding values for living; it was the period of the 'Victorian Sage' – Carlyle, Mill, Arnold, Ruskin and Tennyson – educating the social conscience. This was the great age of the novel. The English novel developed into the great art form of the era, in the works of Thackeray, Trollope, the Brontes, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Henry James.

Poetry was rather a refuge from anxieties than an illustration of them. The major poets of the period were Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, and Gerald Manley Hopkins. The most representative poet of the period, Tennyson gave expression to all the varying moods of his time. Browning, on the other hand, was more concerned with the faith and optimism of his time. He reveled in the drama of the human mind and in his favourite poetic genre dramatic monologue, he dealt with the psychology of human behaviour. His interest was solely in the inner world, the human soul. He believed in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the possibility of perfection through love even if the perfection is realized only after death. Arnold, a mid-Victorian, on the contrary, expressed the loss of faith of his age and its consequent melancholy. He found himself between two worlds, "one dead, and the other powerless to be born." Reflective melancholy may be considered the keynote of his poetry. Though a Victorian, Hopkins' poetry shows little of the Victorian spirit. In his originality, obscurity, and technical experimentation, he seems more akin to the 20th century poets and is acclaimed as the first 'modern' poet.

1. 2. Alfred Lord Tennyson – His life and Works

Tennyson (1809 – 1892), usually known as Alfred Lord Tennyson, after he was made a baron in 1884, was born as the fourth of twelve children of a clergyman at Somersby in Lincolnshire on 6 August, 1809. He was precocious as a child. He composed blank verse at the age of eight, wrote poems in imitation of Pope at the age of ten, and at twelve made an analysis of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. He joined Trinity College, Cambridge when he was eighteen and shortly before that his first published volume of poetry, *Poems by Two Brothers* was out, written in collaboration with his brother.

At Cambridge, Tennyson became the center of an admiring group. There developed an intimate friendship between him and a brilliant young man, Arthur Hallam, who was later engaged to the poet's sister. When he was twenty-one, was published his *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. Two years later, in 1830 he bought out a large volume, *Poems* which came in for sharp critical attack. This hostile critical reception and the rude shock over the sudden and premature death of Hallam, who was not even twenty-three, and the days of financial instability made him sad and gloomy. There was in him an intense yearning for an escape from this state of sorrow and he felt the urge to go forward. It was in this mood that he composed *Ulysses* in 1833, a passionate poetic account of the hero's relentless quest for the wonder of new experiences.

After the 1840s, Tennyson achieved popularity, unequalled by any other English poet in his own life-time. With the publication of the two-volume edition of his *Poems* in 1842, he scaled the heights of fame. Wordsworth described him as the greatest living poet. The first three books of his sole authorship (1830, 1832, 1842) include much of what is now considered his best work, like *Mariana, The Lady of Shallott, Ulysses, Morte d'Arthur, The Lotos Eaters,* etc. In 1850 he married after a long engagement the woman he loved. The great grief at the loss of his dear friend Hallam in 1837 produced the series of elegies in *In Memoriam,* one of the greates elegies commemorating the death of his dear friend. Queen Victoria declared that she valued *In Memoriam* next to the Bible. However, it was the mixture of picturesque romanticism and acceptable idealism in *The Princess* (1847), which greatly extended Tennyson's popularity with the general public. In 1850 he succeeded Wordsworth as the Poet Laureate of England. In 1855 appeared *Maud and Other Poems* followed by *Idylls of the King* (1859) and *Enoch Arden* (1864). He was made a peer in 1872 at the age of seventy-five. His last two volumes were *Demeter and Other Poems (*1889) and *The Death of Oenone and Other Poems* (1892). He died on 6 October 1892, while reading Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

1. 3. Tennyson's Poetry

Tennyson is the most representative poet of the Victorian age, in whose poetry the Victorian complacency about England's might and progress, the Victorian conflict between science and religion, and the typically Victorian attitude of disenchantment with the industrialized and urbanized society find a memorable expression. He was a successful and prolific writer much idolized in his time. In fact, Tennyson is the only English poet ever to have been honored as the Poet Laureate and ennobled as a Baron purely for his poetry. This popularity arose from two facts: he had, on the one hand, exquisite poetic skill, a master of metrical and sound patterns and a conscientious craftsman; he was, on the other hand, in his mental and emotional outlook, very representative of his age. He was very sensitive to his times and in his numerous poems he highlighted the hopes and aspirations, the doubts and disappointments of his contemporaries, who had found it hard to come to terms with the rapid strides of science and the deep inroads it made into the hitherto complacent life of the people. He had a characteristically Victorian insular patriotism; he was both exhilarated and disturbed, like so many of his contemporaries, by the social and industrial changes of the age and he was distressed by the shaking of traditional beliefs by the scientists. He countered this threat to faith from the intellect, by an emotional, sometimes sentimental, idealism, which was extremely acceptable to the middle class reading public.

He continued the Romantic tradition, but in his poetry, as in most Victorian poetry, the moral purpose, necessitated and approved by the taste of the time, outweighed the visionary and symbolic qualities, characteristic of the Romantics. As Harold Nicholson has aptly remarked, the Victorians distrusted 'absolute imagination.' His idiom was that of the Romantics – Wordsworth, Shelley, especially Keats – but his formal technique was as meticulous as that of the eighteenth century poets; the combination was both beguiling and reassuring.

Tennyson was shortsighted, a defect which he turned to account by the exactness of his closely observed detail. As a nature poet, he is remarkable for the fidelity and minuteness of his observation. The most striking feature of his poetry is its picturesqeness, reminding one of Spenser and Keats and his characteristic tone is pensive and elegiac. He had a measure of Keats' gift of pictorial presentation – almost a wizard in words like Keats – to which he added an even more astonishing command of the musical resources of language. His poetry excels in its "broad undulating sweetness", its lucidity and music. It may be true that it lacks passion, but it does not lack picturesqueness and in variety of its music it has seldom been surpassed.

Taste in the 20th century on the whole turned against Tennyson's poetry; the main charge was that it was deficient in power of thought. It is still admitted that he had an extraordinary ear for cadence and rhythm, but it is implied that this virtue does not compensate for the mediocrity of his intelligence. However, this tribute to his 'fine ear' amounts to acknowledgement that Tennyson was a fine artist – perhaps, the truest artist among Victorian poets until Hopkins, and no true art can be without some kind of depth. Though with the detraction he suffered in the 20th century, he is not now considered the great philosophic poet, reconciling science and religion, he remains high in rank among English poets of immense poetic excellence. Undoubtedly, his first three books and *In Memoriam* contain poems in which some of the deeper emotional conflicts of his time are beautifully articulated. This is more than sufficient credential to call him the most representative poet of the period.

1. 4. The Text of the Poem *Ulysses*

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink

Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed

Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those

That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when

Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life, Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle——
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail

In Offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me——
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hears, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet to be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

1. 5. An introduction to the poem

Ulysses is perhaps the noblest of Tennyson's classical poems, one of his best, daring in conception and masterly in articulation. The poet himself said: "*Ulysses* was written soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and gave my feelings about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life, perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memorian*." He said further, "There is more about myself in *Ulysses*, which was written under the sense of loss and all that had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end. It was more written with the feeling of this loss upon me than many poems in *In Memoriam*."

The poem seems to be based on the classical tale of Odysseus or Ulysses, with which Tennyson tries to unlock his own heart. In form the poem is a dramatic monologue, a poetical form in which there is only one speaker all through and there will be one or more silent listener/s. The tradition of Ulysses' last voyage, of which there is only a hint in Homer's *Odyssey*, appears in Dante's *Inferno* on which passage Tennyson's poem is based. Though Homer's hero returns at last to his native land Ithaca, Tennyson's hero, as in the cast of Dante's Ulysses, is disgusted with the life of inactivity in Ithaca and once again ventures out in quest of adventures. His motto is, "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

'Ulysses' and Tithonus', both dramatic monologues, present two complementary responses to death, occasioned by the untimely death of Hallam. Whereas 'Tithonus' points out the futility of mere longevity and uneventful life, 'Ulysses' presents death as crowning an active and dynamic life, however short.

1. 6. Analysis of the Poem

In the form of a monologue, the poem is in seventy lines and a brief outline of it is given below.

Lines 1-5 Ulysses' present monotonous life in Ithaca. He finds that it is extremely monotonous to be the "idle Kind" of Ithaca. It is unbearable for him to lead an inactive life there.

Lines 6-21 Reflections of his past life of adventure. He contrasts his present idle life with his earlier life of heroic adventures in the seas when he "enjoy'd greatly" and "suffer'd greatly" and became a part of all that he met.

Lines 22-32 His impatient yearning for a quest for new experiences. Instead of "rusting unburnished" he wants to "shine in use", though old, he wants every hour of his remaining life to bring something new to him.

Lines 33-43 His confidence in his son Telemanchus. He is confident that his son Telemachus, "blameless" as he is, will successfully rule over the island. When he sets sail in quest of a "newer world", his son, true to his taste, will carry out his royal duties in Ithaca.

Lines 44-70 His passionate exhortation to the mariners. Pointing to the port, he calls upon his companions to push off. Though they are old, old age has its own honour and toil. They should sail beyond the sun set to the unknown worlds, with one "equal temper of heroic hearts". And their motto is, "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

1.6.1. Explanation

Line 1 'an idle king': Ulysses was the king of Ithaca, an island near the gulf of Corinth. He was one of the wisest of Greek mariners in the Trojan war, and fought numerous gods, giants, and men for twenty years before he returned home. Back home he killed the suitors to the hand of his faithful wife Penelope and thereafter lived happily with her and his son Telemachus. In Tennyson's poem, Ulysses finds his life in Ithaca a sheer monotony and leaving his kingdom to Telemachus, sets sail once again in quest of new adventures.

Line Numbers

2 'Still hearth' and 'barren crags' represent an empty and meaningless life.

3 'aged wife': Penelope; 'mete and dole' : measure put, administer.

4 'unequal laws' because his subjects are not advance enough to receive the

'equal laws' of civilization, ie. Laws on terms of equality between man and

man. 'savage race' refers to the uncivilized islanders of Ithaca.

5 That: who. The lines means 'whose petty day to day interests cannot comprehend my experiences of the gods, warfare and adventures in many countries.

6-7 I…lees : Life is represented as a cup which Ulysses would drink to the dregs, i.e., to the last drop, enjoy the pleasures and adventures of life to the maximum.

10 'scudding drifts' : small wisps of clouds flying before the wind.

'rainy Hyades': constellation of seven stars whose rising, simultaneously with the sun was believed to bring the spring rains.

11 'vext' : violently disturbed. I…….name : my name is known as the name of a wanderer.

15 Myself…all : being myself not the least significant of all those men I saw and knew, but rather honoured by them.

17 ringing : echoing to the clash of armour. 'windy Troy' : an epithet from Homer's *IIiad*. The whole line is typically Tennysonian, delicate rhythm fusing sound and sense.

18 I ….met : What I am is the produce of what I have experienced.

19-21 The passage means: 'Yet all that I have experienced only reveals to me how much more there is to be experienced'. Here is a fine word picture combining the abstract and the concrete.

Man's collective experience is not the end of knowledge but only the beginning because experience is the arch through which he has but a glimpse of the vast unexplored region, which recedes as he advances. The horizon, which looks like the margin of the world, recedes as we advance. It is the same with the horizon of our experience.

In Dante's *Inferno* (Canto 26) the spirit of Ulysses says that his domestic leanings were overpowered by his wish to travel: 'the knowledge of the world at large to gain'. So he set out with a band of trusted companions and reached the farthest point in the West where Hercules inscribed on the rocks: 'Beyond these bound, let no man bend his mast'. But Ulysses persuaded his men to go beyond. This speech is the occasion of the poem.

23 to …. rust in use : a metaphor from war which describes life in old age as a weapon which will become rusty if it is not used. Unburnished : unpolished

26-28 but every….. things : Every hour of life in old age is an hour saved from the silence of death. It is not a mere unit of time but something that brings new experience.

29 some three suns : the few remaining years in Ulysses' life as an old man,

which he should not hoard like a miser, but spend freely in acquiring knowledge.

33 gray spirit : aged soul

40 decent : creditably careful

41 In offices of tenderness : in kindly services to those around him

45 There …. seas : the time is twilight

My …. mariners : According to Homer, the companions of Ulysses had all lost their lives before he returned to Ithaca. He spent long years in Ithaca, until he had an intense yearning for fresh travel again. The comrades he addresses here are of the same heroic mould as his old comrades.

48-49 opposed ….. foreheads : faced dangers as free and self-reliant men

53 that …. Gods : men who fought against Gods. In the *Iliad* the gods are seen taking sides in the Trojan war, some helping the Greeks and some the Trojans. The long ten years wandering of the Odyssey was also a sustained struggle against the settled hostility of Poseidon and other gods.

56 The long …. climbs : The accent here is on the evening of life.

58-59 smite… furrows : an echo of the Homeic phrase, 'they smote the hoar sea with their oars,' a recurring line in the *odyssey*. The word 'furrows' here means a hollow between ridges or a track made by a plough or a ship.

60-61 the baths …. Stars : the western horizon. The ancient Greeks believed that stars actually sank into the sea when they set.

62 the gulfs : either the deep waters of the sea or whirlpools

63 the Happy Isles : According to Greek mythology, the Isles of the Blest, supposed to lie in the

extreme western ocean, was the abode of virtuous and heroic men after death. This explains the reference to Achilles in the following line.

64 Achiless : Achilles, who was killed at Troy, was the bravest of the Greek war heroes. He killed the Trojan hero, Hector during the siege of Troy.

65 Tho' ….abides : Though much of courage has been lost through years, much remains. That strength : that body of strong men

66 Moved … heaven : an ambiguous phrase meaning either 'our heroism stirred men and gods' or 'we preformed world-shaking deeds.'

67 One … hearts : a band of equally heroic men.

1.7. Critical Appreciation

Tennyson's *Ulysses*, one of his most perfect poems, is short but exquisite. The poem is based more on Dante's portrait of Ulysses in *Inferno* than on Homer's *Odyssey*. It gives a composite picture of the Greek hero Ulysses, restless with a yearning to 'explore the lip.' The poem thus ends on a note of determination and optimistic quest. In form, it is a dramatic monologue, but actually the poet's point view determines its form. That is why modern critics tend to consider it a soliloquy expressing the Victorian spirit of compromise. Perhaps it is a 'soliloquy presented as a dramatic monologue' in which Ulysses seeks self-oblivion in death; his voyage is indeed a preparation for death.

> Though the poem presents Ulysses as an archetypal seeker and adventurer, a few qualifications regarding his portrayal are call for. Ulysses' contempt for his country and people, and his patronizing – not loving – attitude towards his son show Ulysses in a poor light. Again, the poem conveys 'a dragging sense of inertia, of

ennui, strangely matched with the vocabulary of adventure and enterprise

(Christopher Ricks). Even the listless urge to wander ('I cannot rest from travel')

could be another form of escape from reality.

1. 8. Sample Questions

1. Sketch the character of Ulysses.

2. Evaluate *Ulysses* as a dramatic monologue.

3. Compare and contrast the character of Ulysses and Telemachus.

4. Critically consider the attitude, presented in the poem, toward life and death

5. Bring out the philosophy of life expressed by Tennyson in the poem.

6. Consider Ulysses as an archetypal seeker and adventurer.

7. Critically evaluate Ulysses as a symbol of the indomitable spirit of action of man

8. Consider Tennyson as a representative poet of the Victorian age.

1. 9. Suggested Readings

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2. Harold Nicolson. *Tennyson* : *Aspects of His Life, Character and Poetry, London, Constable,* 1923.

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4. Jerome. H. Bukley, *Tennyson*: *the Growth of a poet,* 1960

5. John Killham, Ed., *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson,* 1960.

6. Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson : A Biographical and Critical Study*, 1972.

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Lesson - 2

Ted Hughes (1930 – 1999)

Gog

(Detailed Study)

Contents:

2 . 1. Postwar British Poetry

"Before the Second World War, my generation did on the whole have a liberal and naïve belief in the perfectibility of man. In the war we became if not physically hardened, at least morally and inevitably coarsened. After it we saw, what the Animal could do to his own species", wrote William Golding. His words very well reflect the mood of the post war disillusioned Europe, the anguish and anxiety of the people of the times who had lived through the traumatic experience of the war. In the post war years, the prevailing mood in the literature of England was one of "disillusionment, exhaustion, and sterility." George Orwell thought that the young writers seemed to be "fleas hopping among the ruins of a civilization." But though the sense of gloom was common, the responses it evoked were varied.

W.H.Auden and Robert Graves produced the best poetry in the decade after the War. One could see immediately after the war an "apocalyptic, neo Romantic and rhetorical tone in poetry with much emphasis placed on surrealism and the status of myth", and the unruly deity of this cult was Dylan Thomas. There were novelists of a comparable stature. The fifties are considered to be the decade of the Angry Young Men. The poetry of the period was mainly contributed by a group named

"The Movement", represented in Robert Conquest's anthology *New Lines*(1956). The writers who belonged to it represented an intellectual reaction against the neo-romantics of the 1940's, especially Dylan Thomas. They demanded that intelligence and intelligibility should be regarded as essential virtues in poetry.

Ted Hughes is associated with 'The Group' poets who consciously reacted against the poetry of 'The Movement'. 'The Group' was a deliberately antithetical response to the supposedly tame, formalist poetics of the Movement, which were exemplified in the anthology *New Lines.* However, unlike the Movement, whose members never assembled in any organized way, the Group was, from the start, a tightly knit, even a local affair, originating in Cambridge in 1922, when a number of poets connected with the magazine *Delta,* began holding regular meetings to read and critically analyse each other's recent work. Subsequently the focus moved to London, where poets met at the homes of Philip Hobsbaum and later, Edward Lucie-Smith. After the Group disintegrated as a formal entity during the 1960's, it was represented as Poets' Workshop and its members remained influential in organizations such as the Poetry Society.

The Group may have been socially more coherent, but it was poetically more diverse than the Movement. Perhaps, its most widely shared characteristics were an interest in natural and violent imagery and a corresponding suspicion of gentle irony and closed forms. Among the poets who have been associated with it at different times are Alan Brownjohn, Philip Hobsbaum, Ted Hughes, Edward Lucie-Smith, George MacBeth, Peter Porter, and Peter Redgrove, most of whom would have broadly supported the 'anti-gentility' stance of A,Alvarez in his Introduction to *The New Poetry* (1962). *A Group Anthology*, edited by Hobsbaum and Lucie-Smith, appeared in 1963 (London).

2 . 2. Ted Hughes : Life and Works

Edward James Hughes or Ted Hughes was born in Mythomroyd, a little town in Yorkshire, on 17 August 1930. His father, William Hughes was a carpenter who fought in the First World War. He was, in fact, one of the seventeen survivors of an entire regiment, which perished at Gallopoli. On his return home, he used to tell his family stories of fighting in the war. He had been seriously wounded in the fighting and later on his son was to enshrine his suffering in the poem 'Out'. These accounts of fighting made a permanent impression on young Ted, who became obsessed with war and death in war and wrote a number of war poems.

The family moved to Maxborough, a coal-mining town in South Yorkshire, when Ted was just seven. This effected a great change in the life of the boy, who had begun to love his rural surroundings and now he had to adapt himself to urban life. He had begun to take great interest in animals and birds while at Mythomroyd. This interest, however, remained with him throughout his life and it accounts for a large number of animal poems he wrote subsequently.

After attending the Maxborough Grammar School, Hughes won a scholarship to Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 1948. But before attending the University, he did two years National Service as a wireless mechanic. At Cambridge he first took up English literature, but later switched over to Archeology and Anthropology. While at Cambridge, he met the American poetess Sylvia Plath, who

was there on a Fulbright scholarship to study English. They got married later that year 1956, two years after graduation and went to the USA in 1957. Hughes taught English and Creative Writing at Amherst College and Plath taught literature at Smith College.

Hughes published his first volume of poems, *The Hawk in the Rain* the same year1957, and its vigorous vernacular won him instant acclaim. Its terse celebration of raw natural energies contrasted with the rational ironies of Movement verse and since the late 1950s Hughes has been viewed as a nature poet. In 1959 the Hugheses returned to England, where they lived in a small flat and gave their entire attention to the writing of poetry. *Lupercal*, his second volume of poems, which was published in 1960, aims to challenge the cultural dominance of southern English culture. The same year their first child was born. In 1961 they moved to Devon and their second child was born in 1962. By then, however, the marriage was showing signs of breaking up and shortly afterwards, they separated. In 1963 Plath committed suicide. For three years after her suicide, Hughes did not write much except a few magazine articles and book reviews. After a trip to Ireland in 1966, he apparently recovered his creative vigour. His next volume of poems, *Wodwo,* was published in 1967. In 1970 he married Carol Orchard, daughter of a Devon farmer. *Crow* was published the same year. The crow figures just as a symbol and the powms have great philosophical significance. They are basically satire on religious beliefs of the people and more particularly on the dogmas and theories based on the teaching of the Bible, a satire on Christianity and the Christian beliefs, abti Biblical and anti-traditional, shocking for those who have orthodox belief in Christianity.

In 1971 he went to Iran with Peter Brook's international company to write a play for an Iranian theatrical organization. He is also one of the founders of the Arvon Foundation, which was set up to promote talented young writers.

A prolific as well as versatile writer, Hughes has won numerous literary awards. Apart from being a poet and a playwright, he has worked as an editor and also a translator. His major publications include *The Hawk in the Rain*(1957), *Lupercal*(1960), *Wodwo*(1967), *Crow (*1970), *Gaudete* (1977), *CaveBirds* (1978), *Remains of Elmet* (1979), *Moortown* (1979), *The River*(1983), *Wolf Watching*(1989), and a number of books for children. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1984, in recognition of his poetic merits. His appointment as Poet Laureate sealed his conception of his poetic mission and enabled him to speak out on environmental issues while celebrating royal weddings and babies.

2 . 3. The Poetry of Ted Hughes

Hughes' first collection of poems itself, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) won him instant and universal critical acclaim, an unusual achievement for any young poet of his age. The reasons are plain to see. Hughes' poetry broke upon a dead decade in English literature; into the social-democratic sheepishness of "The Movement" and the *New Lines* anthology it brought "a sudden sharp hot stink of fox"('The Thought Fox'), reiterating the perennial Romantic notion of poetic inspiration as something atavistic and instinctual, a thing "of the blood and gut". This was a poetry harsh, jagged, and abrasive, which though it often rhymed, apparently did so as a kind of disdainful concession to order, which suggested the stubborn reluctance of a turbulent, energetic world to be constrained by considerations of urbanity or the kind of formal nicety dear to the "The Movement". This was clearly a

poetry that had been shaped by the Cambridge English School's predilection for the muscularity, wrenched syntax and scansion, and the extraordinary yokings of vocabulary and image in John Donne's verse.

2 . 3 . 1 Violence in his poetry

Violence is an essential aspect of the poetry of Hughes. For him,"violence is an assertion of identity", it is also, "a pure expression of spirit", clearly depicted in the powerful and villainous 'Hawk' and several other poems of Hughes. Most of his best poems are dominated by an element of shock and violence; they find remarkable verbal expression for powerful physical sensations, and are inspired by a fervent admiration of the wild creatures that they describe. But his great success is in communicating to his readers his admiration of animals' energetic 'life-force'. As A.E.Dyson commented in *The Critical Quarterly,* "The major theme in the poems is power; and power thought of not morally, or in time, but absolutely – in a present which is often violent and self-destructive, but isolated from motive or consequence, …. For Ted Hughes power and violence go together: his own dark gods are makers of the tiger, not the lamb. He is fascinated by violence of all kinds, in love and in hatred, in the jungle and the arena, in battle, murder and sudden death. Violence, for him, is the occasion, not for reflection, but for being; it is a guarantee of energy, of life."

The British have always been a warlike and belligerent nation and Hughes seems to reflect this quality, especially imperialism, in his poetry. 'Hawk Roosting', for instance, treats a kind of violence that has no justification in the poem, it is a privilege. The bird proudly avers that it needed the entire power of Creation to produce its foot and each feather. He considers himself the master of the universe.

I kill where I please because it is all mine:

There is no sophistry in my body

My manners are tearing off heads-

The allotment of death.

The predatory quality described in the different animals, birds and fish give the impression that they have no other alternative than to resort to violence. This is also true of men who use violence and reach their goal by hook or by crook.

In an interview Hughes has said, "My poems are not about violence but vitality. Animals are not violent, they are so much more completely controlled than men." There is ample evidence in the texts to show that Hughes does depict violence in many of his poems, and he does so, in its most brutal and naked shape. Poems like 'The Jaguar', 'Esther's Tomcat', 'View of a Pig', 'The Bull Moses', 'An Otter', 'Thrushes', 'Pike'etc, and a host of others depict violence, animal violence. The poems like 'Six Young Men', 'Bayonet' and 'The Martyrdom of Bishop Farrar' depict human violence. These poems of violence are perfectly realistic and very vivid in their depiction of brutality and cruelty.

2 . 3 . 2 Animals in his poetry

Ted Hughes' poetry, like that of Kipling, depicts the law of the jungle and also the behavioral patterns of animals. Animals and their raw energy occupy prime positions in his poetry. Many of his famous poems, such as the Crow poems, 'Thrushes' and 'Hawk Roosting', are on animals and birds; and they register, with unbelievable intensity, violence, power, and brute-beauty. Through 'Thrushes', for instance, the poet seems to explore the lust for power and violence; the fiery energy of the birds stands for power. Many of his poems, which are directly related to animals, deal with the savagery and ferocity of those animals. Poems like 'Jaguar', 'The Bull Moses', 'An Otter', 'Pike', 'View Of a Pig' and several others can be cited as examples. These animal subjects are the focal points of Hughes' poetic observation and study.

Hughes' volume, *Season Songs*, on the other hand, portrays meeker animals like a young calf, and a deformed baby lamb, with tenderness and pathos. There is also the poem entitled 'The Horses', which depicts the passivity and gentleness of a group of ten horses at a particular moment in their existence. Since his boyhood days, Hughes was very much interested in animals. His early days were spent in Yorkshire amid rural scenes. His brother was a hunter and his company naturally encouraged his great interest in animals.

Hughes obviously has some affinities with D.H. Lawrence. His poems about animals show the sort of sympathy with them that Lawrence shows in his poems like 'Bat' and 'Snake'. They also share his admiration of the essential sanity and goodness of our instinctive impulses. Ted Hughes, having been born in the same sort of semi-industrialised area as Lawrence, has a Lawrentian sympathy for the more violent and elemental human impulses. He writes so often about animals and birds because he finds in them the unsophisticated vitality that urban man is in danger of losing. The hawk or the otter, trying, in vain, to survive the murderous attacks of man, symbolizes the attempt of beauty, passion, and natural vital instincts to survive in an artificial society.

The poems that present these animals and birds are among his very best because they concentrate on a single animal or bird and cohere round a single theme. The imagery is not only forceful and striking; it is also intellectually disciplined to drive home a limited number of relevant ideas.

During a prolific writing career, Hughes has been regarded as a poet who writes about the natural world rather than the society, but the feral forces he celebrates are disguised metaphors for a series of historical struggles – Reformation, Industrial Revolution, First World War. He follows D.H. Lawrence both as a literary model and as a writer who attempts to abolish society by locating the self-justifying act of individual witness in a primordial wilderness. Hughes' primitivism embodies this wounded search for an original wholeness and forms the basis of his writing for children.

Hughes often relates animal cruelty to the life of human beings, though he does so in a disguised and symbolic manner rather than explicitly. In fact, his fascination for the animal world may be viewed as an indirect commentary on the contemporary world of violence, 'a kind of anthropological allegory' (Michael Schmidt). He also takes the standpoint of an ecologist in warning us about the depletion of natural resources. In their fascination with an elemental energy, his poems may also be

read as protests against the postwar consensus, which was challenged by the election of a radical conservative government in 1979. By coincidence, Hughes' most assured volume, *Moortown*, was published that year. The poems in the opening sequence are elegies for an island economy, which is self-reliant and not 'at the mercy of foreign politicians'. Insistently these poems enact the means by which individual enterprise reclaims a natural wilderness. They also express the desire to occupy a primal natural world before 'industrial servitude'. Such a wish is an expression of Hughes' primitivist imagination, his celebration of what Nietzsche terms 'the free powers without ethics'.

2 . 3. 3 Myths in his Poetry

Hughes had tremendous interest in primitivism and ancient myth. He had a great fascination for primitive beliefs and superstitions. He depends upon many ancient myths for many of his poems. His use of myths and legends is best found in the poems collected in the volume *Crow.* The protagonist in these poems, the crow is a curious and intriguing blend of ancient myths and legends, apart from the significance with which Hughes himself has endowed this bird. He has taken the features of the Eskimo, Red Indians and Celtic folklore and launched them in our world. One of the myths which inspired Hughes is related to "the white goddess" or the Nature goddess in her three aspects of maiden, mother, and crone. This goddess is both beneficent and destructive. The myth of this goddess helps Hughes to widen the Wordsworthian view of Nature so as to include all that is terrifying and predatory, in addition to what is comforting and consoling in Nature.

Hughes' preoccupations with the unconscious mind, with death, with the animal world and with ancient myths do show his affinity with Shamanism. The shaman was valued for his direct experience of "other worlds which the ordinary man knows of only through myth and ritual". This experience was believed to enable him to cure the sick. The shaman's ritual involved singing, dancing, and recitation, often in a special poetic vocabulary. Hughes observes that Shamanism is not a religion. It is a technique for moving in a state of ecstasy among the various spiritual realms He believes that imaginary flights of the Shaman are the experiences of the poet, the romantic element in him. The Shaman and the western poet, according to Hughes, are a part of their own traditions and cultures and therefore they can be compared only on the basis of cultural lines. Hughes, throughout his poetry shows his concern for culture. What attracts Hughes is the sophistication of primitive culture in areas where the modern western culture is barbaric. The poem *Wodwo* shows his interest in primitive beliefs. The term 'wodwo' means a mythical satyr (half man, half-animal). The poems in *Crow* is a scathing satire on Christianity and Christian beliefs. These poems register Hughes' greatness as a poet.

2 . 3. 4 The Crow Poems

The crow poems have a deeply philosophical significance. They are much more than animal poems and have much wider and deeper implications. Apparently they appear to be poems related to crow, but these poems cannot be classified only as animal poems. They are basically satire on the prevailing religious beliefs of the people and more particularly on the dogmas and theories based on the teaching of the Bible. They are also a satire on Christianity and the Christian beliefs. They are anti

Biblical and anti-traditional. These poems are shocking for those who have orthodox belief in Christianity, but on the whole these poems register Hughes's greatness as a poet.

2 . 3. 5 War Poetry

No modern poet can keep himself away from war and the destructiveness of war .The two World Wars have drastically affected human sensibilities. They have shaped the minds of modern poets. World War I evoked considerable poetry, which bemoaned the destruction caused by it; World War II, likewise moved poets to write about its calamites. Ted Hughes had a personal reason to bemoan war because his own father had fought in World War I and had barely survived it. In the poem 'Out' Hughes meditates upon his father's terrible experience of War. Of his war poems, 'Bayonet Change' and 'Six Young Men' are very famous and are deeply moving and poignant. War forms one of the major theme of Hughes's poetry.

2 . 3 . 6 Style

Ted Hughes is known for his skilful use of words and rhythms and an abundant and bold use of imagery. He used vivid imagery and factual description. There is condensation, and colloquial words and phrases and a capacity to express elusive or shadowy thoughts. There is a frequent use of conceits and hyperbole.

The most obvious feature of Hughes' style is his use of violent, unusual phrases. His poetry has the youthful vigor that we associate with Marlowe, and the love of verbal acrobatics, that we associate with Hopkins or Dylan Thomas. He excels in ingenious ways of finding words for physical shocks and sensations such as 'the sudden sharp hot stink of fox'. He makes readers startle to notice his unusual similes, such as when he describes an aged macaw hanging 'like a torturer's iron instrument'.

The language used in Hughes' poetry is the language of the whole mind. There is tremendous control in his style. There is a development in his style in the course of his writing of these successive volumes. Hughes 's style is original in the whole range of modern poetry. There are influences on him nut its originality, despite those influences and even some borrowings ,is unquestionable

Hughes employs humor, especially ironical humor. Though he is fond of wild animals, he has learnt from Donne and Eliot to describe them in a witty, sophisticated way. With a kind of 'metaphysical' with describes the tiger and the lion in the zoo as 'fatigued with indolence'.

Hughes makes a deft use of daring linguistic deviations. For instance, the personal pronoun is repeatedly employed twenty one times in 'Hawk Roosting', reflecting the self-centred nature of the hawk.

His style is as modern as his ideas about animals are realistic and unsentimental.

2 . 4. The Text of the Poem

I woke to a shout: ‘I am Alpha and Omega’
Rocks and a few trees trembled
Deep in their own country,
I ran and an absence bounded, beside me.

The dog’s god is a scrap dropped from the table.
The mouse’s saviour is a ripe wheat grain.
Hearing the MessiaH cry
My mouth widens in adoration.

The dog’s god is a scrap dropped from the table.
The mouse’s saviour is a ripe whear grain.
Hearing the Messiah cry
My mouth widens in adoration.

How far are the lichens!
They cushion themselves on the silence.
The air wants for nothing.
My mouth widens in adoration.
How far are the lichens!
They cushion themselves on the silence. The air wants for nothing.
The dust, too., is replete.

What was my error? My skull has sealed in out.
My great bones are massed in me.
They pound on the earth, my song excites them.
I do not look at the rocks and stones, I am frightened of what they see

I listen to the song Barrin, my mouth
Where the skull-rooted teeth are in possession.
I am massive on earth. My feet bones beat on the earth
Over the sounds of motherly weeping.

Afterwards I drink at a pool quietly.
The horizon bears the rocks and trees away into twilight.
I lie down. I become darkness.
Darkness that all night sings and circles stamping.

II

The sun erupts. The moon is deader than a skull.
The grass-hear waves day and night and will never know it exists.
The stones are as they were. And the creatures of earth
Are atoms of saints' brains are swollen with the vast bubble of nothing
Everywhere the dust is in power.

Then whose
Are these
Eyes,
eyes and
Bance of wants,
of offering'

Sun and moon, death and death,
Grass and stones their quick peoples, and the bright particles.
Death and death and death
Her mirrors

III

Out through the dark arch ways saith, under the ancient lintel everwritten with roots,
Out between the granite jambs, gallps the hooded horseman of iron.
Out of the wound-gash in the earth, the horseman mounts, shaking his plumes clear of dark soil.
Out of the blood-dark womb, gallops bowed the horseman of iron,
The blood-crossed knight, the Holy warrior, hooded with iron, the seraph of the leak edge.
Gallops along the world's ridge in moonlight.

Through slits of iron, his eyes have found the helm of the enemy, the grail,
The womb-wall of the dream that crouches there, greedier than a foetus.
Suckling at the root-blood of the origins, the salt-milk drug of the mothers.

Shield him from the dipped glance, flying in half-light, that tangles the heels,
The grooved kiss that stamps the eyes with darkness
Bring him to the ruled slap, the octaves of orders,

The law and mercy of number. Lift him
He will need to be strong
To follow his weapons towards the light.
Unlike coriolanus, follow the blades right through Rome.

And right through the smile
That is the judge's fury
That is the wailing child
That is the ribboned gift
That is the starved adder
That is the kiss in the dream
That is the nightmare pillow
That is the seal of resemblances
That is illusion
That is illusion

The rider of iron, on the horse shed with vaginas of iron,
Gallops over the womb that makes no claim, that is of stone.
His weapons glitter under the lights of heaven.
He follows his compass, the lance-blade, the gunsight, out.
Against the fanged grail and tireless mouth
Whose cry breaks his sleep
Whose coil is under his ribs
Whose smile is in the belly of woman
Whose satiation is in the grave.
But under the blood-dark archway, gallops bowed the horseman of iron.

2 . 5. Analysis of the Poem

'Gog' is in three parts. Part I with seven stanzas of four lines each, Part II with thirteen lines and Part III with two sections of sixteen and twenty lines respectively. It is rather complex, without any apparent logical development of thought. Gog, obviously represents evil, whether he is the Gog of myths or of the book of Revelation. After a thousand years of imprisonment, Satan has a temporary respite from the bottomless pit, let loose on the nations of Gog and Magog. Part I presents Gog waking up into 'an absence' with rocks and a few trees trembling. The second and third stanzas are identical, suggesting the bestial and gluttonous nature of Gog. His massive and uncouth structure n the barren place of 'rocks and stones' conjures up a baleful atmosphere. After stalking through the dusty country, he drinks at a pool and then lies down to become one with darkness.

In Part II we see the power of death, even the sun and the moon sharing a part of this vast machinery of death. Everything in the world seems to reflect death.

Part III of the poem depicts 'the hooded horseman of iron', 'The blood-crossed knight, the Holy Warrior.' He could be the Red Cross Knight of the *Facrie Queene* or st. George, the patron saint of England. The Knight kills the dragon or Evil with its terrifying profile. Saint George or Jesus combats evil. The poem closes with this ever recurring battle of good and evil, symbolized here by the Red cross Knight's battle against the forces of evil represented by the Dragon, the Beast, who is no other than Satan with all his evil enticements, 'suckling at the root-blood of the origins'. The process of battle between the Red cross knight and the Dragon with its illusory masks of temptation in varying forms, in this case a smile, goes on. The poem ends with a graphic description of this picture of evil to be overpowered by good, in the form of the hooded horseman of iron

2 . 6. Explication and Appreciation

Wodwo

wodwo of the relationship between god ,man and the serpent ,here called god ,who is identified with the dragon of the book of revelation :

It ended by being about the dragon in revelotion that's waiting under the women in heaven ,between the sun and moon,waiting for her to deliver the child its mouth open (the poet speaks ,90)

I awoke to a shout : 'I am alpha and Omega '.

In Revelation Gog is awoken by Satan, but here it is God 's claim to be the first and the last which makes him.If God ,the god of the Logos,is all,what is gog? It is god 's claim to be everything and yet to exclude the world ,the flash and the devil ,which provokes into wakefulness and destructive activity the sleeping dragon ,which is all that is not \logos.

'Gog' is from the collection *Wodwo,* published in 1967, a volume of marvelous, but difficult and enigmatic poems. The reviewers were impressed, but several admitted their bafflement. An inspira-

tional poet like Hughes does not choose what to write or what not to, but he writes what he must. As Norman Nicholson has remarked, "He comes face to face with those forces in the physical worked which are outside the range of moral choice or rational control, forces we have to live with or die with". In the words of Barbara Lloyd-Evans, "Often pieces read like tales of the stranger from beyond normal bournes, returning with a renewed clarity of vision, sharp as toothache, as uninvited as Lazaruz'. Fifty years, then came out from wherever he was hiding, satisfied his hunger with a few humans and went back to his pad. This, they said, must have been going on for centuries.

The dog's god is a scrap dropped from the table.

The mouse's saviour is a ripe wheat grain.

Hearing the Messiah cry

My mouth in adoration.

Gog does not worship Holiness and Truth and Logic; he worship food,like all the creatures of earth .when he hears the birthcry of Christ , 'the dragon stood before the women which was ready to be delivered, for to deour her child as soon as it was born' (book of Revelotion,12|:4) Lichens, air and dust have no mouths to fill.But Gog has no choice .He is not responsible for his massive bones ,his teeth, his terrible appearance and jarring song ,nor for the trail of destruction he leaves behind him .

The implication is that if God had not made his clim to be the Logos,Alphw and Omega ,thus denying the existence of Gog ,gog would have slept on.His awakening is therefore like that of Yeata' 'rough beast 'in 'the Second Coming ':

The darkness drops again ;but now I know

That twenty centuries of story sleep

Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast ,its our come at last ,

Alouches towards Bethlehem to be born? (The Second Coming)

Part I of 'Gog' first appeared in 1961 .Part III as 'The knight ' in 1966 ,and Part II not until wodow itself in 1967. the three parts are very difficult to relate .In Part II have a vision of a world which belongs to death ,dust and nothingness.

Then whose

Are these

Eyes ,

eyes and

Dance of wants ,

Of offering? ('Gog')

The clue comes in the last line when we are told that all created things are 'her mirrors'. Who ,then ,is 'she'? The only women in the poem so far is the weeping mother who has lost her son to Gog. She was neither dancing nor offering .Only gog was dancing .Part III gives us some help.the Knight's enemy is women and dragon,women and dragon ,it comes slowly clear ,in alliance him , virtually indistinguishable from ince another .The women's weeping turns into a secret laghter, a smile ,a seductive glance ,a 'ribboned gift',a kiss:

Shield him from the dipping glance,flying in half light ,that tangles the heels,

The grooved kiss that the eyes with darkness . ('Gog')

The meaning of 'wodwo' is satyr or a spirit of the forests. It is a mythical character, partman, part-animal and partly all kinds of elemental things. Critics have called this volume a volume of 'powerful poems'. The poems reveal an agitated tormented psyche. The imagery used here is related to fear, turmoil, blood, and death and some of it is of emptiness and silence. The protagonists in these poems seem to disdain their roots, and to have developed an obsession with man's destructiveness. There are many poems, which present expressionistic portraits of weapons, recurring feuds and destruction in the blood of the species. There is no rational basis for man's legacy of wartime slaughter. The poet categorically points out that contemporary man is straying further and further away from the roots of his ancestor. The reason for this alienation is his state of hopeless isolation in his own existential agony. Man cannot fully understand, but he thinks that there is something wrong and that the scientific developments have blasted him to this stage. *Woodwo* deals with the process of the cultural deprivation of man. The poems collectively tell us of Hughes' personal disenchantment also. This volume differs from the earlier ones most obviously in its much bleaker vision, a vision much closer to Beckett's than to Lawerence's. This is the poetry of an increasingly barren struggle for survival in a landscape as bleak and relentless as that depicted in 'Pibroch'.

Gog

'Gog' is the fullest and most difficult exploration in *Wodwo* of the relationship between God, man and the serpent, and Gog is here identified with the dragon of the Book of Revelation:

It ended by being about the dragon in Revelation, that's waiting under the woman in heaven, between the sun and moon, waiting for her to deliver the child, with its mouth open (t*he Poet Speaks*, 90).

I awoke to a shout : 'I am Alpha and Omega'. ('Gog')

In Revelation Gog is awoken by Satan, but here it is God's claim to be the first and the last which wakes him. If God, the God of the Logos, is all, what is Gog? It is God's claim to be everything and yet to exclude the World, the Flesh and Devil, which provokes into wakefulness and destructive activity the sleeping dragon, which is all that is not Logos.

The self wakes to its own desolation:

I ran and an absence bounded, beside me. (Gog')

It wakes to an unexplained guilt of self-questioning in a world where

Everywhere the dust is in power…..

and

The rider of iron, on the horse shod with vaginas of iron

Gallops over the womb that makes no claim, that is of stone. ('Gog')

Gog is also the legendary Gog in the stories of the Red Indians, a huge man-monster who lived nearby. This creature was believed to be three times as big as man, hairy, fanged like a wild animal and immortal. According to newspaper reports, Gog slept for about

The Knight is fighting to come clear of women whose smile is in her belly, whose womb is a 'tireless mouth 'a 'tireless mouth ', 'a fanged grail', 'an octopus maw', whose womb, in other words, is the mouth of Gog.

Bring him to the ruled slap, the octaves of order

The coil 'under his ribs' is the body encircling and entangling the soul and also the serpent or dragon reared up waiting to swallow the new-born child. The dragon is incarnation and therefore death and therefore reincarnation to keep the cycle going-Karma

Death is not failure and cease

But clean back to a fresh start

Laying the original wide open

Like a bith on heat

S secret laughter ('As Women's Weeping')

TRT OF THE HUGHES

The Knight , like Crow after him, is taking the 'Examination at the womb Door',

the purpose of which is to close the womb door, to avoid reincarnation, to break out of the greedy dream, the illusion of the life of the senses, the dance, and try to reach the light, the Logos.

The main obstacle is Woman, woman as mother, as fallen Eve, as whore of Babylon as spurned Venus, as revengeful white Goddess, as Gog walking within her every spring:

My mouth is the despair of God

Formed only for men.

The serpent remains earthen, brutishly-veined,

Rooted in crevices, living on flies and men-

The serpent that should have strangled me

And then earth itself.

I sing ,stamping the grueling drum-beat

To renew fallen men.

Love is weak to protect as webs.

In April my body to beings to frighten me

And my sleep fills with weeping –

Again and again the forced grave of men. (‘Fallen Eve’)

Thus the poem is a battle between Gog and woman on the one side, God and man on the other ,exactly the battle described by Graves in *The White Goddess.*

The Messiah who is born in the New Testament Revelation is to ‘rule with a rod of iron’ (or in Moffat’s translation ‘sheperd with an iron flail”).He grows up to be the horseman of iron:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood : and his name is called

The Word of God.

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations:

and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.(Book of Revelotion,19:11,13,15)”.

The lance and the girl were the great male and female sexual symbols of the pagan fertility religions .As the serpent, another phallic symbol, was degraded and denied and thrown out of heaven as Lucifer, so in the new religion of the dead body, the lance and girl became mere relics of the crucifixion. Here the grail is restored to its original meaning, but becomes the enemy the Knight rides against. His phallus is transformed into destructive lance-blade or gunsight, No doubt, like Calvin, he has iron arteries too. Like Blake’s visioness crazed God, Urizen, this Messiah seeks to live by and impose on others:

the ruled slab ,the octaves of order

The law and mercy of number .

As in Blake, as in Lawrence, the energies he denies rear up against him :

The sun erupts. The moon is deader than a skull. (’Gog’)

My heavens are my brass my earth is iron my moon a clod of clay

My sun a pestilence burning at noon and vapour of death in night (Blake, *The four Zoas*)

If we get out of contact and harmony with the sun and moon, then both turn into great dragons of destruction against us (Lawrence, *Apocalypse*)

He finds he cannot destroy the dragon without destroying life itself . Since the serpent's coil is 'under his ribs' the horseman is seeking to destroy an essential part of himself:

And the vital twist ,the mysterious chemical charge that converts the resisting high-minded puritan to the being of murder and madness ,is that occult crossiver of Nature's maddened force –like a demon –into brain thet had rejected her…

Coriolanus, looking at his wife and mother, sees the Roman mob who want to rear him to pieces to act like a madman …(*A choice of Shake speare's Verse*,192-3)

He will need to be strong

To follow his weapons towards the light.

Unlike Coriolanus, follow the blades right through |Rome …('Gog')

This Hughes sees as the basic psychology of Fascism (which is what 'Gog; began by being about). He need to be strong to overcome

The whorish dragon of the dark ages

Helmed with a modern capital and devouring

Virginal St George as a flower. ('Humanities')

She is 'the real deity of Medieval England, the celtic pre-Christian goddess, with her tail wound round those still very much alive pre –Christisn and non-Christian worlds'. She is 'the old Mediterranean serpent goddess, the anathema of Old Testament' This 'Queen of Heaven who was the goddess of natural law and of love, who was the goddess of all sensation and organic life-this overwhelmingly powerful, multiple primaeval being, was dragged into court by the young Puritan Jahovah'. *(A choice of Shakespeare's Verse*, I86-7) the trial of strength continues .But in the Queen's armory there many 'empty armours, at attention, loyal St George surviving the worm and the virgin, faces open for inspection'(The Wound'). This battle between good and evil goes on forever.

2. 7. Sample Questions

1. Comment on Ted Hughes' use of myths.
2. How far is Ted Hughes a poet of violence.
3. Critically analyse the theme of 'Gog'.
4. Comment on the use of symbolism in the poem.

2. 8. Suggested Readings

1. Keith Sagar, *The Art of Ted Hughes,* 1975.
2. Alan Bold, *Hughes and Thom Gunn,* 1976
3. Ekbert Faas, *Ted Hughes : The Unaccommodate Universe*, Santa Barbara, California, 1980.
4. Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts, *Ted Hughes : A Critical Study*, London, 1981.
5. Michael Schmidt, *Eleven British Poets,* 1980.
6. Thomas West, *Ted Hughes*, London, 1985.

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Lesson 3

Thomas Gunn (1929 -)

On the Move

(Detailed Study)

Contents

3 . 1. Postwar British Poetry

"Before the Second World War, my generation did on the whole have a liberal and naïve belief in the perfectibility of man. In the war we became if not physically hardened, at least morally and inevitably coarsened. After it we saw, what the Animal could do to his own species", wrote William Golding. His words very well reflect the mood of the post war disillusioned Europe, the anguish and anxiety of the people of the times who had lived through the traumatic experience of the war and lost faith in the goodness of man. In the post war years, the prevailing mood in the literature of England was one of "disillusionment, exhaustion, and sterility." George Orwell thought that the young writers seemed to be "fleas hopping among the ruins of a civilization." But though the sense of gloom and despair was common, the responses it evoked were varied in various genres of literature.

3 . 1 . 1. The Movement

W.H.Auden and Robert Graves produced the best poetry in the decade after the War. One could see immediately after the war an "apocalyptic, neo Romantic and rhetorical tone in poetry with much emphasis placed on surrealism and the status of myth", and the unruly deity of this cult was Dylan Thomas. There were also novelists and playwrights of a comparable stature. The fifties are considered to be the decade of the Angry Young Men, of a discontented and disillusioned young generation.

The poetry of the period was mainly contributed by a group named "The Movement", represented in Robert Conquest's anthology *New Lines* (1956). The young poets of the 1950's set out writing poetry that had a more obvious sense of form, rhythms that were easier to recognize, and a meaning that was more precise and definite, than Eliot or even Auden. In fact, they resolved to be deliberately different from Auden, for though they admired his technical virtuosity, they resented his determination to use poetry as a manifesto of his ethical ideas, whether Marxist or Christian. They accepted the negative opinions of T.S.Eliot, the critic, about the kinds of poetry that ought not to be written in contemporary times, but they did not accept him as a model poet.

By the beginning of 1955, sufficient Movement work had appeared for some reviewers to proclaim that it represented the 'literature of the 1950's'. An anonymous leading article entitled 'In the Movement' in *The Spectator* of 1st October 1954, announced a new trend in poetry, the emergence of a group of writers, who represented something new in British literature and society. The 'literary scene', the article claimed, had been transformed and literary taste had begun to move in new directions. It stressed the skeptically intelligent, accessible and robustly commonsensical attitudes of this group of young poets.The writers who belonged to this group represented an intellectual reaction against the neo-romantics of the 1940's, especially Dylan Thomas. They demanded that intelligence and intelligibility should be regarded as essential virtues in poetry. As Ian Hamilton writes in his essay 'The Making of the Movement', this group of young poets were 'in concerted reaction against the tangled and pretentious neo-romanticism' of the New Apocalypse and their immediate successors.

The effect of the *Spectator* article was reinforced in 1956 with the publication of *New Lines.* D.J.Enright and Robert Conquest the editors of the volume and also among the Movement poets, had already edited another principal anthology of the group *Poets of the 1950's*(1955). The poets represented in the anthologies were D.J.Enright, Robert Conquest, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Thom Gunn, John Halloway, Elizabeth Jennings, Philip Larkin and John Wain. In the years since 1956, the term 'the Movement' has come to be taken to mean these nine poets. Six of them were at that time university lecturers, two were librarians and one a civil servant. Their poetry was intelligent, knowledgeable and polished. They were resolved to avoid the faults of Dylan Thomas, whom Conquest accused of destroying the taste of the poetry-reading public and insisting on the debilitating theory that poetry *must* be metaphorical. In contrast to Thomas, Conquest declared, these poets would not surrender their technical excellence in order to explore the sub-conscious, and he condemned Thomas for being content to make *an arrangement of images of sex and violence tapped straight from the unconscious (a sort of upper-middle-brow horror comic), or to evoke without comment the naivetes and nostalgias of childhood.*

Conquest went on to make a more positive statement of the qualities that the new poets shared. According to him, their poetry was characterized by 'rational structure and comprehensible language'and 'negative determination to avoid bad principles.' The poets were designated 'the New Augustans', in recognition of the accomplishment with which they used traditional verse form and the logically discursive development typifying many of their poems. In one sense, indeed, their standpoint is not new, but merely the restoration of a sound and fruitful attitude to poetry, of the principle that poetry is written by and for the whole man, intellect, emotions, senses and all. The most important and distinguishing feature, perhaps, would be that it submits to no great systems of

theoretical constructs. It is free from both mystical and logical compulsions and is empirical in its attitude. On the more technical side, they tend to refuse to abandon a rational structure and comprehensible language, even when the verse is most highly charged with sensuous or emotional intent.

Their detractors found their work intellectually arid and elitist in its habits of erudite allusion, factors associated with the preponderance of university lecturers among the Movement poets. Blake Morrison's study *The Movement* (1980) identified F.R.Leavis, George Orwell, and William Empson as precursors of various aspects of these poets' theory and practice. Briefly alluding to the Movement in the introduction to his *Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse* (1980), which contains work by six of the group, Enright later noted 'the nonchalance with which, after a brief period of cohesiveness, its members went their separate ways.' The Movement had, however, a decisive influence on poetry in English for many years.

3 . 2. Thomas Gunn – His Life and Works

Thomas Gunn is an Anglo American poet born in Gravesend in 1929. His father was a journalist. In an autobiographical essay in1977 Gunn warmly recalls growing in a household full of books and playing with friends on the Heath. His mother encouraged his interest in reading and writing. It is possible that the emphasis in certain of his poems, on self-definition and self reliance reflects not only such literary influence as the French Existentialists, but also personal circumstances that required independence and resilience of him while he was still relatively young.

He was educated at Trinity College Cambridge. At Cambridge F.R. Leavis impressed him with his passion for literature, his belief in the value of imagery and his insistence on the expressive significance of verse rhythm. Donne and Shakespeare contributed to the formation of his early style which is cherished by a wonderful control of the metaphysical conceit, the extended metaphor or analogy. After living and teaching briefly in Texas, he settled in San Francisco in 1961. From 1958 to 1966 he taught at the University of California but resigned his professorship to devote more time to writing. From the mid 1950's he has lived chiefly in California, where he began lecturing at the University of California, in 1958.

While at Cambridge Gunn wrote most of the poems that appeared in his first collection *Fighting Terms* (1954). Impressive for their concentration, their vigour and their effective fusion of traditional metre with contemporary idiom, these poems established him as one of the most arresting voices of his generation. This substantial collection of verse displayed the energetic engagement of experience that has remained a central characteristic of his verse through out the continuous stylistic developments in his poetic career. He has described his poetry as 'a debate between the passion for definition and the passion for flow.' The rational tone and accomplished use of conventional forms in his earlier work led to his association with the Movement in whose anthologies he was represented. Though critics associated him with the Movement, his predilections were never as sharply anti-modernist as those of such Movement poets as Larkin and Amis. Indeed Gunn soon began to investigate different tonalities, a development encouraged by his move to the US and by his reading of William Carlos Williams, Stevens and other experimentalists.

The Sense of Movement (1957) emphasized his individuality in poetry, unusual for the formal virtuosity of its treatment of themes derived from popular culture. With *My Sad Captains* (1961) his work became more conversationally flexible through the adoption of syllabic verse-lines, which are used alongside more traditional meters throughout his later volumes of verse, *Touch* (1967) and *Moly* (1971). The latter indicates his participation in the Californian 'alternative culture' of the late 1960's and repeatedly invokes the effect of hallucinatory drugs. *Jack Straw's Castle* (1975) increased the exploratory freedom of his verse forms. The candor with which he had always used autobiographical material culminated in the open treatments of his homosexuality in *The Passages of Joy* (1982) and *The Man with Night Sweats* (1992), works of remarkable technical and thematic range. Among the numerous publications by small presses, which sustained his ethos of experimentation throughout the 1980's are *Undesirables* (1988) and *Death's Door* (1989). He authored a number of critical and autobiographical essays too.

3 . 3. The Poetry of Thomas Gunn

The poets of the Movement, however, have differences of approach and attitude with regard to their proclaimed principles and tenets. The poets of the group subscribe to its principles in a broad sense, in varying extents and degrees, with their own individual stances. Let us examine how far Gunn is a product of the Movement. His interactions with the members did shape his poetic sensibility to a great extent.

3 . 3 . 1 Attitude towards Romanticism

The poetry of many of the Movement poets raises questions about the extent of the Movement's anti-Romantic reaction, their failure to dissociate themselves from that preoccupation with the dark, the anarchic, the irrational, the chaotic, which they took to be the characteristic of the Romantic sensibility. In the work of Gunn, as in Amis and Larkin, there is a continuing participation in the Romantic tradition. That Thom Gunn felt some prejudice *against* Romanticism is clear from his poem 'To Yvor Winters, 1955', from its disparagement of 'the neurotic vision' and assertion of the need to maintain an 'empire over thought and speech'. He dedicated the poem to Winters because Winters' critical work, like the Movement's, had emphasized the importance of intelligence and order in poetry. Gunn's emphasis on 'Rule' in the poem - 'it is only by the control of energy that energy can ever be defined or conveyed'- is typical of the Movement's anti-Romanticism. Gunn's admiration for 'energy' had from the beginning made him more sympathetic to Romanticism than were his Movement confederates. He also distinguished between a 'true' and valuable Romanticism, and the false and effete version of it.

Another feature of Gunn's work, which divides it from the Movement is its interest in Existentialism, a philosophy often thought to be related to Romantic individualism. Gunn's stay in Paris contributed to the influence on him of Sartre's philosophy. Sartrean notions of 'risk', 'choice', 'will', and 'action' appear frequently in his first two collections, *Fighting Terms* (1954) and *The Sense of Movement* (1957), and there is praise for those who 'regret nothing' and who can declare 'I am what I please'.

The co-existence of Romantic and anti-Romantic tendencies in Gunn is best illustrated in the most famous of his early poems, 'On the Move' (refer to section 3.7.2).

For Gunn, choice is all-important, but Amis and Larkin often see choice as futile, individual destinies being determined by some unseen force. This fatalistic philosophy is in sharp contrast to Gunn's celebration of choice and free will. Gunn was interested in both Romantic heroes and Existentialism and he wrote poems dissenting from Amis' view that to ask 'Who am I?' is not to ask a meaningful question.

The question of Romanticism is, in fact, one on which, the Movement poets have been largely in agreement, even though their original position has undergone a significant alteration. They have been more willing later on to acknowledge the strengths of Romantic poetry, towards which Gunn had his natural inclination.

3 . 3 . 2 Treatment of Sex

Gunn's treatment of sex in his poetry can also be viewed with reference to the Movement tenets. In sexual matters, Movement texts often see things from the point of view of a male seducer impatient with conventional pieties, as we find the speaker in Gunn's 'Modes of Pleasure'. His men will not tolerate much discussion of sex; talking about sex is associated with sexual inactivity. Such an attitude is discernible in his 'Carnal Knowledge', where the male speaker is cynically inattentive to his mistress's feelings and insults her intelligence, but makes use of her for sexual pleasure. In this poem and also in 'A Village Edmund' Gunn offers an aggressive masculinity which dissociates itself both from the 'tender' heterosexuality of Lawrence's gamekeeper and from the covert homosexuality of Auden and Spender. The 'new' tough-mindedness of the post-war era with which Gunn is associated, shows up in the insistence with which he presents males like 'A Village Edmund' as 'randy and rowdy and rough'. His concern with symbols of *machismo* – motorbikes, knives, leather belts, tattoos – seems obsessive, even fetishistic. Even in his early poems the treatment of sexual relationships is rather dark and complex and his approach to sex is as tough and as pragmatic as the Movement determined it to be. The daringly frank treatment of casual sex may be taken as a reflection of changes in the sexual mores of the young. Sex for him is intimately bound up with loss and death; it is not 'fun'. Gunn never attempted to conceal disturbing aspects of sexual experience. Critics should not miss the dark Gothic elements in his treatment of sex in poems like 'A Village Edmund' or 'The Beach Head'.

3 . 3 . 3 Attitude to Politics

With regard to politics, the Movement poets were 'political neutralists' rather than political activists, there being nothing to draw their political attention. In 1957 Gunn was complaining that the 'agony' of post-war intellectuals was in having no cause to support. The Movement's stand became 'a stand against having a political stand'.

3 . 3 . 4 Use of riddle, myth, and allusion

The Movement's academicism and rationalism probably underlies these poets' preference for 'emblem' and 'riddle' rather than 'symbol' and Thom Gunn is the Movement poet to make most

use of riddle, and he seems to have admired Graves's use of it. Gunn has acknowledged his poem 'Without a Counterpart' to be 'very deliberately a riddle poem'. Many of his riddles, as in this poem, are based on love or a love affair. For instance, poems like 'Wind in the Street' and 'Looking Glass'.

The Movement was against the use of myth and allusion, but once again there is no consensus on the matter. Gunn makes extensive use of myth in poems like 'Lazarus not Raised', 'Helen's Rape', 'Merlin in the Cave', and 'Jesus and His Mother'. He was most responsive to the use of not only riddle, but also of emblem and magic. His poem 'A Secret Sharer' makes use of he idea of the Gothic *doppelganger.* The speaker gazes up at the window hoping that his 'other self' will appear.

Partly as a result of his residence in San Francisco, where he was exposed to radical populist ideas, Gunn is the one Movement poet to have moved not from the communal towards the individual, but from the individual towards the communal. For younger readers, he has also been more readily identifiable than other Movement poets with the spirit of the times.

3 . 3 . 5 Evolution of his poetry

Overall Gunn's poetry has evolved towards a more directly humane treatment of its subjects, his early works being renowned for their 'toughness'. This evolution may be seen in the changing aspects of two abiding qualities in his work: his sympathy with the outsider- rebel and his interest in the nature of courage. Whereas the outsider- rebels of earlier poems tend to exhibit, as do the motor-cyclists in 'On the Move', romantic self-sufficiency, those in later works are more likely to be injured or lost, as with 'Sparrow' or 'Slow Walker'. And if the characteristic gesture of courage in early poems like 'Lerici' and 'In Santa Maria Del Popolo' is that of opening the arms wide to the existential void, in the later work courage is perhaps best expressed by the comforting embrace that the man dying of AIDS in 'Memory Unsettled' confers on a friend more sick than he.

3 . 4. The Text of the Poem

On the Move

'Man, you gotta go'

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds
That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,
Have 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 tires 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

3. 5 Analysis of the Poem

This poem has forty lines in five stanzas of eight lines each.

Lines

1 - 8 The first stanza describes the movement of birds in nature, which is always driven by instinctual needs, unlike that of human beings. Animals and birds have a definite purpose for their movement.

9 -16 In sharp contrast to the movement of birds, here we get the picture of a group of young energetic boys on motor cycles, very noisy and bursting with energy, moving on for the sheer pleasure of movement.

17-24 The aimlessness of their cycling trip is stressed; it is directionless. Man's existential plight is hinted at.

25-32 The relentless movement of life moves man on and on. Man keeps on moving though there is no specific purpose or destination for him to reach.

33- 40 The poem ends on a note of optimistic affirmation. To be in motion despite the lack of a destination is better than stillness or inactivity, for 'one is always nearer by not keeping still'.

3. 5 . 1 Explication

"Man, You gotta go': a common American expression, meaning roughly 'One must always be on the move, socially and professionally'.

Line 1 Jay : a crested bird

13 Donned : put on (formal)

3. 5 . 2 Critical Appreciation of the Poem

'On the Move', a poem of forty lines is the first poem in Gunn's second collection of poems *The Sense of Movement* (1957), of which A. Alvarez said, '————I can think of few contemporary poets…..who can write with his kind of assurance and purpose——-' The volume was acclaimed for the emphasis of Gunn's individuality in poetry, extraordinary for the formal virtuosity of its treatment of themes derived from popular culture.

This poem reworks the age-old archetypal image of the journey. As in many other poems of Gunn, here also a particular and localized experience of apparent triviality – motorcyclists moving fast – easily leads the poet to reflect on a general human feature. While the movements of birds and animals are purposeful, driven by instinctual needs, man's movement in time and through time seems

to lack either purpose or direction. But the poem concludes with a bright optimistic note of affirmation- 'one is always nearer by not keeping still'.

In nature all kinds of birds 'the blue jay' and the 'wheeling swallows' have some kind of purpose for their movement, for food or for rest. But man, on the other hand, has no such definite purpose, as exemplified by the Boys on motorcycles. They are all devoid of any individuality, each one in the gang 'in goggles' and donned in 'gleaming jackets', dusty and noisy, full of the robust energy of youth. They ride on without any direction or destination. The apparent aimlessness of the boys reflects man's grappling with problems without any clear goals, modern life, " with its sick hurry, its divided aims" and " where ignorant armies clash by night" as Arnold put it.

Man is not only the maker of machine but of his soul too. Man is responsible for his own action and free to choose his own destiny, in a hostile universe. The influence of Sartre and his existentialist philosophy is obvious. Man should be able to exercise control and much that is natural must yield to the will. He must direct the course and be his own master. However, his reckless movement without any purpose is a "part solution". He is not damned because he is "afloat on movement". He seems to have lost communion with his soul, and to drift on aimlessly in a valueless world'. Nevertheless, one moves always. He is part of the political, sociological and historical movement of the world around. The motorcyclists also rush through towns, again not their destination.

The poem, however, ends on a note of robust optimism, reminiscent of Browning. It is in striving, living a life of action though not achieving anything, that man proves his mettle. At worst, one is in motion and at best, 'reaching no absolute', 'one is always nearer by not keeping still'.

Gunn's philosophy of life with his faith in a life of action is proclaimed in the closing lines. He deplores inertia and exhorts us to move on even though reaching the absolute remains a mirage. We are reminded of Hemingway for whom man's life is a relentless struggle in which through dignity a kind of victory is won in defeat. For Gunn, it is a struggle in which through action, a kind of victory is won in defeat. What the victory is, how it could be won, only the modern man, especially the youth knows, or ought to know. The influence of Sartrean Existentialism is thus obvious is poems like this.

The poem is an illustration of poetry of the present in the literary idiom of the present with great purity and lucidity of diction and effective use of symbols. Abstract and philosophical thoughts are explained through symbols like birds and motorcyclists.

This poem illustrates the co-existence of Romantic and anti-Romantic tendencies in Gunn. The strictness of metre and rhyme-scheme; the speaker's admiration for the motorcyclists' exertion of control; the tentative, self-qualifying, explanatory tone-of-voice; the fact that the poem is written from the point of view of a stationary observer, not of an active participant: all these features of the poem give it a Movement quality. Less typical of the Movement, and more indicative of a Romantic sensibility, are the 'robust' assonance of the language – 'gust', 'spurts', 'dull thunder', 'hum', 'bulges', 'hurler', 'hurled'; the existential implications of words like 'purpose', 'will', 'dare', 'choosing' and 'self-defined'; and, above all, the sympathy shown towards the 'uncertain violence' of a social group which others in the group might have regarded as dangerously rebellious. The poem justifies the

gang, giving it an intellectual respectability, and it ends with a celebration of movement, which is most un-Movement-like.

At worst, one is in motion: and at best,

Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,

One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Kingsley Amis's poem 'On Staying Still', which was written about the same time as 'On the Move', is a characteristically Movement corrective to the outlook expressed in Gunn's poem. Gunn praises movement-for-the-sake-of-movement, not minding whether it is directed or not; but Amis unfavourably contrasts the 'changeless tidal fury' of the sea with the immobility of an old 'broken boat' on the shoreline. The poem is a corrective not only because of its defence of inaction and stoicism, but because it questions 'whether/Or not choice is free'. For Gunn choice is all important, but Amis and Larkin often see choice as futile, individual destinies being determined by some unseen force.

As Edwin Muir has commented, "He states afresh and with great force questions which have troubled poets and thinkers in all ages. But he is aware of them as existing now, in his life, and he contributes something new to the old debate". Gunn has been applauded for the agility and subtlety of his mind and his ability "to convey complicated ideas directly, forcefully and with wit" (Julian Symons). He has a peculiar talent for relating his own experience to that of every member of the human race. The complexity of his thought is lightened by the concreteness of his imagery and the simplicity of his language. The poem 'On the Move' bears testimony to this peculiar talent of Gunn.

3 . 6. Sample Questions

1. Discuss the development of the theme of 'movement' at both literal and symbolic levels.

2. Comment on Gunn's use of symbols with reference to this poem.

3. Evaluate the poem critically as a poem by a 'Movement' poet.

4. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem.

3 . 7. Suggested Reading

1. A.E. Dyson(ed.), Essays in *Three Contemporary Poets : Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes and R.S.Thomas,* 1990.

2. George Fraser, *The Poetry of Thom Gunn*

3. Wilmer, *Definition and Flow*: *Thom Gunn in the 1970's*

4. *Poetry from Cambridge 1951-'52* (ed.), Fortune Press (London), 19522.

5. *Poets of the 1950's* (ed.) The Kenyusha Press, Tokyo, 1955.

6. 'A Sense of Movements' in *Spectator*, 23 May 1958, p.661.

7. 'My Suburban Muse' in *Worlds : Seven Modern Poets*, ed. Goeffrey Summerfield, Penguin, 1974, pp.58-62.

8 . Allsop, Kenneth, *The Angry Decade*, Peter Owen, London, 1958.

9 . Dodsworth, Martin (ed.), *The Survival of Poetry*, Faber and Faber , London, 1970.

10 . Thurley, Geoffrey, *The Ironic Harvest: English Poetry in the Twentieth Century,* Edward Arnold, London, 1974.

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Lesson 4

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON (1809-1892)

TEARS, IDLE TEARS

(Non-detailed)

Contents

4. 1. The Victorian Age

The period coinciding with the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 – 1901) is known as the Victorian period in English literature. In 1837 Queen Victoria ascended the throne and 1887 was the year of her jubilee. This period is commonly divided into three:

(1) 1837 – 1851: The Early Victorian period, which was a time of struggle and growth, and the important milestones are the Chartist Movement, the Corn Laws and the culmination of the Industrial Revolution.

(2) 1851 – 1870: The Mid-Victorian period, when Britain was at her height in wealth, power, and influence.

(3) 1870 – 1901: The late Victorian period, which was a less fortunate period, when other nations, especially the United States and Germany were competing with Britain industrially. The period also witnessed the building up of Trade Unions and the formation of the Labour Party.

The Victorian period, which witnessed vast upheavals in various spheres of human life, was the period of the greatest power, prosperity and influence that the nation had ever known, and also of

poverty, discontentment, and disillusion. Culturally, it was the age when change rather than stability came to be first accepted as normal in the nature of human outlook. Ancient foundations of religious faith were eroded among intellectuals by scientific advances, especially the biological discoveries of Charles Darwin. Darwin's Theory of Evolution, based on the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, enunciated in his *Origin of the Species* (1859) had a tremendous impact on the believes and attitudes of the people. Their firm and almost blind faith in religion and God suffered a rude shake. While rapid progress in science made man's day- to- day life increasingly comfortable, it questioned the existence of God but at the same time the scientist could not provide him with a substitute for God, for him to rely on in times of troubles and tribulations. The loss or decline of faith in religion and the absence of a proper substitute for it led to a state of mental conflict and chaos. Unprecedented material prosperity on the one hand and a decline of faith on the other disturbed the mental peace of the people. Culturally and in many ways socially, the Victorian period saw the outset and display of the problems which 20th century has had to solve.

Writers and thinkers, who were sensitive to the situation, responded to it in variant ways. The educated classes and their leaders sought to establish guiding values for living; it was the period of the 'Victorian Sage' – Carlyle, Mill, Arnold, Ruskin and Tennyson – educating the social conscience. This was the great age of the novel. The English novel developed into the great art form of the era, in the works of Thackeray, Trollope, the Brontes, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Henry James.

Poetry was rather a refuge from anxieties than an illustration of them. The major poets of the period were Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, and Gerald Manley Hopkins. The most representative poet of the period, Tennyson gave expression to all the varying moods of his time. Browning, on the other hand, was more concerned with the faith and optimism of his time. He reveled in the drama of the human mind and in his favourite poetic genre dramatic monologue, he dealt with the psychology of human behaviour. His interest was solely in the inner world, the human soul. He believed in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the possibility of perfection through love even if the perfection is realized only after death. Arnold, a mid-Victorian, on the contrary, expressed the loss of faith of his age and its consequent melancholy. He found himself between two worlds, "one dead, and the other powerless to be born". Reflective melancholy may be considered the keynote of his poetry. Though a Victorian, Hopkins' poetry shows little of the Victorian spirit. In his originality, obscurity, and technical experimentation, he seems more akin to the 20th century poets and is acclaimed as the first 'modern' poet.

4. 2. Alfred Lord Tennyson – His Life and Works

Tennyson (1809 – 1892), usually known as Alfred Lord Tennyson, after he was made a baron in 1884, was born as the fourth of twelve children of a clergyman at Somersby in Lincolnshire on 6 August, 1809. He was precocious as a child. He composed blank verse at the age of eight, wrote poems in imitation of Pope at the age of ten, and at twelve made an analysis of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. He joined Trinity College, Cambridge when he was eighteen and shortly before that his first published volume of poetry, *Poems by Two Brothers* was out, written in collaboration with his brother.

At Cambridge, Tennyson became the center of an admiring group. There developed an intimate friendship between him and a brilliant young man, Arthur Hallam, who was later engaged to the poet's sister. When he was twenty-one, was published his *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. Two years later, in 1830 he brought out a large volume, *Poems* which came in for sharp critical attack. This hostile critical reception and the rude shock over the sudden and premature death of Hallam, who was not even twenty-three, and the days of financial instability made him sad and gloomy. There was in him an intense yearning for an escape from this state of sorrow and he felt the urge to go forward. It was in this mood that he composed *Ulysses* in 1833, a passionate poetic account of the hero's relentless quest for the wonder of new experiences.

After the 1840s, Tennyson achieved popularity, unequalled by any other English poet in his own life- time. With the publication of the two-volume edition of his *Poems* in 1842, he scaled the heights of fame. Wordsworth described him as the greatest living poet. The first three books of his sole authorship (1830,1832,1842) include much of what is now considered his best work, like *Mariana, The Lady of Shallott, Ulysses, Morte d' Arthur, The Lotos Eaters*, etc. In 1850 he married after a long engagement the woman he loved. The great grief at the loss of his dear friend Hallam in 1837 produced the series of elegies in *In Memoriam,* one of the greatest elegies, commemorating the death of his dear friend. Queen Victoria declared that she valued *In Memoriam* next to the Bible. However, it was the mixture of picturesque romanticism and acceptable idealism in *The Princess* (1847), which greatly extended Tennyson's popularity with the general public. In 1850 he succeeded Wordsworth as the Poet Laureate of England. In 1855 appeared *Maud and Other Poems* followed by *Idylls of the King* (1859) and *Enoch Arden* (1864). He was made a peer in 1872 at the age of seventy-five. His last two volumes were *Demeter and Other Poems* (1889) and *The Death of Oenone and Other Poems (*1892). He died on 6 October 1892, while reading Shakespeare's *Cymbeline.*

4 . 3. Tennyson's Poetry

Tennyson is the most representative poet of the Victorian age, in whose poetry the Victorian complacency about England's might and progress, the Victorian conflict between science and religion, and the typically Victorian attitude of disenchantment with the industrialized and urbanized society find a memorable expression. He was a successful and prolific writer much idolized in his time. In fact, Tennyson is the only English poet ever to have been honored as the Poet Laureate and ennobled as a Baron purely for his poetry. This popularity arose from two facts: he had, on the one hand, exquisite poetic skill, a master of metrical and sound patterns and a conscientious craftsman; he was, on the other hand, in his mental and emotional outlook, very representative of his age. He was very sensitive to his times and in his numerous poems he highlighted the hopes and aspirations, the doubts and disappointments of his contemporaries, who had found it hard to come to terms with the rapid strides of science and the deep inroads it made into the hitherto complacent life of the people. He had a characteristically Victorian insular patriotism; he was both exhilarated and disturbed, like so many of his contemporaries, by the social and industrial changes of the age and he was distressed by the shaking of traditional beliefs by the scientists. He countered this threat to faith from the intellect, by an emotional, sometimes sentimental, idealism, which was extremely acceptable to the middle class reading public.

He continued the Romantic tradition, but in his poetry, as in most Victorian poetry, the moral purpose, necessitated and approved by the taste of the time, outweighed the visionary and symbolic qualities, characteristic of the Romantics. As Harold Nicholson has aptly remarked, the Victorians distrusted 'absolute imagination.' His idiom was that of the Romantics – Wordsworth, Shelley, especially Keats – but his formal technique was as meticulous as that of the eighteenth century poets; the combination was both beguiling and reassuring.

Tennyson was shortsighted, a defect which he turned to account by the exactness of his closely observed detail. As a nature poet, he is remarkable for the fidelity and minuteness of his observation. The most striking feature of his poetry is its picturesqeness, reminding one of Spenser and Keats and his characteristic tone is pensive and elegiac. He had a measure of Keats' gift of pictorial presentation - almost a wizard in words like Keats - to which he added an even more astonishing command of the musical resources of language. His poetry excels in its "broad undulating sweetness", its lucidity and music. It may be true that it lacks passion, but it does not lack picturesqueness and in the variety of its music it has seldom been surpassed.

Taste in the 20th century on the whole turned against Tennyson's poetry; the main charge was that it was deficient in power of thought. It is still admitted that he had an extraordinary ear for cadence and rhythm, but it is implied that this virtue does not compensate for the mediocrity of his intelligence. However, this tribute to his 'fine ear' amounts to acknowledgement that Tennyson was a fine artist – perhaps, the truest artist among Victorian poets until Hopkins, and no true art can be without some kind of depth. Though with the detraction he suffered in the 20th century, he is not now considered the great philosophic poet, reconciling science and religion, he remains high in rank among English poets of immense poetic excellence. Undoubtedly, his first three books and *In Memoriam* contain poems in which some of the deeper emotional conflicts of his time are beautifully articulated. This is more than sufficient credential to call him the most representative poet of the period.

4 . 4. The Text of Poem

Tears, Idle Tears

'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the Days that are no more.

'Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;

So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more,

'Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns

The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds

To dying ears, when unto dying eyes

The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;

So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

'Dear as remembered kisses after death,

And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned

On lips that are for others; deep as love,

Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;

O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

4. 5. Analysis of the Poem

'Tears, Idle Tears' is a short poem of twenty lines on four stanzas of five lines each.

Lines

1-5 The poet in a nostalgic and reminiscent mood is trying to trace the sources of his despair, the cause of his tears as he is looking on the Autumn fields.

6-10 Recollection of the past, "so sad, so fresh", haunting his memory

11-15 This stanza is on the sadness of death, death of your dear ones, leaving behind only memories.

16-20 Pleasant memories of his dear one who is no more, sweet memories of love of days gone by, are now a kind of Death in Life.

4. 5. 1 Explication

Lines

2 Divine despair: not the despair of worldly frustration or failings, but despair with a spiritual origin

4 The Happy autumn fields: In England and many other countries of the West, the land-scape looks more beautiful in the softer light of autumn(the season that follows sum-mer and precedes winter) than in any of the other seasons.

5 Days that are no more: Days of the past

6 Beam: ray of sunlight.

7 Underworld : That which cannot be seen from a beach or the bank of a river.

8 The last : The last ray of sunlight which signals the end of the day.

…over one: The other kind of the world of which we have lost sight.

9 Verge: edge.

10 So sad, so fresh: The past is described as being sad and fresh. Sad, because it is over, fresh, because it remains alive in the human consciousness.

12 Pipe : the sound.

14 Casement: a window.

Casement slowly grows a glimmering square: The light shines on the window.

This is an image of beauty.

The whole of stanza three is bout the sadness of dying.

16 After death: After the death of a person one has pleasant memories of him or her.

17 Fancy: imagination

Feigned: pretended.

20 O death in Life: All the experiences described concerning remembrance of the past are described as a kind of death while one is living.

4 . 6. Appreciation of the Poem

'Tears, Idle Tears' is one of the several poems written by Tennyson, deeply affected by the sudden and premature death of his intimate friend Arthur Hallam. This short lyric is an expression of his grief stricken and desperate mood of sorrow at the thought of his dear departed friend.

The poet attempts to trace the source of his grief, which finds expression in his 'idle tears'. It is not the result of any worldly frustration or failings, but despair with a spiritual origin that makes him sad, as he views the 'the happy autumn fields', memories of the past, ' of the days that are no more' come crowding into his mind, plunging him sorrow.

Memories of the past are sad and fresh in his mind, fresh as the first beam of sunlight glittering on the sail, the warm rays of the rising sun. It heralds happiness as the ship brings our friends home. At he same time the memories are sad, like the last rays of the setting sun falling over the ship that is sinking our dear ones 'below the verge.' The past, which is no more, is both sad and fresh, sad because it is no more there and fresh, as it is still fresh and alive in our memory.

He goes on to call the past 'sad and strange' as the early piping of birds, half-awake in the dark dawns of summer. It is sad and strange as the bird's faint piping is to dying ears. To a person on his death- bed, the window with its glimmering light grows dimmer and dimmer. The sadness of death is

effectively conveyed through these images – so sad and strange. Such is the experience of death and the memory of the days gone by.

'Dear', 'sweet', 'deep', and 'wild' are the epithets employed to qualify the bygone days. You live in the memories of the past. It is as dear as the pleasant experiences you had with the beloved person who is no more, sweet as the illusory pleasures your fancy conjures up, as intense as the experience of love, and wild with regrets of the past. Finally he accosts it as 'Death in Life', reminiscent of the vision in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner.' Remembrance of the days of love and happiness, which have now become part of the past, is a kind of death, while one is actually living.

The poet has successfully articulated his intense sense of loss and grief at the loss of his dear one. Memories of the happy past are fresh in his memory. An appropriate atmosphere of nostalgia and remembrance has been very effectively conjured up. The imagery employed is vivid and picturesque. The two similes employed to convey the idea of memory being 'fresh and sad' are to be noted. I t is fresh 'as the first beam glittering on a sail' and sad 'as the last which …..' sinks into the sea with all we love. There is also the comparison of 'the sad and strange' memory to the 'earliest pipe of half-awakened birds'. 'Remembered kisses' recalls the umpteen moments of the experience of love and 'hopeless fancy' creates imaginary moments of pleasure too. The riot of emotions surging in his mind at the thought of the good old days of love, gone forever, is effectively conveyed through this poem. The poem, indeed testifies to Tennyson's craftsmanship as a poet.

4 . 7. Sample Questions

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem.
2. Comment on the use of imagery in the poem.

4 . 8. Suggested Readings

1. F L Lucas. *Tennyson* , Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1957.
2. Harold Nicolson. *Tennyson : Aspects of His Life, Character and Poetry,* London, Constable, 1923.
3. William B, Stanford. *The Ulysses Theme : A Study of the Adaptability of a Traditional Theme*, London : O.U.P., 1954.
4. Jerome. H. Buckley, *Tennyson : the Growth of a Poet*, 1960
5. John Killham, Ed., *Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson,* 1960.
6. Christopher Ricks, *Tennyson : A Biographical and Critical Study,* 1972.
7. A. Dwight Culler, *The Poetry of Tennyson,* 1977.
8. Philip Henderson, *Tennyson, Poet and Prophet*, 1978

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Lesson - 5

Samuel Beckett (1906 – 1988)

Waiting for Godot

(Non-detailed Study)

Contents

5 . 1. The Period

The post war period in Europe and Britain was characterized by a general mood of despair and gloom, as man confronted a kind of life that had no longer any point in it, that had become somewhat stagnant. This mood of gloom inevitably finds its reflection in the literature of the period too. William Golding said, "Before the Second World War, my generation did on the whole have a liberal and naïve belief in the perfectibility of man. In the war we became if not physically hardened, at least morally and inevitably coarsened. After it we saw, what the Animal could do to his own species". These words very well reflect the prevalent mood in post war disillusioned Europe, the anguish and anxiety of the people of the times who had lived through the traumatic experience of the war and lost faith in the goodness of man. In these post war years, the prevailing mood in the literature of England and Europe was one of "disillusionment, exhaustion, and sterility." George Orwell thought that the young writers seemed to be "fleas hopping among the ruins of a civilization." Though the sense of gloom and despair was common, the responses it evoked were varied in various genres of literature. For instance, the absurdist philosophy of life inherent in Beckett's writings as a whole, must have risen out of the specific socio-historical conditions of the times.

In fact, this sense of disillusionment did not set in suddenly overnight after the Second World War. *The Waste Land* had already laid bare the barrenness of contemporary human life, mainly spiri-

tual and ethical. We can trace it further back to the post Darwinian England and Europe with a drastic waning in the faith in God and religion. There were other causative factors like the two World Wars and the consequent and inevitable breakdown of the liberal faith, the emergence of Communism in the U.S.S.R, the rise of Nazism, the tyrannical regime of Adolf Hitler and his inhuman policy of genocide in the concentration camps, the spiritual emptiness of the post War era, and the rapid advancement of science and technology leading to unprecedented material prosperity and affluence, which was unable to satisfy the spiritual cravings of man. Industrialization had reached an alarming growth rate in the capitalistic West, bringing to the fore the consequent ills of alienation and depersonalization. Modern urban man became isolated as he had never been before, with the consequent loss of the sense of community. This sense of alienation has had a decisive influence on the arts and literature of the period. The pernicious side of technological advancement exhibited in the two World Wars was another historical factor responsible for the negativism in the literature of the times.

The Second World War had a direct impact on Beckett. It might have deepened his awareness of suffering and of the fearful uncertainty of existence. His war experiences in France as a member of the Resistance group must have had an influence on his writing. He wrote in an essay on Proust about " the perilous zones in the life of the individual, precarious, painful, mysterious and fertile, when for a moment, the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being." Writers like Beckett seem to be concerned, in their works, about conveying their sense of mystery, bewilderment and anxiety when confronted with the human condition, and their despair at being unable to find a meaning in human existence. The so-called 'unrest' in humanity is attributed to man's plight of purposelessness. In other words, man is forced, in this modern age to exist out of harmony with his surroundings. As Henry Miller has put it, "Everything that was of beauty, significance and promise has been destroyed or buried in the avalanche of false progress." An acute awareness of this lack of purpose forms the central theme of the 'Absurd' (Ref 5.4).

5 . 2. Samuel Beckett – His Life and Works

Samuel Barclay Beckett, Nobel Prize winner, novelist and dramatist, was born at Foxrock near Dublin, Ireland on Good Friday, April 13th, 1906. He came of a prosperous middle class Protestant family. He was educated at Portora Royal School, where he excelled in academic activities as well as in sports and games. He joined Trinity College, Dublin in 1923 and took his B.A.degree in French and Italian with first class. Chess, golf, cricket, cycling and modern languages were among his interests.

In the summer of 1926 he toured France on his bicycle. In 1928, after a teaching tenure at Campbell College, he went to Paris as lecturer where he met James Joyce. The Joycian spell proved a crucial influence on Beckett. He worked as Joyce's Private Secretary and edited a few essays in *Finnegans Wake* by Joycean disciples, who were enthusiastic about the work to be published about ten years later. In 1931 he published 'Proust', his major work in literary criticism, a short study in aphoristic style. The impact of Proustian thoughts on him was quite strong and led to his Cartesian obsession with the antithesis between the outer and inner worlds. The Proustian involuntary memory enables us to escape into the spacious annexe of mental alienation. Thanks to his pursuit of such

studies, the tragic yet absurd aspects of the individual shackled in a degenerating body, became major concerns for Beckett.

From 1930 to 1932 he was back in Dublin as Assistant Lecturer in French at Trinity College and took his MA degree in 1931. Soon he resigned his job, being temperamentally unfit for the same. The first of his creative works was the poem 'Whoroscope' (1930) and his first prose fiction was the volume of short stories titled *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934). In 1931 his first play *Le Kid* was published. In 1933 he lost his father who had left him an annuity, which was his source of income for the following two decades until he received royalties on *Waiting for Godot*. In 1935 he published his first collection of verse *Echo's Bones and other Precipitates* .

In 1937 Beckett settled in Paris. In 1938 his first novel *Murphy* was published. During the Second World War period he was active in the French Resistance Movement against Nazism, between 1942 and 1945. He lived a life of seclusion for two years and then a bare living as an agricultural labourer with his future wife Suzanne.

It is notable that Becket, who had proved temperamentally unfit to hold a teacher's post at Trinity College and had undergone psychoanalytical treatment in London for a serious neurotic condition, could rise to a state of sanity and normal activity. However, again he suffered a serious breakdown, from which he sought relief by finding an outlet to his confusion in writing. The result was his last strictly English novel *Watt.* Its composition was, in fact, his daily therapy.

In 1945 he returned to Ireland to visit his family during Easter. He was back in Paris soon and a rich phase (1945-50) of creative activity followed. He wrote in French the trilogy *Molloy, Malowe Dies* and *The Unnameable* in which he adopted the first person monologue as his fictional form. Along with these novels came *Waiting for Godot* (EN ATTENDANT GODOT)), first written in French and later in English. In 1952 it was published in Paris. Beckett's own translation of the work in English was published in New York in 1954. This was followed by *All That Fall* (1957), *Endgame* (1957) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958).

In 1959 the University of Dublin conferred on him an honorary D.Litt. Besides the performance of his plays, there were broadcasts and also later telecasts of his works. In 1969 Beckett won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He continued his literary career, writing experimental plays, which challenged every aspect of the conventional theatre and shocked his audience worldwide. These short plays and sketches register human mystification and incapacity before the pathos of life and the ineffectiveness / futility of attempts to connect or comprehend. *Ends and Odds* (1977) contains pieces which defy naming and classification. It was *Waiting for Godot* that won him general recognition, although his main claim to distinction lies in his novels. From 1955 onwards Beckett has remained as one of the dominating figures of contemporary literary scene. He appeals above all, to a generation of people that rejects facile solutions. Profoundly influenced by Dante, Proust and the metaphysicians, Beckett is first and foremost concerned to grasp the relationship between the Finite (ie-man) and the Infinite (time and space) in a world from which the traditional figure of God has disappeared . His complex, abstract and quasi mathematical speculations are expressed in series of vivid symbols and images and his vision of the Finite (man) disintegrating beneath the threat of a remorseless infinity (time and space) leads to a picture of the Universe which is arid and comfortless, yet compelling.

5 . 3. The Theatre of the Absurd / Absurd Plays.

In the 1950's European and American writers experienced an unhappy feeling, a kind of deep anguish, the reason for which they could not explain. This experience, of course reflected the feeling of discontent and frustration experienced by people in general. Existentialist philosophers call this the 'existentialist anguish', anguish at the absurdity and meaninglessness of human existence. Philosophers and writers like Sartre and Camus

look upon man as an island, an isolated alienated being cast into a hostile, unfamiliar universe which does not seem to possess any inherent truth, value, sense or meaning. They represent man's life on this planet as it journeys from the 'nothingness' where it came from to the 'nothingness' where the journey should end as a mere existence which is, to say the least, absurd and anguished. The miserable predicament of man, who is thrown into the world to suffer endlessly, is their main concern.

Albert Camus in his highly influential book *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1975) describes man's condition thus:

"A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as the hopes of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity."

Eugene Ionesco says in his essay on Kafka, "The absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless."

The first Absurd dramatist was Alfred Jarry, a French playwright to be followed by writers like Samuel Beckett (Ireland), Jean Genet (France), Eugene Ionesco (Rumania), EdwardAlbee (America), ArthurAdamov (Russia), Fernando Arrabal (Spain), Harold Pinter (British)etc. When their plays are presented on the stage, the audience no longer leaves the theatre puzzled or outraged, as they did when the plays were premiered. On the other hand, they attract crowds who watch them with gusto and find them fascinating and stimulating. The result is the birth of a new genre of drama, different from the conventional drama. As we have already said, an Absurd play has no plot, no real characters, no conflict. Structure is rather circular; it is never complete. We now accept that these playwrights are presenting on the stage their version of human life and the universe, as best as they can. That is their way of projecting their perception of life and we also read some meaning into it as best as we can.

The label the 'Theatre of the Absurd' was given by Martin Esslin, author of *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) and must be " understood as a kind of intellectual shorthand for a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method and convention, of shared philosophical and artistic premises, whether conscious or unconscious, and of influences from a common store of tradition."

Let us have a look at the various developments and circumstances, which have contributed towards the birth of the Absurd theatre. The major causative influences are the drastic receding of faith in God and religion in the post – Darwinian period (England and Europe), the destruction and

disillusionment caused by the two World Wars and the consequent breakdown of the liberal faith, the emergence of the Communist regime in the USSR, the barbaric dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, especially relating to the mass torture and genocide in the concentration camps, the spiritual and ethical barrenness of the post war era, the failure and inability of a rich, mechanical and materialistic world to satisfy the spiritual cravings of man, etc.

The language of the Absurd plays also deserves to be commented on. We have seen how Sartre, Camus and Ionesco were concerned about a senseless and meaningless universe, with senseless actions etc. Language, being the carrier or medium of sense, it is no wonder that the theatre of the absurd is seriously concerned with the criticism of life which has been deprived of its semantic/ logical component. Language has become 'empty' or inadequate to express sense and when such an inadequate language becomes the medium of expression for, say, philosophy, politics, or economics, the latter too become empty. In many recent books, much of what we read seems to be beyond our comprehension, not because we are deficient in grasping, but because the writers are using a language, which has become increasingly inadequate. Most of our everyday conversation fails to communicate since it is illogical and senseless, even nonsensical and absurd. The language of the absurd plays, which makes no sense to us, is in fact, realistic because only such a language can express an absurd universe realistically. All the same, the plays remain actually opaque and hard shelled. When our already existing conceptualization of the world in verbal shape runs contrary to what the true picture in verbal form is, we suspect the latter and stupidly cling on to our fond vision. When the two verbal pictures clash, however truthful the latter may be, we tend to dismiss it as absurd or meaningless.

In section 5.6 'Introduction to the Text' is given an account of the features of an absurd play, such as, no plot, no real characters in conflict with each other, circular structure of the play, no heroes, only anti-heroes, bare and empty stage, and dialogue which is repetitive and contradictory.

Thus, the Theatre of the Absurd, stemming from Alfred Jerry's *Ubu Roi*, first staged in Paris as far back as 1896, is based on the assumption that human life and endeavor are so essentially illogical, and language so inadequate, that man's only refuge is in laughter. But when man has lost his innate capacity to laugh, either at his own self or at life in general, his situation is really pathetic.

5 . 4. Beckett as a Dramatist

The plays of Beckett are not intended to be read from the pages of a book; they are pieces of theatre, needing to be performed if they are to make their full impact. It is meaningless to look for a logical universal message behind his work. Beckett presents an experience not an argument and each spectator or listener must respond in his own terms. As a critic has commented on a performance of *Waiting for Godot*, "It was an expression, symbolic in order to avoid all personal error, by an author who expects each member of his audience to draw his own conclusions, make his own errors. It forced no dramatized moral on the viewer, it held out no specific hope." This is the essence of Beckett's theatrical technique. Each of his plays is an experience from which Beckett expects every member of the audience to draw his own conclusions. Thus, while one critic described *Waiting for Godot* as a statement in dramatic terms of the wretchedness of man without God, another sees it as a general

expression of the futility of human existence when man pins his hope on a force outside of himself. There is no point in asking what any of his plays is intended to mean. When asked what Godot represented, Beckett answered, " If I knew, I would have said so in the play." Attempting to interpret his plays in allegorical or symbolical terms is a wrong approach, since his plays defy definition.

Beckett's dramatic devices are not, in fact, his innovations. It is a combination of old and new. Contemporary philosophical and psychological ideas are fused with the ancient mime, circus, clowning, and rituals and presented to the audience using modern dramatic techniques. His plays do not in the least abide by the features of any traditional types of drama. It is vain to look for any story or plot or any specific message from him. There is no development or progression of action. The circular structure of the play suits its theme. A Beckettian play usually ends as it begins. In *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, there are two Acts, which are similar in many ways. The scene of action is the same and so are the characters and the play ends where it begins.

Beckett's characters exist and can exist only for as long as the play lasts, indeed only as long as they are before our eyes. Beckett gives us no hint as to how they have come to the situation in which we find them. They have no past except for what they may tell us, and no future. At the end of the play, they will be practically unchanged. All his characters have a trait of the clown in them. The futility of human existence can be relieved only through the ability to see oneself as absurd. Vladimir and Estragon find delight in nonsense. There are plenty of examples for the verbal nonsense exchanged by Vladimir and Estragon.

Beckett, in his plays, exploits stage space, movement, light, dialogue, and action to enforce the feeling of alienation experienced by his characters. The locations in his plays cannot be identified and the characters are confined into limited spaces and their movements are also limited. Lighting in Beckett's plays is either darker or brighter showing unnaturality.

The use of language in Beckett's plays is also quite unusual. He exploits the resources of a predominantly verbal style which suggests the qualities of dynamism and vitality to show up by contrast the inaction and stasis of his dramatic world. The key words in the play emphasize the gloom and inaction of the Beckettian universe as apparent in the themes of waiting, uncertainty, the collapse of time, and so on. These thematic concerns are underlined by words of uncommon usage, especially archaisms and 'poetic' usages. Beckett's use of personal names and place names reveal loss of identity and uncertainty regarding self-hood in terms of their unusualnss as well as the facile manner in which name switching takes place. Cliches and empty formulas and aphoristic and proverbial sayings are used as concrete reminders of the complex quality of experience in the twentieth century.

Repetition occurs not only at the level of action, but at various levels of language, as an important verbal device suggesting the monotony and predictability of existence that is purposeless and senseless. Besides serving to underline the philosophical bias of the play, this device of repetition also contributes to the formal symmetry of the play.

Silences and pauses are significantly frequent in occurrence, indicating the fundamental breakdown in language when meaningful communication is impossible. The numerous directions to ges-

ture and movement are pointers to a futile attempt at combating this breakdown. In short, Beckett's use of language highlights his philosophy of the absurd as it exemplifies the lack of communication, loneliness, loss of identity, meaninglessness and uncertainty, which are the main concerns of his universe.

Many people complain that Beckett's plays are sordid, repetitive, meaningless, have no story, none of the glitter associated with the word 'theatrical', and above all that they have no relation to life as we know it. Beckett is not concerned with reproducing life as we know it. His concern is to chart a whole zone of being in the individual, hitherto left absolutely alone by the artist. To conduct these explorations, as Beckett calls them, he has evolved his special kind of play, based on impact, not argument, striving all the time to avoid definition, a kind of play, which may be described as "the drama of the non-specific."

Beckett is an artist of great originality, who with one play, *Waiting for Godot*, could change the whole of the contemporary theatre. The received conventional notions of the novel and the drama were thrown to the winds. Beckett's peculiar revolution seems rooted in the fact that the whole of his writing career has been a search for an adequate artistic expression for his depression and his distaste for art. He himself summed up his attitude in a 1949 dialogue when he described the fate of the artist as being resigned to "the expression that there is nothing to express, no power to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."

5 . 5. Introduction to the Text

Ever since its premiere in Europe and the United States, *Waiting for Godot* has been arousing controversies and violent debates on the defining features of drama and on problems relating to the theatre. This play, which holds a mirror to the absurdity of human anguish, has compelled worldwide attention ever since its production. The best way, perhaps, of introducing this text would be by describing it as what a 'well-made play' is not. Let us have a look at the elements that we look for, by and large, in a well-made play.

(a) A well- made play should have a beginning, a middle and an end. (b) It must have a theme and a plot / story. (c) It must have sensible and logically acceptable dialogue in a language, which makes sense and can be understood by the audience. (d) It should have characters, real or imaginary, born out of close observation of real people around and whose actions are convincing, even if totally fictitious. (e) It must have the three time-honored features of crisis, hero, and the three unities of time, place and action.

Set by these norms, *Waiting for Godot* has no beginning, no middle, no end, because nothing happens in the course of the play. There is no well-knit plot as such and the theme we have to construe. It has its dialogue in modern English of course, but much of it we don't 'understand' because it is not sensible and not logically connected. Often one talks about one thing, another about another thing and not at all in response to the former's words, with the result that there is very little communication between the two. It is as if each character is an island unto himself, shut up in a kind of alienation.

Their behavior, words and actions are all different and rather unnatural. They are not introverts, nor are they insane or retarded, but they are not organized about themselves. An honest self- examination may perhaps reveal ourselves to be like such characters on occasions. When such characters talk, their talk will be full of sound and fury, not signifying nothing, of course, but their peculiar, alienated, island- like mental make-up.

None of the characters in the play have any second names indicating their roots. Names are of different nationality, Russian, French, British, and Italian. They are free with no identities of their own. Their 'actions' are not convincingly motivated. It is hard for us to believe in the existence of such 'humans'. They break all accepted norms and conventions of credibility and seem to be aliens to us. They simply do not belong.

By the time one comes to the end of the play, we begin to feel that we have been cheated. We are where we were at the opening, sort of circular structure. As the curtain falls, we tend to unanimously proclaim that the play is absurd; we are unable to make head or tail out of it.

5 . 6. Synoptic Outline of the Play

Waiting for Godot, a tragicomedy in two Acts, as Beckett himself put it, was first written in French and later translated into English by Beckett himself.

Practically nothing 'happens' on the stage, nothing 'sensible' or 'meaningful' and 'logically coherent' is done and there is no perceptible development in the conventional sense of the term. The second Act is almost a repetition of the first. The scene is set on a country road with just a leafless tree. Two tramp like figures, Estragon and Vladimir, are apparently wasting their time away, waiting for someone (Godot), who never turns up. They seem to belong to a category of people in Paris known as Clochards, persons who have known better days and have been educated, civilized and cultured. Their stage names, with no surnames, initials or titles do not give any clue of their identities. They are visited by Pozzo and Lucky, two strangers, the former a person of apparent substance and enjoying the status of the ruthless master, driving the latter, his carrier and stupid slave, before him, roped like an animal and controlled by means of a whip. The bluster of Pozzo, showy, empty, and tyrannical and the mish mash of Lucky, crazy and rhetorical, seem to represent the most that human civilization is likely to provide in the way of answer to those who wait. They leave the tramps soon. At the end of the first Act a messenger from Godot arrives and promises that their rescuer Godot will come the next day.

In the second Act, which is a replica of the first, the waiting continues. The tree has now a few leaves sprouted on it. Pozzo and Lucky reappear, but this time Pozzo is blind and Lucky dumb. The same kind of senseless and repetitive gibberish follows. They stumble and fall. Vladimir and Estragon help them on their way. A little later the same messenger appears again with the same message that Godot will come the next day. And the waiting continues. Things remain the same as on the previous day, when the curtain falls.

Since nothing 'happens' in the play and there is hardly any development as such, a synoptic outline can hardly tell us anything. The endless waiting produces an effect of pathos at the futility of

human condition, but Beckett turns the tramps into blabbering clowns who mess about with their hats and boots and tumble in horseplay. The anguish of human rootlessness and meaninglessness consorts with crude pantomime. Obviously Beckett denies satisfaction to his audience who leave the theatre terribly disturbed. Thorough reading and re-reading of the play is imperative to reach anywhere near the core of its meaning.

5 . 7. Critical Commentary

When the curtain rises we find a country road and a tree by its side. It is evening. Eastragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. This is how the play begins. The locale is unidentifiable; so is the character. It could be any place and Estragon, a strange name, of any nationality. We even begin to suspect that the boot he is trying to take off has become part of his body.

Vladimir appears hearing Estragon muttering 'nothing to be done' and says ' I am beginning to come round to that'. Taking the two sentences together we gather that what lies in front of them is vacuity- nothingness -a terrible feeling, if they are capable of feeling. But, thank God, Vladimir is just 'beginning to come round to that'. Total insensitivity and apathy have not overcome him. This is evident from their happiness on reunion and the expression of fellow feeling….

Vladimir: I am glad to see you back… together again at last.

And by the end of the play we learn that it is this fellow feeling and mutual dependence that sustain them. Both of them have happy memories even if they are not happy now. They had known better days, had social recognition and a status to boast of. Now they are reduced to the level of tramps (clochards). They have their private ailments, the boot that has become like a part of his person in the case of Estragon and the unnamed, and unnamebale disease of Vladimir.

A close analysis tells us that no consistent communication in the strict sense of the term takes place between them. They talk at cross purposes, suggestive of their wandering minds as well as their inability to concentrate, to think coherently, or to understand the other's point of view, if there is a point of view at all. Their comic gestures, virtual pantomime as a matter of fact, tells us of vacant minds and also that they have all the time in the world and do not know what to do with it. There is a telling comment from Vladimir, 'There is man all over you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet'-a metaphor telling us about how we charge the 'world' with all kinds of imperfections when in reality we are to blame.

Their talk now swings to religious matters: Crucifixion, the thieves who were with Jesus Christ at the time of crucifixion, the inconsistencies in the gospel versions of the account, sin, repentance etc. A little later,

Vladimir: One daren't even laugh any more.

Estragon: Dreadful privation.

We can only imagine the situation with horror- a world where we cannot even dare laugh, where we are subjected to destitution. Once again the talk becomes unintelligible as a continuum –

apparently unconnected sentences, some fragmentary and out of place. Then we hear Estragon saying: I am going (He does not move).

Is it because he cannot move that he does not? This is a regular feature in the play shared between the two. Perhaps they cannot follow up their word with the corresponding action. Perhaps they do not know that they will have to follow up their words with the action already suggested by the words, if they are to be accepted as sane human beings. On second thoughts, we are tempted to state that it is because they cannot 'will' that they do not move.

Once more religion – Estragon's comment is a heavy weight clout.

'People are bloody ignorant apes'

Vladimir, on getting a chance, picks up the boot of Estragon (which the latter somehow managed to take off from his foot), peers into it and drops it with disgust. Estragon has not seen this. What makes Vladimir suspicious? We observed earlier that it was their fellow feeling that sustained them. Are we to change our minds? We have lots of questions like this to ask, but we are unable to provide answers to them. The two resume their inconsequential talk.

Estragon : Let's go

Vladimir : We can't

Estragon : Why not

Vladimir : We are waiting for Godot.

Estragon : (Despairingly) Ah; (pause) You're sure it was here ?

Vladimir : What ?

Estragon : That we were to wait

Vladimir : He said by the tree (They look at the tree). Do you see any others?

……..

Estragon : He should be here

Vladimir : He didn't say for sure he'd come.

Estragon : And if he doesn't come?

Vladimir : We will come back tomorrow

Estragon : And then the day after tomorrow.

Vladimir : Possibly

Estragon : And so on

Vladimir : The point is –

Estragon : Until he comes.

This is one of the very few sections where they deviate into sense, i.e they talk sense about the same subject, coherently, relevantly. And the topic of discussion forms the subject matter of the play, waiting for Godot.

But soon it becomes clear to us that they are not sure of the place, the time, the day etc., of their appointment with Godot. But soon afterwards, there is the show of love and compassion.

Estragon : (step forward). You're angry? (Silence. Step forward). Forgive me, (Silence; step forward. Estragon lays his hand on Vladimir's shoulder.)
Come, Didi.(Silence)

The language shows the strong influence of the stream of consciousness technique: it progresses through associations. Beckett was under the strong influence of Joyce and Proust. The talk continues.

Vladimir : Well, what do we do ?

Estragon : Don't let's do anything. It's safer.

This comes with a bang. It can be taken as a justification for their inertia. Or, perhaps, they are too cautious and are terrified of any fresh enterprise from themselves because of past failure. *Waiting for Godot is a harmless act, because they do not have to do anything.*

The next few lines tell us about the place of Estragon (Gogo) and Vladimir (Didi) in relation to Godot.

Vladimir : Let's wait and see what he says.

Estragon : Who ?

Vladimir : Godot.

Estragon : Good idea……

(anxious) And we? I beg your pardon? I said. And we? I don't understand. Where do we come in ? Come in? Take your time. Come in? On our hands and knees. (which reinforces prayer and supplication)

Note the euphemism in the following.

We have lost our rights?

We got rid of them.

This, of course, is just one of the language games of Beckett. Estragon is hungry, begs for a carrot from the 'pocket store' of Valdimir, collects it and starts eating it. Vladimir says:

Make it last, that is the end of them.

Note the astonishing penury that they have been driven to. They are reduced to the level of animals feeding on raw vegetables.

Once again there is an impasse, talking at cross purposes. But, strange, the talk is pure philosophy. We suspect at once: are they 'consciously' capable of that?

Estragon : The more you eat, the worse it gets.

Then arrive Pizzo and Lucky. Immediately there is utter confusion. Is Pozzo Godot? : an identity crisis of which Pozzo is not a part, but the target. One of the first sentences of Pozzo shakes the very foundation from beneath us:

You are human beings nonetheless. As far as one can see. Of the same species as myself. Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image.

But we cannot agree with Pozzo in this. We have our doubts about the 'human' status of Estragon and Vladimir. They are certainly not the type of human beings we are acquainted with. In body and form? Yes. In other ways? No. Lucky has no individuality to speak of. He is worse than a bonded slave. Both Estragon and Vladimir examine him closely as if Lucky is a strange animal. Then they greedily watch Pozzo eating chicken and Estragon begs for the chicken bones, thrown away by Pozzo. Vladimir reacts violently against the inhuman treatment meted out to Lucky.

Soon follows Pozzo's explanation as to why Lucky never puts down the luggage he carries. The psychology is succinctly put:

He wants to modify me, so that I'll give up the idea of parting with him, etc. Pozzo is taking him to

'the fair where I hope to get a good price for him'… 'The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them'

A philosophy not quite different from that of Adolf Hitler and his victims, six million Jews, bear testimony to the truth of his statement.

The weeping Lucky occasions an astonishing remark from his master:

The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh.

Vladimir does not mince his words when he launches a scathing attack on Pozzo's treatment of Lucky:

After having sucked all the good out of him you chuck him away like a ……like banana skin.

And we find Pozzo desperately and frantically trying to justify his intention to sell Lucky: Lucky is driving him mad. Now Vladimir criticizes Lucky. Then come from Pozzo these surprising

words:

Forgive me. Forget all I said. I don't remember exactly what it was but you may be sure there wasn't a word of truth in it.

Well, all the while Pozzo was pulling their leg, as also the audience's leg. His going to the fair to sell Lucky for a good price etc, was a cock and bull story. If so, what part of Pozzo's words can be taken as serious? We are not sure about anything.

Pozzo has been entertained by Vladimir and Estragon. Pozzo is grateful.

Pozzo: …..so that I ask myself is there anything I can do in my turn for these honest

fellows who are having such a dull , dull time.

This elicits a brave response from Vladimir:

We are not beggars!!!

But Estragon keeps begging. Vladimir attacks his friend. Pozzo offers them some entertainment and orders Lucky to dance. Lucky dances. Then,

Estragon : Wait

Vladimir : Wait.

Pozzo : Wait.

(All three take off their hats, simultaneously press their hands to their foreheads, and concentrate.)

Then there is the long, long leave–taking, strenuous and half-hearted. Pozzo and Lucky exit. There is a brilliant piece of dialogue immediately afterwards.

Vladimir : That passed the time.

Estragon : It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir : Yes, but not so rapidly.

They cannot move away because they are waiting for Godot. They talk about change and Estragon says :

They all change. Only we can't.

Change is life and is change. If they can't change, they don't live. And we begin to seriously entertain

the idea that *they do not live, they simply exist.*

A boy comes on the stage and tells them: Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow.

Their talk now swings to that. And at last Estragon says

Then all *we have to do is wait on here.*

Note carefully the implication of the above statement, especially the phrase 'wait on'.

The sight of the tree reminds them to suicide, rope etc. Then follows a moment of nostalgia-remembrance of things past, a romantic longing. A philosophic registration, nay, reconciliation is heard from Vladimir:

There is no good harking back on that.

Estragon: Nothing is certain.

The first act ends wit Estragon:

Estragon: Well, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's go.

(They do not move) The following day they will continue to wait for Godot.

Why don't they go? Why don't they translate their words into deeds?There is no one correspondence between their words and actions. This usually goes by the name of insanity. But they do not appear insane. They many be clownish though. Well, its smacks of absurdity. No it is *Absurd!*

Act II

The following day same place and same tree, but this time a few leaves can be seen on the branches. How could leaves appear overnight? Vladimir is discovered. Estragon returns. It seems that he has been beaten black and blue. It hurts. They embrace.

The same kind of talk, sentences at cross purposes, recurs. Most of the talk is unintelligible in totality. Confused, nebulous recollections of yesterdays and yesteryears bewilder them. They are not sure of anything.

Estragon. I don't know why don't know.

The above is a powerful anguished and frightening cry from an exasperated mind. After a while Estragon is falling asleep with Vladimir singing a lullaby and laying his coat across his shoulders: a rare and tender action showing humanity.

Estragon leaves the stage and returns a few minutes later with the cry:

They are coming!

Vladimir: (Triumphantly) It's Godot! At last! Gogo! it's godot.

We are saved! Let's go and meet him

Observe carefully the immense relief as well as the excitement of Vladimir. At last the waiting is over! But, no, no one is coming. The balloon of their rising hopes is pricked as soon as it is inflated. Accusations and counteraccusations over, they make up and resume their nonsensical talk. Pozzo and Lucky come back. Pozzo is blind and Lucky dumb; the rope is shorter.

The rest is the same as before.

In the course of the stupid talk the words of Vladimir appear like a silver lining on a cloudy day.

'We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting

for…waiting Time flows again already. The sun will set, the moon will rise, and

we away…from here'.

They hope to go away from here. Hoping is something positive, desirable. Estragon mistakes Pozzo for Godot, but Vladimir corrects him.

'Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed'.

Vladimir's words are worth their weight in gold. The words that immediately follow

Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which cruel fate consigned us!….it is true that when with folded

arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happened to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for

Godot to come…'

What is madness? The line of demarcation between sanity and insanity is very thin; besides, they are relative. What is sanity for one may be insanity for another.

Between them Vladimir and Estragon help the blind Pozzo; they carry him. Pozzo cannot even stand erect. Lucky and Pozzo depart the way they entered the stage the first day.

Vladimir and Estragon continue to wait, to wait for Godot, with the former lapsing into philosophy.

Boy comes and announces:

He (Godot) won't come this evening…But he will come tomorrow'.

Vladimir is furious, jumps forward as if to catch the boy. The boy runs away. But the last words spoken by Vladimir to the boy are worth quoting:

'Tell him (Godot)… tell him you saw me and that…that you saw me. (…with sudden violence) You are sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me!'

Note how frantic and desperate Vladimir is. See that Beckett wants to communicate the idea of abject helplessness. The direction is: As in Act I. Vladimir motionless and bowed.

They think of going away.

Estragon	:	Where shall we go?
Vladimir	:	Not far.
Estragon	:	Oh yes, let's go far away from here.
Vladimir	:	We can't
Estragon	:	Why not?
Vladimir	:	We have to come back tomorrow.
Estragon	:	What for?
Vladimir	:	To wait for Godot.

If they did not wait for Godot, if they dropped him, he would punish them.

Note how realization dawns on them. They cannot go away from there without meeting Godot. They will return to the place with a rope to contemplate suicide, because it is one their chief preoccupations. Now they have no rope.

The second Act ends exactly as the first one but for a switch in the speakers.

Valdimir: Well, shall we go?

Estragon: Yes, let's go.

(They do not move.)

Now what happened on the stage deserves a closer second look. Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot, when the curtain rises. They are waiting for Godot even when the curtain falls. In between they have done absolutely nothing except waiting which does not require any exertion. Time has passed. What do we make out of this?

Only time can prove whether Godot will come or not. Man the slave, tied to time, the master and man (like Lucky and Pozzo), the Finite being, getting crushed by time, the Infinite, and the most powerful enemy of man; perhaps this seems to be the general drift of the play. And man can do nothing against time except wait for things to happen (to him). It is these happenings that constitute time. If nothing happens, time stands still, nothing changes and, worse, life cannot be lived.

Waiting for things to happen when nothing happens is meaningless, absurd. But what can man do? The tide of time carries man, not man the tide of time. Only time can make things happen. And it is happenings that constitute time. In this cruel, vicious predicament cycle where is the place of man? It seems that he has no place. Hence to search for a place in the scheme of things where there is no place is absurd!

But man has a weapon to fight with against this scheme of tyranny. The weapon is suicide. To wield it, man must have stupendous courage and courage is lacking in both Vladimir and Estragon : Hence their misery. Life (is it life?) goes on through time. In the case of Vladimir and Estragon, their inaction suggests suspension of life and change: a terrible prospect for man (Here *life* and *change* are used as synonyms).

Waiting is also hoping and the latter is positive. Hence all is not lost. Suppose Godot does come tomorrow, then? Waiting bears fruit: hope is rewarded. So let us wait and hope. Let us hope and wait.

5 . 8. Sample Questions

1. Sketch the Theatre of the Absurd in the light of *Waiting for Godot.*
2. 'The theme of the play is not Godot but waiting.' Do you agree?
3. What are the themes Beckett deals with in the play?
4. Discuss *Waiting for Godot* as an absurd play.
5. Consider *Waiting for Godot* as an existentialist play.
6. 'The second Act of the play is a repetition of the first.' Discuss.
7. Consider Pozzo and Lucky as a foil to Vladimir and Estragon.
8. In *Waiting for Godot* repetitions, either identical or with minor variations are cleverly used for the sake of contrast and emphasis. Discuss.
9. It is not obligatory for dramas to have a meaning or a message; the very absence of meaning may be the meaning. How does 'Godot' bear testimony to this?

10. No attempt is made to reveal the identity of Godot. Beckett keeps him a mystery. Comment on.

11. Even though there is no consistent philosophy of life throughout the play, patches of intense philosophical meditations are to be found scattered in the play. Substantiate.

12. Sanity and insanity, truth and falsehood, allegiance and desertion, love and hatred, all these are precariously balanced in the play. Discuss.

5 . 9. Suggested Readings

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THE WASTE LAND

— T.S. ELIOT

Contents

6. 1. OBJECTIVES :

No single person has influenced the development of modern American poetry quite as much as T.S. Eliot, both as poet and as critic. The objectives of this essay include a brief account of T.S. Eliot, his life, the age of T.S. Eliot and his works. A skeletal view of Modern Poetry ; and the composition of "The Waste Land" — one of his best known poems, its gist and Eliot's style and technique as revealed from the poem are also touched upon. A short mention about Eliot's point of view, his use of allusions and myth and anthropology is also made supporting them with a few critics' remarks about "The Waste Land" It also projects Eliot's acute concern with the disintegration of European civilization. It has been interpreted as 'an imperial epic', and as "an image of imperial catastrophe'.

6. 2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE POET

Thomas Stearns Eliot has been regarded as one giving voice to the modern spirit of weariness and disillusion. His poems and poetic plays take up the predicament of modern man, the futility and misery of modern existence. Simultaneously they depict the plight of human soul caught in a state of irredeemable crisis in an age of anxiety. Eliot has been considered the representative poet of the age. A study of the socio political, intellectual and economic conditions is relevant to study and understand his words. Modern age is marked by despair, disillusionment and pessimism resulting from the restlessness and instability prevalent in the times.

The social pattern of early Victorian England based on a sense of self-complacency, based on material prosperity, social security resulting from established social conventions and political order and a strong belief in existing moral values began to break down. Education and democratic spirit also permeated around with an overall progress in the fields of science, population and other related fields. Negativism was the offshoot of so many positive signs of social progress.

In the economic sphere built on capitalistic attitude gave way to a new economy. There grew an unequal distribution of wealth with the increasing population on one hand and the economic depressions due to the wars on the other. The last decades of 19th century witnessed the disappearing of the agrarian way of life and the rapid growth of industrialization and its accessory, urbanization. This led to materialistic comforts, though towns were over crowded and there was a greater demand of everything but a less supply of things. Vice and crime were on the rise bringing down the ethical values to a grinding halt. The industries contributed to the rampant pollution because of smoke and noise. Eliot was concerned and conscious of the boredome, ugliness, meaninglessness and loneliness of city life and describes them vividly in his poems like "The Waste Land". The modern age, on positive side, nurtured the idea of welfare state.

On the political front there were many crises. One of these was the replacement of Natural Law and Natural Rights by the principle of sovereignty of the people. The modern western society was built on the foundation of Natural Laws and Natural Rights—the inalienable claims of the individual to life, liberty and property. The moral duties of the society are determined by these claims, society does not determine them. But democracy, with its concept of popular sovereignty paved the way for a total disregard of Natural Laws. There were rivalries between nations and wars and the emergence of dictatorship strengthened.

The synthetic and affirmative theory of the universe propounded by the Age of Enlightenment broke down with the beginning of the nineteenth century ushering in a spirit of revolt. The German philosophical idealism of the early nineteenth century culminated in the romantic revolt represented by Byron, Nietzsche and Schopenhager. These were many evolutionary theories by Lamarck , Erasmus, Darwin and others. The intellectual background of the age is distinguished by crosscurrent of thought. The literature of the modern age is governed by realism than by romance. The modern writers have concentrated their attention on the problem of modern life. The realism of the modern age has further been accentuated by the growth of the scientific discoveries. The rapid spread of science and materialism and deification of the machine has brought about a commercialization of art, literature and music and so on. Many poets and novelists have felt disgusted with the growing cult of materialism and their works are marked with a note of revolt against the advancing tide of the modern times.

In the century since the first publication of Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" (1855), the art of writing poetry has undergone several revolutions. In the period between 1930 and 1955, roughly Anglo American Poetry has produced a crop of poet- critics who are particularly conscious of their art and their techniques. This consciousness stems to a large extent from the influence of Eliot. The modern poets have rebelled against the metrical conventions as they did against the artificiality in diction and language. Eliot was one of those who made his own laws and who experimented widely with verse forms, even creating a metrical device which permits him to play with language for comic effects.

Eliot's Theory of Poetry : In 1933 he remarked that he considered the theater to be the ideal medium for poetry. In 1936 he felt that Poetry should be "the natural and complete medium for drama" At times in his handling of verse in the plays as well as in certain of his poems, Eliot has recreated the incantatory rhythms of liturgy. In general, however, his verse has modern vocabulary and cadence.

6. 3. ELIOT'S LIFE AND WORKS :

T.S. Eliot was born on 26th September, 1888 in St. Louis in Missouri, an industrial city in the center of United States. He came from a cultivated and cultural family of New England. His parents were Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte Chainey Stream. His grandfather was a minister of Unitarian Church and his mother was a social worker and an advocate of woman's rights and was a writer himself. Eliot was strongly influenced in his early life by his grandfather and his mother and his writer instinct was from them while the father gave him the business talent.

He studied in Smith Academy in St. Louis till 1905. He completed his preparation for college at the Milton Academy in Massachusetts and then entered Harvard University in 1906. He attended the Lectures of George Santayana and Irving Babbitt. He started composing poems and contributing them to the 'Harvard Advocate", a student literary magazine which he edited. He wrote "Portrait of a Lady" and "Prelude" from 1909 to 1910. His "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock" and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' appeared during his stay in Paris and Munich for a year. He returned to America, studied various subjects including Sanskrit and Pali, Philosophy, Logic and so on. Then traveled to many countries pursuing his studies. He met Ezra Pound whose influence was tremendous on him. He married Vivienne Haigh Wood in 1915 and settled in England. He worked as a teacher and then in a Bank. He submitted his doctoral thesis on F.H.Bradley but did not to go to Harvard University for formal acceptance of the Degree. In 1916, he made his debut in London not as a poet or literary critic but as a reviewer of philosophic books. He also wrote many essays for magazines and periodicals. From 1917 to 1919 he was assistant editor of "The Egoist". In 1922 he founded and edited "The Criterion" in which was published "The Waste Land". His other works include 'Murder in the Cathedral' (a play 1935), The Family Reunion (a play in 1939), The Cocktail Party (a play in 1950), The Confidential Clerk (a play in 1959) and many other well known poems like "The Journey of the Magi", "The Four Quartets (1943)", "The Music of Poetry (1942 essay)", Selected essays – 1917—1932, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 1933, (Essays), "Essays 'Ancient and Modern' (1936)" "The Idea of a Christian Society" (1939), "The Secret Wood " Essays 1920 etc.

Herbert Reade describes Eliot as "The man in all his reserve, was the man he wishes to be, a serious but not necessarily a solemn man, a severe man never lacking in kindness and sympathy, a profound man".

Eliot's conception of religion was a sacramental and catholic one. Protestant conception of the church would not be admissible to him. His thoughts, feelings and his spiritual outlook remaind to be a typically new England's. He was nostalgic about the glorious but irrevocable past and conscious of the despair and folly of modern life. He despised the materialistic spectacle of modern world but was conscious of the fat that he was also a part of it. His "first poems deal in an ambiguous fashion in ability to reconcile himself with the world around him, and the anti-social passions of which he was aware. An atmosphere of frustration and defeat hangs about their early poems and the emotional discord in the poet is reflected in the alternation of melancholy and disgust, and the collision of the satirical and the poetic, in rhythm and image". But by the time he wrote "The Waste Land" he seemed to have lost his faith in the superiority of the earlier ages.

6. 4. AN ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "THE WASTE LAND"

' The Waste Land" is Eliot's best known poem. It was first published in 1922,and by the 1940's it had become a standard in most anthologies of modern poetry. It has been studied by generations of students; in fact for many students it has formed the first introduction to contemporary poetry. The poem is so well known that its name has become a tag for Eliot and the group of poets who have followed him. This group is commonly known as the "Waste Land group."

Reduced to simplest terms, the poem is a statement of the experience that drives a character to a fortune teller, of the fortune that is told, and of the unfolding of that fortune. This simple outline, however, is complicated and universalized by being set within the framework of the fisher king legend. Eliot has attached a series of notes to this poem. These notes are intended to supply contexts for some of the more obscure references and quotations within the poem. In the introduction to these notes, Eliot writes:

Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: From Ritual to Romance. Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book it self) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean The Golden Bough; I have used especially the two volumes Adonis, Attis, Osiris. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.

The fisher king legend, carefully studied by Miss Weston in its relation to the stories connected with the Holy Grail, is an ancient legend originally connected with a vegetation cycle explaining the seasons. Sir James Fraser, in The Golden Bough, has traced the vegetation myths into antiquity. The ancient peoples of Egypt and Greece explained the cycle of the seasons in relation to the death and rebirth of a God. The God died in the winter with the death of the vegetation. And was reborn in the spring with the rebirth of the vegetation. The spring, the planting season, was often accompanied by religious ceremonies symbolizing the planting of the dead god in the soil along with the seed for the new crops. Among more primitive peoples, these rituals often involved orgastic sexual ritual as well as human sacrifice. The winter too had its rituals. The death of the year was, as noted above, associated sometimes with the actual death of a God, sometimes with the sexual maiming of the God. Again these rituals were accompanied by symbolic representation of the imagined events, and involved either human sacrifice or ritual maiming of a person selected to Represent the God. Sir James Fraser pointed out vestiges of these ancient rituals still existing within the Christian world, and also indicated that the death and rebirth of Christ falls within the pattern of this ancient ritual. Miss Weston has been able to trace vestiges of the ancient ritual transformed into Christian terms in the stories connected with the quest for the Holy Grail. In some of the ancient versions of these stories, for example, the questor arrived in a country which was

barren or waste. He discovered that the barrenness of the land was magically associated with the wounding of the king. In some cases, there was even some indication that the wounding was sexual. The questor had the heal the wounded king, often by undergoing some, sort of trial, and the healing of the king resulted in the reburgeoning of land. As the Grail stories become more modern the overlay of Christian ideas becomes heavier, and the ancient ritualistic concepts were more deeply buried, but they persist into quit modern times. These ideas concerning the development of certain Christian concepts and rituals out of pagan antiquity, and the ideas concerning the relation of the Christ story with much older pagan fertility rites, caused a tremendous impact on the intellectual conceptions of the generation which spanned the end of the Nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

It is important to remember that the literal interpretation of Biblical evolution was held inviolable in the Anglo-European world for a thousand years. The end of the nineteenth century saw a revolution in human thinking. Charles Darwin's Origin of Species appeared in 1859, offering a scientific theory of evolution. Anthropology began to demonstrate, late in the Nineteenth century, that many concepts held to be mystically Christian were in reality extremely ancient ideas whose origin was buried deep in per-history. The Victorian concept that "God's in his heaven and all's right with the world," that the world was in a state of perfection, had been challenged, and by the latter half of the Nineteenth century the distrust of old ideas had spread into literature. Matthew Arnold, in "Dover Beach," raised some of the questions that were plaguing the Victorian mind. Thomas Hardy in England, and Dostoevsky in Russia, were provided a new view of the human being operating in a universe which was essentially hostile to him, rather than in a universe dominated by an anthropomorphic God who was concerned even with the fall of a sparrow. The literary school called Naturalism developed in France and spread to American and elsewhere. This intellectual furore was culminated early in the Twentieth century by the first World war which provided positive proof of "Man's inhumanity to Man," and which indeed left many of those who survived it with a bitter feeling that they were quite alone in the universe — in a universe in which chosing was the natural order of things. Early in the Twentieth century, the philosophical groundwork for various philosophies of despair and dissolution had been laid, and by mid-century, after the added impetus of the second World War, such movements as the best and the Existentialist began to reach their full maturity.

Eliot's view of the world, his wasteland derogation of possibilities, was exactly right for the period after World War I. He became the spokesman in verse for that generation, as Ernest Hemingway became its spokesman in prose fiction. In 'The Waste Land' Eliot overtly contrasts the glories of the past with the sordidness of the present An interesting illustration of this occurs in section II (A Game Chess) in which the first 33 lines (77-110) describe ancient grandeur while the following 61 lines (111-172) describe a modern situation. Many other illustrations of the contrast exist in the poem, reaching from an idea developed in one section to a distantly removed image in another section. Since the poem depends for its effect on these contrasts, it is important to be aware of them and to be alert for them. Some will be illustrated in the detailed discussion which follows.

The poem is an extremely difficult one exactly because of the numerous interruptions in the narrative level and because of the piled up contrasts. In fact, the poem may be read on many levels. It has a narrative level, a story covering roughly a twelve hour period in a single day. Like "Prufrock" it is a kind of monologue containing within it snatches of dialogue remembered. It is also in the stream of consciousness; that like "Prufrock," Its principal action occurs in the speaker rather than in the "real" World. The literature of the early twentieth century is filled with experiments with what might be "internal monologue". That is , with the free association of ideas in the mind of the narrator. James Joyce experimented with concept in Ulysses and in Finnegan's Wake; Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner are other well-known experimenters with this form. Since the association of ideas and the accompanying tangential flights of thought are instantaneous, these writers also had to experiment with the concepts of time. The philosophical experimentation of Henri Bergson, the French philosopher, had set the stage for much of this experimentation with time. In earlier fiction, for example, the time covered was commonly quite long. The novel Tom Jones, for example, covers some twenty years. Other novels cover the particular years of a series of events, or the cycle of a single life, or even the cycle of several generations. All these novels cover time lapses in the external world-that is, they are concerned with "clock time." But Einstein's theory of relativity suggests that there is no such thing as absolute time. Time is relative. Bergson further suggests that there are two kinds of time: relative time in the mathematical sense and relative time in the human sense. Every human being known that a given period of clock time may appear longer or shorter depending upon the circumstances. A period spent pleasurably is likely to seem to fly, while a period spent painfully is likely to seem endless. That these circumstances are real enough is illustrated by idioms in the language; idioms like "time flies," and "time stands still."

In the physical world, any given event occupies a measurable quantity of clock time, but in the world of the mind, time is not measurable; rather, it is relative to events. Some events "endure" for a considerable time, while other events have a very brief duration. Experiments with the reproduction of through patterns necessitated experiments with duration in the human rather then in the clock sense. Quite a number of contemporary works cover extremely brief periods of time—in some cases, matters of minutes—instead of the years or decades commonly employed in nineteenth century and earlier fiction.(it is not to be assumed that all contemporary literature is removed from events in terms of clock time; in fact, most detective stories are based upon a rather close attention to chronological time. Many other works, even many of quite respectable literary reputation, are concerned with chronological time.) For example, "The Catcher in the Rye" is a novel that may serve to illustrate an interesting use of time. That novel is framed between two scenes in which the narrator is telling a story to a psychiatrist in a mental hospital in California. The telling time is roughly equivalent to the time it takes the reader to read the book. But within the narration, the narrator is speaking about a period covering four days of chronological time. And within that literal level, the narrator's reaction of certain events makes them appear longer in terms of human time than they actually were in terms of clock time by the simple expedient of remembering more details about these particular events and skimming over other events.

In 'The Waste Land', then, Eliot experiments with both the idea of human time and with stream of consciousness. To complicate the matter , he employs a number of quotations which are not in English .The first of these , the epigraph, is taken from the Satiricon of Petronius (chapter 48). Then, in the first section , there is some German, and later in the poem some French , and even some Sanskrit. Beyond that, a number of lines are quoted from literary works in English. All of this tends to confuse the reader if he fails to remember the importance of the juxtaposition of the present and the past in the poem. But, beyond this, the quotations are intended to bring into a new context, ideas which have appeared elsewhere. These are lines recollected by the speaker, and they serve to establish suggested context into which, or perhaps through which, his immediate thinking may operate. Further, it serves to universalize, or internationalize, the context; that is ,the "truth" of the poem transcends time and place. It has existence in all places, or in no time and in no place. Many of the quotations employed are identified in the notes provided at the end of poem. It is wise for the reader to take the trouble to look up the original source, because in many instances the context of the lines in this poem are influenced or clarified by the original context.

Eliot's technique in the "The Waste Land" consist of the juxtaposition of extreme contemporaneily with mysticism and religious symbolism derived from the past. The poem abounds with illustration of the juxtaposing of past and present on many levels. The structure of the poem is built out of the contrasts in time, of which the most obvious and ironically dramatic are the series of "scenes" from modern life set against the memories of the myths related in The Golden Bough and From Ritual to Romance. These contrasts are supported and universalized by Eliot's use of literary reminiscence and references. The poem illustrate Eliot's conception of the past as an active part of the present and his belief that disparate materials drawn from the past may be fused into a new creation which is in turn has a validity of its own.

Since this is the stated aim of the poem, the use of time may provide part of the key to the understanding of the poem. On the superficial level, the poem gives the feeling that time stands still, that there is duration. But the essence of the poem achieves a sense of timelessness. The chanting of "Shanthi"[the peace that passeth understanding] at the close of the poem indicates that for Eliot "peace" can come only as dimension of duration. On the literal level, the poem covers a twelve hour period in a single day. In this sense, its relation with the Ulysses of James Joyce is apparent. The literal time changes are indicated in the following lines:

61

62 "Under the brown fog of a winter dawn…"

208 "Under the brown fog of a winter noon…."

220 "At the violet hour, the evening hour……."

But at the same time, this day has a cosmic dimension; it is millennium. The poem illustrates the concept of the eternal return of the same. Consecutively , the poem has imposed upon it, on the still another level of comprehension, a cycle of birth, growth , maturity, decay, death, rebirth reiterating the theme of eternal return.

According to Eliot's own analysis of poem, Tiresias is the central character, and what Tiresias sees is the substance of the poem. Now Tiresias has not only seen and experienced these events in the past, but he has also foretold them in the future and already foresuffered them. If this is the case , then the future coexists with present and the past. Furthermore, Eliot says that all the other characters in the poem merge into Tiresias. Tiresias is a hermaphrodic blind seer: "I Tiresias , though the blind , throbbing between two lives, / Old man with wrinkled female breast….." In his notes , Eliot writes:

Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currents, melts into the phoencian sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct form Ferdinand prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and two sexes meet in Tiresias.

If all the men blend into one man, and all the women into one woman, and the sexes meet in Tiresias, then Tiresias is himself a condensed history of man; or , in other words, a brief history contained within a single individual of fall of man. Tiresias provides an aesthetic unity and continuity for the poem in addition to functioning to unify past, present, and future.

But Tiresias is also blind. Therefore, he appears to represent the eye of the mind, or a kind of a universal contemplative consciousness. This inner reality subsists through all the experiences that he "sees," and serves to unite past and present , men and women, the characters in the poem and the "I" who is speaker.

As noted above, Eliot states that what Tiresias "sees" is the substance of the poem. Tiresias comprehends that the only salvation is death, because out of death comes rebirth. Death and rebirth constitute a cycle of eternal return, and a cycle of eternal return is a manifestation of the duration of the time. Time. then, appears to be at the center of Tiresias vision, but the time that he sees is not a chronological time. It is a timeless time, a time of indefinite duration.

The poem is filled with multitude of symbols, each of which exist on a variety of experiential levels. The number of levels that a given reader can perceive depends upon the reader, within the limitations of his experience , to associate the multiplicity of images freely. The richness of this texture permits Eliot to intermingle literary levels, and temporal levels; to mingle past, present, and future in a continuity. In "The Function of Criticism", Eliot writes:

The existing [literary] monuments form an ideal order among themselves , which is modified by the introduction of the new(the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives ; for the order to persist after the supervention of the novelty, the whole existing order must be ,if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations , proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted ; and this is the conformity between the old and the new.

" The Waste Land" illustrates the conformity between the old and new in a single literary creation. Obviously, it is an extremely difficult piece of work. These many threads are difficult to trace through the whole tapestry.

6. 5. A CRITICAL EVALUATION :

"The Waste Land" is a poem of he great intellectual complexity and it is a study of a civilization doomed by its own sterility. It is a poem full of colour, sound, voices and people doing things. The Waste Land has a variety of headings. These are not separate compartments, but ways of elucidating the range of Eliot's description, and in particular, the different degrees of symbolism that such a description contain. Firstly there are those description, and whose principal purpose is to root the poem in the contemporary world. Many of these are first names of places. Similar Eliot's use of specific place-names is his mentioning of such a things as talk of demoralization , false teeth, 'hot gammon' and Mr. Eugenides's 'pocket full of currants'. These detailss are vivid and exact and have some thing of a documentary's focus on real life. We come to see how the vividly observed modern, physical world symbolizes spiritual death, and, when this is placed in the context of the past, the time when the mankind knew not only spiritual bankruptcy but also the way beyond it, then we see how truly wasted our own age is. We could call this technique of juxtaposition "symbolic synchronicity" through it, we are made to see the modern physical world encapsulating the spiritual death that has been known in all periods. We see the past and present working together in synchronization. This is crucial part of Eliot's technique of analysis in the poem. Such blight as Eliot describes is, at one and the same time, both itself and the spiritual blight of all periods. The bitter irony lies in the fact that whereas in the past there were ways out of it, now these are not. The references to Dante, vegetation cults, Grail legends. Renaissance poetry and the rest provide a vocabulary for such spiritual decline and comment on the broken and blinded modern world. To a large extent Eliot's poem is a landscape poem. These are a number of landscapes in the poem, the world testament desert of LL 19-30, the river banks of LL 173-96, the mountainous world of LL 331-394 and the Narrator's " arid plain" at the close, that are principally symbolic.

These landscapes are landscapes of the mind. They are the symbolic expressions of spiritually sterility. "The Waste Land" proposes to present a Christian interpretation of life and emphasizes the need for regeneration, the symbols of water and fire are two important symbols in the poem. Medieval legends and their heroes sought a vision of divine grace, symbolized by Christ's blood held in the Holy Grail Eliot's hero-sensibility wanders own the parched " Waste Land" of a semlarized existence, seeking to know itself. The poem weaves back and forth between the Elizabethan court and the past of London, with brief sharp glimpses of royalty flirting with the beloved on the Thames, Slumdwellers in a public house rehearsing the sordid realities of marriage as they know it etc.,

THE THEME :

The poem, to restate, is about the degeneracy of human nature, in particular with regard to the experience of sex and the nature of love. It concerns itself mainly with degraded forms of love, it refers to finer loves and suggests that such loves do not now occur. Its hope lies in that love which is generous and the sympathetic, indeed in divine line, and the failing of the poem is perhaps in the great leap that it makes from the sordid or dispirited pictures of sexual relationships on earth to the exhortation of the thunder. "The Waste Land" is considered to be a distinctively modern poem, artfully manipulating the traditional element. Helen Gardner writes " Although ' The Waste Land' may begin with the dilemma of the modern mind, it discovers that the moral dilemma is the historic dilemma,

and to limit the poem's meaning to being primarily expression of modern lack of forth is to mistake its form and scope". Geoffrey Bullough says , " 'The Waste Land' goes beyond a mere diagnosis of the spiritual distempers of the age; it is a Laurent over man's fallen nature; a prophecy, and a promise .Eliot himself says " When I wrote a poem called 'The Waste Land' some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the disillusionment of a generation which is non-sense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of intention. It includes not only the criticism of modern western civilization, but also embraces the Elizabethan age and the remote past. The remoteness of the civilization celebrated in 'The Waste Land' from the natural rhythm is brought out, in ironical contrast by the anthropological theme.

STRUCTURE :

The unity of the poem is a musical unity and in order to understand 'The Waste Land' we must make use of " The auditory imagination". It is a series of poems rather than a single poem. However, some kind of unity is given to the poem by the figure of Tiresias, although the unity is emotional rather than logical. Tiresias is the central character, and what Tiresias sees in the substance of the poem. Another kind of unity is given to the poem by the fusion of personages, time and place. 'The Waste Land' is a long religious poem, even a Christian poem, though in 1926. I .A .Richards stated that it was a poetry " Severed from all beliefs" . Eliot says in favour of this long poem. " It is only a poem of some length that a variety of moods cab be expressed ; for a variety of moods requires a number of different themes or subjects, related either in themselves or in the mind of the poet. These parts can form a whole which is more than the seem of the parts; a whole such that the pleasure we derive from the reading of any part is enhanced by our grasp of the whole. A long poem may gain by the widest possible variations of intensity.

'The Waste Land' is composed of a plurality of voices, quotations from several texts, and a variety of languages, styles and genres. The poem alludes to several myths. It also includes traits from several genres and form the meditation lyric, the spiritual autobiography, the romance, the elegy, the epic, Jacobean drama, the defective novel, the music hall comedy and so on. Various analogues have been used to explain the structure and organization of the poem.

ELIOT'S POINTS OF VIEW:

In the 'The Waste Land' he extends the form of the monologue, which he had used in "Prufrock", by splitting the poem into a multiciplicity of fragmentary monologues. The poem continues Eliot's preoccupation with the fragmented, shifting, discontinuous nature of identity. The different voices and points of view shift, merge, dissolve, collide, so that the boundaries between them cannot easily be demarcated. The 'I' of the poem too, does not have an autonomous, determinate identity. It is fractured into a number of personae . To read 'The Waste Land' as a poem in which the several voices and points of view merge into a single identity would be to discount its complexity of tone and feeling. The text is a site where a plurality of voices and meanings cross and recross without necessarily being resolved into a unity in which differences are submerged. I. A. Richards found in it an articulation of "the plight of a whole generation". But Eliot said, "Some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the disillusionment of a generation" which is non sense. He described the

poem as an expression of his state of mind rather than as " Social Criticism ".D. H. Harding a critic states that the poem is " A formidable piece of anti-establishment writing, with its challenging newness of technique, the range of its social reference, the intensity but at the same time the astringency and control of its emotional response to contemporary existence"

6. 6. SAMPLE QUESTIONS :

1. 'The Waste Land' is an expression of the disillusionment of the post-work generation". Discuss.
2. Does the 'The Waste Land' lack a formal structure ? Substantiate your argument.
3. Trace out the symbolism in 'The Waste Land' .
4. What are the ideas/ themes focussed on 'The Waste Land'.?
5. Write an essay on the unity of 'The Waste Land'.
6. Attempt an essay on the imagery in the poem 'The Waste Land'.

6. 7. SUGGESTED READINGS

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Lesson – 7

Robert Graves-Mermaid, Dragon and Fiend

Contents:

7. 1. Objectives :

The Objective of this essay is to give preliminary and brief account of the much well-known poems of Robert Graves- a nineteenth century poet. The most popular of his poems are 'Mermaid', 'Dragon' and 'Fiend'. The use of images and symbols by Graves is also touched upon.

7. 2. Background of the Poet :

Robert Ranks Graves was born at Wimbledon on the twenty fourth of July, 1895. His father was Irish and mother a German. His father, Alfred Perceval Graves was a well known writer of songs and composer of ballads. The young Graves belonged to a scholarly family as his mother was also the daughter of a professor. The Graves family was large. Robert Graves grew up in discipline with a belief in religion and conventional normality. Graves studied in many schools but unfortunately he did not like anyone of those. He had bitter memories of the charter Home School. He became a poet at the young age of fourteen.

Graves joined the war as a soldier after his schooling. He fought in the great war and wrote a few poems then which were published. He was not very happy with the war being continued and he considered it to be meaningless. He could notice the indifference of the civilians towards the soldiers in general.

During the war he was wounded in the war and the official report misrepresented that he died of wounds. His friend Sasson wrote an elegy in commemoration of his friend. That happened even before Graves could write to his mother about what exactly happened to him. His obituary appeared in "The Times" and Graves could read it while still alive. Incidentally it was his twenty first birthday and Graves was shocked to hear the reports of his being dead. But this incident led him to w rite a poem called "the second-fated."

Meanwhile Sasson who was also disillusioned with the war made statement against the war quite boldly. Grave stood in support of his friend lest the latter be tried in a court martial. Therefore, to save him from impending trouble, Graves began to defend Sasson as a patriotic and devoted soldier, unfortunately deranged under the miserable burden of war. He says: "Much against my will, I had to appear in the role of a patriot distressed by the mental collapse of a brother-in-arms: a collapse directly due to his magnificent exploits in the trenches. I mentioned Siegfried's hallucinations of corpses shown along the Piccadilly Sasson was admitted to a hospital." Very soon Graves got married to Nancy.

7. 3. Works of Graves

After his marriage he composed poems collected later as 'The Country Sentiment'. These poems depict an escape from the morbid and harsh realities of war. There was a sudden charge in his life. He was disappointed in his marital life. Even the prevalent conditions of England depressed them. Therefore, he left his wife and England and settled in Spain. This views and experiences find place in his autobiography 'Good Bye to all that'.

Graves got acquainted with great writers while in sEngland. He also got his BA degree from Oxford. He submitted a thesis entitled The Illogical Element in English Poetry during his graduation and the thesis got published as On England Poetry in 1922. In 1925 Graves read the work Laura Riding of America and the next year he met her. He published another book A Survey of modernist poetry in 1927. He started on novels in the thirties. In 1934 he wrote I Claudius which acquired so much popularity that it got translated into seventeen languages. Two more novels were written: Count Beloisarius and Claudius the God . He wrote The Long Weekend in collaboration with Alan Hodgson and the book revealed the social history of contemporary Britain probably, the book provided historical events between two great European wars.

The first collection of important poems appeared in 1947. ' The White Goddess' A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth was a milestone in his literary career. Graves disclosed the dichotomy between good and evil in the human beings. He creates a number of characters representing the good and the bad. He also makes a mention of the cult of the mother Goddess prevalent in different countries of the world. He delineates the human thought process and according to him civilization is the relation of varied experiences. In 1965, he published his collected short stories. Between 1961 and 65 he worked as professor of poetry at the University of Oxford. He continued to write till the end of his life in 1985.

7. 4. Summary and Symbolism/Imagery

Graves employs a good number of images and symbols, like many modern poets. He is similar to Yeats and Thomas in his symbolism. Like romantic writers he pays tributes to nature and draws his inspiration from it for his early poetry. He used floral images. He compares the blossom of love to the blossoming of a lily. The absence of flowers stands for lack of fertility and the barrenness of seasons. He relates flowers beautifully to his poems. The trees are called upon to judge things, as they were persons alive, thus being personified. Even the images of birds are found in his poetry. Christ is compared to a pelican. He refers to birds which stand for the church and its corruption in his poem;

'Rocky Acres'. He uses the image of a buzzard and scorns the religion being institutionalized. A lover recalls his experience with the help of the flight of birds in "Winged Heart"- Besides these images, images of landscape are also employed by him. Landscape symbolism as in Eliot, Rilke and Paul Valery is a common continental characteristic in modern poetry. 'Rocky Acres' also consists of landscape symbolizing the indifference of nature to the events of war.

Graves speaks of traditional and mythological stories heard in his boyhood days. He expresses fears and apprehensions based on the supernatural and unforeseen inexplicable terrors, a common belief in every age. He reminisces the fables and moral stories he has heard:

"In my childhood numerous
of a world beyond the door
Terrors to the life of man
That the high road held in store

He heard the stories of strange creatures like the mermaids who played in water, fire breathing dragons and of Satan with horns- a symbol of evil on his head.

Of the mermaid's doleful game
in deepwater I heard tell
of lofty dragons puffing flames
of the horned fiend of Hell

He dismisses these stories fictitious and baseless but perhaps he suspects that they might be real. He had vague fears about the existence of the evil creatures. These assume symbolic dimensions for him and at one he begins to believe in them. He thinks mermaids do exist though not concrete in shape:

now I know the mermaid kin
I find them bound by natural laws.
They have either tail or fir.
But are deadlier for that cause

The mermaids were supposed to represent the temptations of flesh in medieval times. The mermaids are believed to entice men and after flirting with them, leave them.

Mythical creatures like the dragons do not exist really but in stories where they have tongues sticking out, Sharp teeth and scales that produce noise. They are only symbolic creatures. They depict the disturbed states of mind of man and his depressions.

For they are creature of dark air
Unsubstantial tossing forms,
Thunderclaps of man's depair
In midwhirl of mental storms,

Graves describes the power of blackness in the last three stanzas. Evil is represented by Satan and is more fearsome and deadly than it is described or prophesied by prophet. Man is not allowed to have a full vision of knowledge of the terrible power of evil, for fear that he may die of despair.

And there's true and only fiend
worse than prophets prophesy
whose full powers to hurt are screened
Lest the race of man should die.

Those who are in search of true love are often tempted by physical attractions. Even faithful people fall victims to these temptations of the devil.

"Even in vain will courage plot
The dragon's death, in coat of proof
Or love abjure the mermaid's grot;
Or faith denounce the cloven hoof"
Evil means the make of good or virtue.

7. 5. Conclusion

Thus Graves gives an account of power of evil vividly. The real evil resides within the human being, in his mind. Poets and written gave it a physical shape in their creations, forms like mermaid, Dragon or the Fiend, but evil is evil in whichever farm it is depicted. Graves' poems of similar names stand for the common practice observed by other poets- the conflict between good and evil.

7. 6. Sample Questions:

1. Write an symbolism and Imagery in Graves' Poetry?
2. What do Mermaid, Dragon and Fiend represent in modern poetry? How does Graves use these?
3. Comment on Grave's Poetry?

7. 7. Suggested Reading

Selections from John Wain, ed Anthology of Modern Poetry. ELBS

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Lesson –8

SONS AND LOVERS

D. H. Lawrence

Contents:

8. 1. Objectives

The objectives of this lesson include an analysis of D. H. Lawrence's novel, Sons and Lovers, his style, the autobiographical element in it, besides revealing Lawrence's philosophy of life and love. However, since a writer holds a mirror to the contemporary social, political, economic and religious conditions of life in his age, a brief account of those prevalent conditions is also given, as a writer cannot be isolated from the existing social milieu. So much so it was more so with Lawrence who was not only a creative genius but was also blessed with a vision of prophecy with an aim to use his writing as a tool to convey his vision of life to the readers.

8. 2. Background of Lawrence's Age:

The advent of Industrialization converted England from an agrarian country into an industrial country. Urbanization, an offshoot of the industrialization changed the face of the economy in England with majority of the population settling down in the urban areas, often leading to overcrowding, chaos and in sanitary and miserable living conditions. Pollution and lack of hygiene were rampant with a high mortality rate, especially among children.

Incidentally money replaced and human relations and values begin to disintegrate gradually. There was a wide gulf between the rich and the poor. Many writers exposed those evils in society in their writing. For instance, Thackeray, Ruskin, Carlyle and Hardy were very critical of the undesirable elements in the society. Education's importance was well realized and even women began to acquire education. This helped them to be aware of the general development and circumstances around and slowly there was a move for the liberation of women. Franchise to women was also pleaded upon.

The emancipation of women logically gained strength, aspiring for the breaking away of male domination and authorization set up. Different types of authority, at work, profession, industry and in the very basic unit of family were threatened.

There was skepticism even in religion. Though during the first half the people were tolerant to the established dogmas and doctrines in the Victorian age, in the second half, philosophers and scholars began to steady comparative religious. Their work shook the superiority of Christianity reigning supreme till then, Darwin established his theory of evolution which further reduced the authority of the church. Nevertheless, people started drifting away from religion.

At such juncture, Freud and Jung, eminent scholars in Psychology brought about remarkable changes in the human behavioural patterns. Freud based his findings on the biological instincts and emotions of man. Also, the subconscious played a vital role according to him. Man's actions might vary from his oven thoughts. These findings in the psychological realm of man changed the relationships among men and women, and also in the family. The part played by sex in one's life was realized and the neurotic and abnormal human behaviour were traced to the suppression of instincts of sex. Such complexes as 'Oedipus Complex' – the relationship and attachment between the daughters and fathers. Even infantile sexuality was paid attention to. The early development of a child, it was discovered determined its behaviour later on in life. Most of the novelists took note of these changes in the attitude of man's thinking and behaviour. Particularly D. H. Lawrence felt these changing relations between man and woman were an important aspect of the times.

Man's anxiety was on the increase due to his restlessness, fears and instability both emotional and spiritual. Democratic outlook among people grew, preparing them to protest against imperialism both political and intellectual. Nationalism and patriotism gave way to fraternity at universal level. E. M. Forster fostered the feeling of brotherhood in his novels .On the whole there were intellectual enlightenment, cosmopolitanism and broadmindedness, as a result of the growing number of books and magazines being printed.

8. 3. Life and Works of D. H. Lawrence :

Amid such an existing scenario emerged David Herbert Lawrence in 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire as a fourth child of his parents, Arthur Lawrence and Lydia. His father, an illiterate, coal-miner, was unrefined. He had frequent tiffs at work, leading to a status-quo in his profession, because of his short-temper. He was popular with his co-workers, sang and drank with them. Somehow, at the beginning Lawrence could see him only as a drunkard and hence such portrayal in Sons and Lovers. His mother Lydia hailed from a middle-class family. She was enamoured by Arthur Lawrence and married him in 1875. Very shortly later, she realized her mistake as she was hardly able to cope with him in their marital life Lydia was refined while Arthur was unsophisticated and uneducated and that disparity widened the gulf between them. Lydia wanted to give a better future to her children and her husband had never got any such ambitious. The frequent feuds between father and mother softened Lawrence's heart for his mother. Simultaneously, Lydia, being disappointed in marriage, sought love from her sons. Infact, she loved her second son Arthur Lawrence and depended for a bright future on him. Unfortunately he died prematurely and her love shifted to David Lawrence

who always loved her intensely. He felt ill critically when he was seventeen. The mother was constantly with him putting him on the path of recovery and that consolidated the bond between them so much that Lawrence could not find adjustment with any other woman but his mother.

Lawrence studied in the Local Board school. He enjoyed a scholarship during his studies, though the amount was not adequate. In 1901, after leaving school Lawrence met Jessie Chambers and they read many books and cycled together. After schooling, he joined a surgical instruments manufacture for sometime. Very soon he continued his education. He joined a British school in his home town as a pupil-teacher.

In 1904 he appeared for the King's Scholarship Examination for uncertified teachers and joined, in 1906, the Teacher's Training Department of Nottingham University college. He stayed there for two years and qualified himself for the Board of Education Teachers' Certificate. In 1908 he took up a teaching assignment in South London. He felt the environment to be conducive for his career of writing.

First Phase of Lawrence's Writing: 1909-12

Lawrence began to write with the inspiration of Jessie Chambers. It was she who sent his poems to Ford, Madox Hueffer who published them in "The English Review" in 1909 under the title "A Still Afternoon". In the same year he completed The White Peacock, his first novel which was published in 1911. During 1910-11, three of his stories were published in "The English Review". His second novel The Trespasser, begun in 1910 and published in 1912. During the same period, Lawrence had to face many personal problems like failing health, death of his mother and mental tensions. He had a bout of pneumonia which forced him to leave Croydon for a change of place. His relationship with Jessie Chambers also came to end because his mother, very possessive of him, was afraid that Jessie might take him away from her. But Lawrence was emotionally dependent on Jessie and had to undergo a lot of pressure and agony.

In 1912, he met Frieda, a German lady and the wife of Ernest Weekley, one of his former professors. Lawrence and Frieda loved each other and they eloped together. Frieda was able to dominate the image of his mother Lawrence recorded his experiences of his life with her in poetry called Look! We Have Come Through. In 1913 he completed Sons and Lovers which was very autobiographical in nature . I t represented the conflict in his mind, caught between his mother and Jessie Chambers. Jessie helped him a lot in drafting the novel. Later, Frieda also wrote parts of it to project his mother's point of view.

Second Phase of Writing 1912-19: His second phase of writing started in 1913. He wrote The Rainbow, published in 1915. and Women in Love in 1920. The Rainbow, like Sons and Lovers dealt with the issue of sex freely. So it was banned. Lawrence had to spend his days in poverty.

The Third Phase of Writing 1920-25: After the end of the I World War, the Lawrences traveled widely. He wrote many essays, short stories, poem, critical studies, travel book and also three novels – Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo and The Plumed Serpent. His other works included "Movements in Euro-

pean History", "Psycho analysis and the Unconscious", "Sea and Sardinia", " Fantasia of the Unconscious", "England, My England", "Studies in Classical American Literature" and "Birds, Beasts and Flowers".

The Final Phase of Writing 1925-30: Lawrence fell ill but continued writing his novel St.Mawr and "Reflections on the death of a Porcupine". He went to Italy again for the change of place and wrote Lady Chatterley's Lover, published in 1928 which was at once confiscated. He also wrote a number of pamphlets like "Pornography and Obscenity", "My Skirmish with Jolly Roger"and "Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" in which he defended the change of obscenity leveled against him. His health deteriorated further and he died in 1930.

8. 4. Important features of Modern Novel :

It is desirable to see a few features of the novel as it existed during Lawrence's time. In the twentieth century it has become one of the most powerful forms of literature, though there were a number of novelists, along with poets, in the nineteenth century. Thomas Hardy, Henry James, H.G.Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene were among the eminent writers of the twentieth century.

Those modern novelists revolted against the Victorian novel based on materialism and progress with bourgeoise, and complacent attitudes. But the changes in the social, cultural, political and other fields necessitated new terms of articulation of ideas and emotions. The modern novelists mingled modernity and tradition in their writing. These novels wanted to portray the exact reality and luckily they had many psychological theories to come to their help.

As part of projection of realism the modern novelists dealt with sex without any inhibitions. They began to interpret the relations between men and women in the light of the fearless concepts propounded by Sigmund Freud. D .H.Lawrence personally believed that sexual harmony was essential for wholesome happiness in life He felt it necessary even for the realization of the spiritual aspects . Therefore, some people branded him 'obscene' also. But he grew out of the stigma along with the rapidly changing times. In the modern novel, the hero fell out of his idolized romantic image and became human with his own weaknesses and instabilities, sometimes inexplicable. There are main characters like Stephen Dedalus, incomplete in Joyce's Ulysses and Paul Morel in "Sons and Lovers" who suffers from Oedipus complex.

There is the introduction of 'the stream of consciousness' technique to depict the reality of character objectively. This stream of consciousness is based on the theories of Freud, Jung and Adler, which were psycho-analytical. In a novel written in this technique things are presented in a disorganized fashion related by connection rather than logical sequential argument.

The use of symbolism also grew more popular in the modern novel. The symbols were used innovatively and differently by various novelists. A number of themes with a rich variance were handled by the novelists,, thereby encompassing multifarious aspects of life.

8. 5. The Summary of Sons and Lovers

Originally, Sons and Loves was called Paul Morel and Lawrence began to write it in 1910. Lawrence outlives the theme in a letter of Garnett thus:

"A woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class and has no satisfaction in her own life. She has had a passion for her husband, so the children are born of passion and have leaps of vitality. But as her sons grew up she selects them as lovers—first the eldest, then the second. Those sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and hold them. As soon as the young men come into contact with women there is a split. William gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him, because he doesn't know whereas the next son gets a woman who fights for his soul- fights his mother. The son loves the mother- all the sons hate and are jealous of the father. The battle goes on between the mother and the girl, with the son as object. The mother gradually proves the stronger, because of the tie of blood. The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's hands and like his eldest brother, go for passion. Then the split begins to tell again. But, almost unconsciously, the mother realizes what is the matter and begins to die The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked of everything, with the drift towards death".

Though these ideas may not exactly appear in "Sons and Lovers", they hold good for the general theme of the novel with some minor adjustments and amendments. In 1911, Lawrence, after rewriting the novel, showed it to Jessie, the inspirer of the character of Miriam. Jessie directed him to depict the mother and son relationship in a more realistic and objective manner. She also gave him a few ideas and passages which Lawrence accepted without any change. He rewrote the novel but Jessie was 'bewildered' at the Paul and Miriam Story and also the glorification of the bondage of the hero with his mother. However, Lawrence completed it in November 1912 ,retitting it as Sons and Lovers. He refers to it as the colliery novel. in which the early chapters of the novel give a strong ,true picture of the working class employed in the mining industry.

The outline of the story goes thus: Walter Morel was a young handsome,energetic collier. Gertrude loved him very much and married him. So few years later, she realized that he was irresponsible ,and a drunkard too. She lost her love for him and began to find solace in her children-William,, Annie,Paul and Arthur and depended on them for love. The children also loved her very much..William was the oldest son who desired to go to London for a job.In his absence ,Mrs. Morel began to lean on Paul for the companionship to make up her love not only for her husband but also for William.

Paul was closer to his mother than the others. Paul Morel loved painting. He was more sensitive than his brothers and sister William brought Lily home though she was not a suitable companion for him. She seemed to be self-centred and shallow. Though William realized it, he decided to retain the relationship with her. Unfortunately, he fell ill in London and his mother was with him nursing him. She was so upset that she could not get over the shock. But Paul became sick soon and she realized her responsibility of nursing Paul. So she began to attend on Paul while the other two children looked after themselves. When Paul was sixteen, Paul went to visitsome friends of Mrs. Morel.The Lievers

were very warmhearted and Paul made friends with them easily. Miriam, a fifteen year old girl attracted him with her inner charm. Mrs. Morel did not care for Miriam. Paul joined a stocking mill and worked successfully there. He maintained social relationships also well. Miriam advised him when necessary.

Miriam and Paul reached their twenties. They soon spotted their love for each other. But Paul never touched he through her he met Clara Dawes. Mrs. Morel wanted Paul to leave Miriam. Paul tried it and felt strongly that he needed her. He was in a fix. Clara Dawes, separated from her husband, Baxter Dawes, was senior to Paul by five years. She was very pretty and attracted him. She became his mistress but never divorced her husband nor married Paul. Paul was not able to adjust himself with any one but his mother to whom he could run for love and understanding. Miriam was very possessive and Clara kept him at a barrier. Paul spent more time with his mother and she was happy. Annie, his sister had got married and gone to live with her husband.

Paul's paintings were displayed at local exhibitions and he won some prizes. His mother encouraged him to paint. He wanted to go abroad but stayed back for his mother. He began to see Miriam again. She gave in herself to him and his passion was savage. Somehow he was not satisfied with the relationships with her and so continued to go to Clara. Miriam knew about that affair. She felt one day. Paul would come to her only. Clara satisfied Paul's inner needs and desires. He was constantly in agony. He gave adequate money to Mrs. Morel for the things which her husband could not give her. Mr. Morel stayed with his wife and son, though no longer respected.

Mrs. Morel had cancer and it was detected rather late. Her health began to decline fast. Paul was disturbed by her suffering. But she wanted to live. Paul and Annie knew that one day she would die. Paul was frightened of that separation. He sought Clara's company but she was not able to give him much comfort. while visiting his mother at the hospital Paul found that Clara's husband was recuperating from typhoid. He understood that both of them wanted to reconcile with other and worked towards it.

Mrs. Morel's suffering grew unbearable. Annie and Paul thought she would better die and Paul gave an overdose of morphine. Mrs. Morel died the next day. Paul was left alone. He thought his life was also over along with his mother's life. Clara went back to her husband. Paul and Mrs. Morel shifted from their house, unable to live in Mrs. Morel's absence and they began to live separately.

Paul wandered aimlessly for sometime. He remembered Miriam returned to her for sometime only to realize he did not want her. He wanted to go abroad, he wanted to die to meet his mother. He left Miriam and felt free. Gradually he realized that he need not die to join his mother and that she was always with him. That gave him hope and courage to lead his life in newer light.

CHAPTERWISE SUMMARIES

CHAPTER I : — The setting of the novel the mining lands is provided the environment in which mining workers lived is depicted Mr. And Mrs.Morel are introduced. It is also described as to

where and how Walter and Gerfrudimet, how Gertrude loved his ideas and got married to him. Later she begins to see the true sides of her husband. William is born. The relationship begins to go astray between Mr. and Mrs.Morel. Mrs.Morel starts doting on William for affection.

Chapter II. The frequent quarrels disrupt the family bless. They begin to lose their happiness, Paul is born. Mrs. Morel gets sick. The Clergyman Heaton exists the family. The gulf between the husband and wife widens.

CHAPTER III. Mrs.Morel falls ill due to an inflammation of the brain. The entire collier community try to help him. During this period, the husband and wife try to put their relationship break on the normal tracks. But Mrs.Morel has already transferred all her love to her children. Mrs..Morel feels alienated Mr.Morel's authority begins to slow down at home. William grows big, Paul is very declicate. Mrs.Morel joins the Women's Guild . William gets a job in the Co-operative Office first and later in Nottingham. Annie is studying to be a teacher and Arthur is at the Boarding School.

CHAPTER IV Paul is built like his mother. William goes to work. Paul and Annie are close to each other. Children especially Paul turn away from the father who is a drunkard. He cannot stand his mother suffer agony because of her husband. The children keep the father at a distance. Paul becomes sick with bronchitis. His mother spends much time with him getting closer and closer to him.

CHAPTER V William is in London. Paul is good at painting. Mr. Morel fractures his leg and is hospitalized in a serious condition. The miners help them again. Paul is fourteen. He is called for an interview at Jordan's manufacturers of surgical appliances at Nottingham.

CHAPTER VI The family improves financially. Arthur gets a scholarship. Annie joins as a teacher in a school. Paul begins to pursue his painting. William is engaged to Gyp who is shallow, careless and uneducated. She acts very superior to the others. Paul meets Miriam when he visits the Lievers. William dies. Mrs. Morel is upset. Paul falls ill with pneumonia. The mother attends on him carefully.

CHAPTER VII Miriam is sixteen. Paul visits the Leivers often. There grows love between them and they never realize it. Paul's family does not like her much and particularly Mrs. Morel is against her.

CHAPTER VIII Arthur joins the army Paul wins prizes for his paintings. He meets Clara Dawes, the daughter of an old friend of Mrs.Leivers. She is separated from her husband.. Paul likes Clara. Miriam notices his love for her. Paul asks Mrs .Morel why she does not like Miriam for which the mother cannot answer convincingly. The Oedipus complex is seen in Paul when he asks her not to sleep with his father.

CHAPTER IX : Paul realizes he loves his mother the most. Sometimes Paul hates Miriam. But Miriam hopes he needs her badly. Paul meets Clara again. Mrs.Morel does not mind the relationship between them as she feels Clara may want him physically and so may not draw him away from her. Annie gets married. Arthur leaves the army.

CHAPTER V Paul gets another prize for his painting. He and his mother discuss religion at length. He begins to visit Clara frequently and becomes close to her. Clara is thirty and Paul twenty three. Clara and Paul talk about Miriam. If ever he should marry, he thinks he should marry Miriam. Clara understands him well and accepts his idea.

CHAPER XI Paul is in a dilemma. He feels that Miriam needs him. But he is reluctant to go to her. He does not want to marry her and wants to avoid any kind of physical contact with her. But he goes to her frequently. His mother is astonished to notice him do that. He tends to become more independent, the change in him which his mother dislikes. Paul asks Miriam for sexual surrender. Miriam agrees but decides to do it sacredly. Paul begins to court her like a lover. Very soon his physical relationship with her ends on a dissatisfied note. He begins to visit Clara again. He decides to break away from Miriam. Their eight years of friendship comes to a close. His mother approves of the break.

CHAPTER XII Paul tries to make his livelihood through his art. He continues his intimacy with Clara. His mother is a little worried about his growing closeness with Clara who does not have a good name. Miriam notices their intimacy but is sure that Paul, once rid of his passion, will come back to her. Paul feels guilty of her separation with Miriam. Clara is seen as a sexual partner and Miriam as an intellectual partner by Paul.

CHAPTER XIII Clara's husband is bitter about Paul's relation with Clara. Paul is also hostile to him. They quarrel in the Office. Baxter Dawes is dismissed from service. He is tried in the court also. Mrs.Morel is unhappy to learn about these bitter developments. Clara is still mad after Paul. At the same time she does not want to be permanently separated from her husband. Mrs. Morel takes ill. Her heart and digestion get affected. Paul is worried about her health. He has some financial problems also.

CHAPTER XIV Baxter Dawes gets ill. He inquires Paul after his mother. They try to patch up their differences. Paul helps him during his illness. Mrs. Moral's health becomes worse day by day. Paul suffers along with her. He continues to go to Clara with desire or passion and she gives in very reluctantly. Paul understands that she is weary of him and asks Baxter to make up with Clara and get reunited with her. After his mother dies, he says he will go abroad. Her suffering increases and Paul looks on helplessly. In his despair he mixes some morphia pills with her milk and gives her. She dies the next day. Paul feels sad after her death.

CHAPTER XV : Paul's life becomes very lonely with his mother dying and Clara going back to her husband. He is depressed, desperate. He feels lost, not knowing what to do and where to go. He cannot get along without his mother. He thinks of Miriam. Miriam is going to work as a teacher. She is planning to be an emancipated woman, financially independent with a career of her own. She somehow becomes stiff, looks older. She thinks Paul is wasting his life. At one moment Paul offers to marry her, but not whole heartedly. So they part. Paul decides to live not for sake of his mother but for himself. He walks away optimistically to face the realities of life.

8.6. A CRITICAL APPRECIATION/ANALYSIS

"Sons and Lovers presents the Freudian Oedipus imbroglio in almost classic completeness", says Graham Hough. Though Lawrence may not have heard of Freud's name, Sons and Lovers consists of the theories expanded by Freud. Bonamy Dobree feels, "For however much he may be telling a story, or presenting the life of today, there is one theme which more and more dominates his writing and that is relation , not so much of the sexes , that poor over-battered theme , but of the male and female principles .For him there is some where essential maleness , and some where else essential femaleness , both , of course , necessary to universal ."According to J.W. Beach, " With Lawrence, Love is conceived of in terms of suggesting chemical affinities, sometimes of psychic auras affecting one another, some times of bodies of different magnitudes and weights exerting varying degrees of pull upon one another." Lawrence's characters are men and women who are simply human natured, with elemental endowments of instincts and passionate impulses in more than the normal measure, people chosen as exponents of his view of life, because they live with something like the same intensity as himself". David Daiches points out " Lawrence projects his novels from the very centre of his own passionate experience so that they act out, sometimes fiercely, sometimes desperately, his own deepest the lyric and the dramatic modes interpenetrate each other.

Alfred Booth Kuttner expresses Sons and Lovers has the great distinction of being very solidly based upon a veritable commonplace of an emotional life , it deals with a son who loved his mother too dearly and with a mother who lavished all her affection upon her son ." "Sons and Lovers appears to have the most conventional chronological organization that a naïve autobiographical novelist would tend to use , with only the thinnest pretense at disguising the personality retrospective nature of the material .We start with the marriage of the parents and the birth of the children. We learn of their daily life…….. certain well defined emotional pressures become apparent" goes on Dorothy Van Ghent. Seymour Betsky says. " SONS AND LOVERS moves along a structural pattern determined by the nature of its human relationships. A wave rhythm distinguishes in beat and counterbeat, the major involvements of the characters those of Walter and Gertrude Morel, Paul and his mother, Paul and Miriam and P:aul and Clara."

There are a number of elements very conspicuous by their presence in SONS AND LOVERS to have a glimpse of the structure of the novel first : Lawrence seemed to have opted for the novel form. 'Because it is so incapable of the absolute', because it was possible to take liberties with it. V.S.Pritchett denounces Lawrence as 'a muddling narrator totally unskilled in construction'. Mark Schorer, in his essay, "Technique as Discovery feels bitter with Lawrence for having failed to allow technique to athom meaning in SONS AND LOVERS and used it. Instead in confused and contradictory ways in his private attempts to master sickness'. But Lawrence quite confidently says, "I tell you it has got form haven't I made it patiently, out of sweet as well as blood?" Laurence had a definite thesis to expound in SONS AND LOVERS that constitutes its main logic and defines its structural design, apart from using the novel for the exploration of certain seemingly inexplicable experiences of his adolescence, the growing catharsis of his mind and the exposure of an artist in him.

The beginning of the novel as already stated, portrays the courtship and marriage of the Morels, their disillusionment and the estrangements of the couple later on. The development of the plot is

analogous to the rhythmical movement of the waves with their beats and counterbeats. The first wave rhythm traces the married life of the Morels, the second deals with Paul and Mrs.Morel relationship; the third wave rhythm Paul and Miriam relationship and the fourth the relationship between Paul and Clara. The waves take their own turns and curves as the theme demands and Betsky says, "There are wave like returns to the achieved tension in that relationship but now each wave show a diminishing strength and intensity".

Other devices of structural unity include symbolism which is effective and unobtrusive. The nature symbols, the flowers are prominent. Floral scenes are many symbolizing the attitudes of the various characters towards life. There is an alternation between the panoramic view and the close up of the characters provides one of the essential structural patterns of the novel. There is compactness in the novel.

Regarding characters Diana Neill remarks, "The characters are drawn from the outside, in the round as well as realized emotionally'. All characters are described externally very vividly. Even the manners and habits of these characters are well depicted. The novelist captures the emotional conflicts in the characters like Paul, Mrs. Morel, Miriam and Clara. His characters are realistic in nature with their strengths and weaknesses. Lawrence dispense with the usual dramatic technique of character-delineation and keeps on shifting from one center of consciousness or one group of characters to another. Another remarkable feature of the character portrayal is a thorough blind of the human and the non-human. Lawrence animates the non-human in order to bring out the soul of his characters or to verify some aspect of human relationship. In a well knit plot, the characters are seen from the outside as well as emotionally from within. A very striking feature of the novel is a faithful description of life in the mining village of Bestwood.

Kate Millett says "SONS AND LOVERS is a great novel because it embodies profoundly felt experience and is probably still the greatest novel of proletarian life in English." According to her Paul's Oedipal fixation is rather less a matter of the son's passion for the mother than his passion for attaining the level of power to which adult male status is supposed to entitle him. She finds an element of sadism in Paul's treatment of Miriam and Clara. Hillary Simpson focuses on Clara as a feminist as well as the feminist consciousness of Mrs. Morel. Lawrence's feminist ideas manifest in his sympathetic treatment of women issues like women's suffrage movement, women's guild and women's need of sexual fulfillment. Most of the feminist critics have appreciated Lawrence's tackling of gender and sexuality as central issues.

Lawrence's style is well suited to his purpose. He is usually vigorous and forceful. His diction is appropriate and he uses the typical dialects sometimes. His use of switching over from the consciousness of one character to another, from the present to the past, from the external to the internal and vice versa relates him with the novelist using the stream of consciousness technique. While the stream of consciousness novelist holds strictly objective point of view, Lawrence swings between the subjective experience of his people and the objective reality. He may, therefore, be described as an impressionistic novelist and not a stream of consciousness novelist wholly. However, his genius is indisputable. He is one of the great writers who may be described as life-changers He is likened to Frennch symbolists like Baudelaire who used symbols as suggestive evocation of timeless spiritual

reality. In short SONS AND LOVERS is one of the greatest novels of Lawrence which is autobiographical .Simultaneously it portrays, human attitudes, emotions and psychological conflicts in a realistic and natural way.

8. 7. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Trace the autobiographical element in Sons and lovers.
2. How did Lawrence report his own tension of his life in Sons and Lovers.
3. "Sons and Lovers presents the Freudian Oedipus Complex in almost classical completeness". Discuss this statement.
4. Lawrence is supposed to have rejected the traditional canons of structure and method in fiction. Examine Sons and Lovers from this point of view.
5. Write a note on the relationship between the main characters in SONS AND LOVERS.?
6. "In the Novels of D.H.Lawrence, the crux lies in personal relationships". Discuss this comment with special reference to Sons and Lovers.
7. Examine Sons and Lovers as a social study as well as a psychological and emotive analysis.

8. 8. Suggested Readings

1. D.H.Lawrence Sons and Lovers. Case book series, Macmillan, London 1969.
2. Sons and Lovers. Harney Geoffrey . 1987.
3. The Novel and the Modern World David Daiches
4. Twentieth Century Interpretation of Sons and Lovers 1970.
5. Introduction to Sons and Lovers——Kazin Alfred, Modern Library Edition 1962
6. Sons and Lovers, Salgado Gamim, 1966.

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Lesson – 9

To The Lighthouse (Virginia Woolf)

Contents:

9. 1. Objectives

To the Lighthouse struck the majority of its first readers as a startling and original experiment in extending the range of the novel. The objectives here like most analyses of the novel, is to identify four distinguishing elements: plot, character, setting, the point of view and also symbolism. More than the overt commentary on human nature, the very form of To the Lighthouse provides a radically new commentary on the meaning of human nature. A major difference between this novel and more conventional novels is the structural role played by symbol in Mrs. Woolf's novel. Even its title is symbol referring at once to the literal as well as internal journeys taken by the central characters in the novel.

9. 2. Background of the Author

Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882, youngest daughter of the large and talented Stephen family. Leslie Stephen , her father was a distinguished critic, biographer and philosopher, and one of the most influential figures in the literary world of the late Victorian England. Virginia is one of his four children from his second marriage with Mrs. Julia Prinsep Jackson Duckworth. The Stephen family of the upper middle class produced most of the influential thinkers and artistes of day. They often entertained the greatest writers and political figures of the time who were attracted by Leslie Stephen's reputation and his wife's stunning beauty. The father's austere religious agnosticism had its great impact on the intellectual and moral integrity of his children, especially Virginia. His extensive library acquainted his children , once again particularly Virginia, with the English and classical works in large numbers. For the first thirteen years of her life Virginia and the rest of the Stephen family spent their summer vacation in a rented house in St.Ives in Cornwall, meant specially for summer, and its rugged beauty haunted her adult imagination reappearing in various guises in most of her novels. Although To the Light house is set in Scotland, the atmosphere and detail of the Ramsay household owe much to her early happy memories of St.Ives.

9. 3. Life and Works

The sudden death of Virginia's mother in 1895 shattered the tranquility of these early childhood days. She became insane and grew more insane when her beloved half sister, Stella Duckworth, died unexpectedly. Her father also was terribly shocked and became ill and finally died in 1904. After his death, his children including Virginia moved to Bloomsbury and Virginia started her serious writing. While the Bohemian witchery ways of those financially independent. Stephen children shocked some older family friends like the novelist Henry James, they could form the nucleus of a brilliant young group of Cambridge graduates. This intellectually stimulating, environment promoted Virginia's literary interests, becoming a regular reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement, reading widely, beginning work on her first novel, The voyage out, and traveling abroad.

In 1912, she married Leonard Woolf, one of her brother's friends. The marriage proved as an extremely happy one. He encouraged his wife's extraordinary talent of writing and he himself was a talented and versatile writer. Virginia's first novel, The Voyage out, was published in 1915 and received encouraging reviews. She began her second novel and continued to review books for the " Times Literary supplement". Her physical and mental illness interrupted her work but she could produce nine novels in her life time, besides a number of short stories, essays, reviews and pamphlets.

She was part of a group of people known as the Bloomsbury Group. In 1917 she and her husband founded the Hogarth Press, which grew form a small printing press into one of the most successful publishing houses of its time. In addition to her literary interests, Virginia was actively interested in the feminist question and two major essays," A Room of One's own" and "Three Guinea" testify to her commitment. She, though not very active as her husband in politics, accompanied him often to political conferences and shared many of his political views'.

Her tragic suicide, in March 1941, came as a shock to her friends and family. She has just completed a first draft of Between the Acts, and the period following the completion of a novel was usually a time of depression for her. Moreover, the war bombs had destroyed her London home and also her own peace. One morning in late March, she left home on her customary daily walk filled the pockets of her coat with stones and drowned herself in the River Ouse.

9. 4. Summary

The details of Virginia Woolf's biography are of more than usual interest when we discuss To the Lighthouse, for this novel both in conception and execution, has close connections with her own personal experience. The very first reference to the novel in her diary makes this relationship quite clear: " I am now all on the stain with desire to stop journalism and get on To the Light house. This is going to be fairly short, to have fathers's and mother's character done complete in it; and childhood. But the center is father's character, sitting in a boat, reciting. We perished, each alone while he crushes a dying mackerel, " Her biographical materials indicate unambiguously the closeness between the world of To the Lighthouse and her childhood, memories. This novel sprang from an intense psychological need, but this novel is not simply of biographical interest. Through her extraordinary crafts

manship and vision,Virginia Woolf has transformed the materials of private childhood memory into an artistic entity which can stand on its own, independent of explanation or annotation; published in 1927, it has been translated into many languages and has gone into numerous editions.

Even before she had set word of the novel on paper, she had a clear idea of the structure, content, theme and even the title of the novel.

The final version of novel was indeed divided as she had envisaged: Part I , The Window, Part II Time passes; Part III, The Lighthouse.

In the part I of the novel, ' The Window', we are introduced to the Ramsay family and friends, holidaying for the summer on a remote and unparticularized Hebridean island. The action in this section takes place during a late September afternoon and evening. As well as introducing the main characters and symbols of the novel, this section presents the central narrative issue of the novel: whether or not an expedition to the local lighthouse will take place on the following day.

The second part of the novel,'Time Passes' is a poetic impressionistic depiction of changes which befall the house and its inhabitants over a period of ten years. The war prevents the Ramsays from returning to the house and it falls to the mercy of natural forces, of weather, of the seasons, of night and day, of time itself. We learn form parenthetical statements scattered through the description of the house's disintegration that Mrs. Ramsay has died, Andrew has been killed in the war, and Prue has died in childbirth. Towards the end of the section, however, the comic figure of Mrs. McNab, the old woman who cleans the house, returns to the house to restore order in anticipation of a return visit by the Ramsays. The passage of time is presented through the folding of key images rather than through the more orthodox method of choronological development, and this whole central section represents a technical tour de force by Virginia Woolf.

The third and final section of To the Lighthouse, ' The Lighthouse', depicts the return visit to the house by the remaining Ramsays and their long-delayed expedition to the lighthouse. Certain guests return with them, and the novel closes with the artistic triumph of Lily Briscoe a visitor on the earlier occasion also. While Mr.Ramsay and two of the children make their way to the lighthouse, Lily resumes work on a painting interrupted ten years earlier and as she does so, she has a fleeting vision which seems to bring into perspective the significance of past and present. The arrival of the Ramsays at the lighthouse coincides with the completion of Lily's picture, and each event adds a depth of symbolic meaning to the other, bringing all levels of the novel to a satisfying conclusion.

Part Wise Summaries:

Part I -

This first section of the novel sets the scene for the book and introduces us to of the main characters, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay sits with her young son James. Knitting a stocking for the son of the light house keeper as they plan to visit the light house the next day. Mr. Ramsay enters and announces that due to bad weather the trip might he postponed. Mr. Tansley, his guest and disciple

supports him. Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley go to the nearby town on an errand. Mr. Tansely confides in her the pain of the past and his hopes for the future. Mrs. Ramsay has to pacify James who is disappointed Lily Briscoe is standing at the edge of the lower painting. Mrs. Ramsay considers match making between Lily and Mr. Bankers an old friend of Ramsay who, like Lily is lodging in the near by village Mrs. Ramsay insists on going to the light house the proposal which her husband refuses at the beginning but his anger gradually subsides. But he acknowledges his dependence upon his wife. Mr. Carmichael, the old and disreputable poet staying with them reminds her of the inadequacy of all human relationships. He is reserved and Mrs. Ramsay takes his reserve as a personal insult, her inability to charm him.

Lily and Mr. Bankes discuss Ramsay's faults, but Lily defends him against Bankes's charge of hypocrisy. She is about to criticize Mrs. Ramsay when she glimpses an expression on Bankes's face as he watches her reading to her son at the window, and she is overwhelmed by Mrs. Ramsay' ability to inspire love and admiration, even in a man like Bankes. The reader's perception of the Ramsays and their relationship is further developed by the reflection of Bankes and Lily. Cam, the second youngest member of the family enters.

Mrs. Ramsay learns that her son Andrew and two youngest guests, Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle have not yet returned from a trip to the seashore . She wonders if Minta has agreed to marry Paul: Minta's mother has accused her of trying to steal her daughter's affections, an accusation which she denies. She feels vaguely guilty for having encouraged Paul and Minta . She worries about the late comers. The beam of the lighthouse shines through the gathering darkness, reassuring her with its familiarity, and she remembers Jame's disappointment about the postponed trip to the lighthouse. The beam enters her consciousness and she identifies that beam with herself and begins to meditate. Mrs and Mr. Ramsay walk together through the garden, discussing trivial domestic matters Mr. Ramsay recalls his walking tours as a young man and regrets for the opportunities lost because of his family responsibilities.

Lily and Bankes talk about the difference between great and ordinary men. Lily notices the Ramsays watching their children playing cricket and they become for Lily a universal symbol of the unity of marriage. Ironically, they are spiritually distant from each other. Nancy, the missing Ramsay girl, has reluctantly accompanied the other young people to the beach. She is drawn towards Minta who seems to have access to a world unknown to Nancy. Her brother Andrew admires Minta for her lack of feminine silliness, but is amused by her irrational fear of bulls. Minta loses her brooch given by her grandmother. Paul promises to look for it or replace it by another more beautiful one. Paul is grateful to Mrs. Ramsay for bringing him and Minta together.

Mrs. Ramsay pities the childless widower Bankes and Lily also admires him. Tansely, the awkward young academic, feels uncomfortable in their company. Lily feels irritated by his dismissal of women's achievements. Tansely condemns Ramsay for allowing himself to be trapped by his wife in domestic and social triviality. Despite her dislike of Tansley, Lily recognizes his unhappiness and tries to sooth him. His response to her reveals a sense of inferiority based on his unhappy childhood.

Mrs. Ramsay feels that Lily and Tansley are unable to inspire love. She plots to make a match between them. Mrs. Ramsay excels as creator, mother and hostess in the major symbols and images of

the novel on a poetic level. The first part of the novel, especially the last section, provides a partial resolution to the conflicts between the Ramsays which have been evident at the beginning of the novel. The identification of Mrs. Ramsay with the lighthouse beam is carried further and the juxtaposition of this light with her reassurance of Mr. Ramsay provides a satisfactory ending for the first major movements of the novel.

Part II

The two initial sections introduce the main theme of part II of To the light house, the destruction of human achievements by time and uncontrolled nature. Section 2 concludes with the factual information that all the lights in the house have been put off. A shadowy spirit or persona unloading darkness begins to emerge. Mrs. Ramsay dies. The house and garden, symbols of man's vain desire to impose order on the chaos of life are buffeted and attacked by rain and wind man's homelessness against the forces of time and death is revealed . The house remains empty. The charwoman, old Mrs. McNab keeps the house for the Ramsay. Prue Ramsay the daughter gets married. She dies in an illness of pregnancy. Andrew Ramsay is killed in battle in France. The empty house bears silent witness to the night storms and terrifying sound of the stormy sea, which seem to threaten the land the Ramsay house decay fast. Mrs. McNab returns with Mrs. Bast to re-establish order in the house. She reminisces about the Ramsay's past life there. Finally the house is cleared. At last Lily, and Mr. Carmichael - the old and disreputable poet who stayed with the Ramsay, return. "Time passes" is central to the authors vision of the novel, and actively embedded the cosmic, non – human antagonist of the human characters. Sections 3 to 9 are the most abstract in the novel, but are framed by clearly delineated characters. Mr. Carmichael at the beginning, and Lily Briscoe and Carmichael again at the end.

Once the house is folled with family and guest. Lily feels strange Mr. Ramsay and the children plan to visit the lighthouse. Lily recognizes the loss inflicted on them by their mother's death Ramsay notices Lily and approaches her for sympathy. She does not know how to deal with him. She is true to complete her painting.

The Ramsay voyage is simultaneous with a growth of awareness in Lily, and inward voyage to her final vision. As her mind traces her relationships with Mrs. Ramsay and her achievements, searching for the visual image from the present to express the reality of her perceptions her eyes follow the progress of the boat to the light house. On board of the small sailing boat are Cam and James who are irritated with their father who has forced them to accompany him to the lighthouse against their will. They have a secret pact to oppose his tyranny. The boatman. Macalister tells them of recent shipwreck and rescue of local fishermen during of storm.

The sight of the distant boat reminds Lily of her difficulty in communicating with Mr. Ramsay. She feels lost and there is no one to help her out. Gradually she gets over it. In the clear morning light, Lily feels a mystical unity in the seascape and hidden in the haze, the lighthouse seems to her more remote and distant than ever.

James is angry at his father Ramsay's Tyranny. The sailing boat approaches the lighthouse. Cam is struck by its unexpected appearance and feels the exhilaration of freedom . Ramsay praises

Jame's steering and his son is elated. In this final stage of the journey to the lighthouse, the three Ramsay characters come to the end of their respective spiritual journeys. Her father's reassuring presence enables Cam to put the past and her fear of death into correct perspective James recognizes in the lighthouse a truth which he and his father share, and comes to acknowledge the part of his own character which strongly resembles his father. The conclusion of Mr.Ramsay's Voyage is indicated in his symbolic gesture of looking back at the island with complete equanimity, a gesture which suggest that he has purged himself of the past.

Lily senses that the Ramsay have reached the lighthouse and suddenly feels exhausted. Carmichael looms up beside her and watches the lighthouse. The Ramsays's journey and Lily's internal quest are accomplished at the same time, and in Lily's acknowledgement of her communication with Carmichael is the validation of her recognition that human emotions, however limited have their own value. With this recognition comes the ability to finish the painting with a symbolic brush stroke connecting the two sides of the picture. The completion of painting and the end of the journey to the lighthouse happen simultaneously, bringing to a triumphant conclusion the narrative and symbolic levels of *To the Light house*

9. 5. A Critical Evaluation

In all the novels incidents, actions, thoughts and descriptions are related, or narrated, by an agent who is known as a narrator. The reader consequently sees the events of a novel to a greater or lesser degree through the eyes, or point of view, of the novel's narrator. It is obvious, therefore, that the narrator is an extremely significant element in considering a novel, because it is the narrator who decides what to show or tell us, and what emphasis is to be placed on an event or character, and it is the narrator's language that describes events and characters in these novels.

The story, or plot, of To the Lighthouse is extremely simple. In the first part, 'The Window', we are introduced to the main characters and the central issue: whether or not the planned expedition to the lighthouse will take place. The second part, 'Time Passes', covers a passage of ten years and reveals the deaths of several members of the Ramsay family. The final section, 'The Lighthouse', recounts how the expedition to the lighthouse, which was planned ten years earlier, is finally accomplished.

It is obvious from this description of the novel's plot that the reader's main interest in To the Lighthouse is not of the 'what happened next? The emphasis of this novel falls on how its events are experienced by those who participate, and the narration is carried out through the multiple point of view method, in which the reader has access to the mental processes of the various characters. This narrative mode provides a rich and complex perspective on the events and world of the novel. To take a simple example: Mrs. Ramsay is variously presented as a tyrant, a heroine, uncompromising, pathetic, and lovable, depending on the angle of vision of the observing consciousness. Which impression is the right one? The answer is all, and none. Mrs. Ramsay is, in the world of this novel, all of these.

Virginia Woolf's particular use of the multiple point of view technique in To the Lighthouse poses certain problems, however, for the reader. The uniformity of language and style in the novel

makes it difficult to distinguish individual point of view. The language of the consciousness of the six-year-old James, for example, is remarkably similar in vocabulary and style to that of his eminent philosopher father.

In addition to such material, the omniscient narrator's voice presents 'stage directions' such as 'he said', 'she thought', and so on. There are also certain characteristics both of style and tone which identify the omniscient narrator's a tone of hesitancy, diffidence, which lead him to question the omniscience of the narrator. In the passage just quoted, notice the repetition of the vague 'anybody' and the use of the hesitant 'perhaps'. This quality of doubt and uncertainty is unusual in the conventional omniscient narrator and gives the novel a characteristic quality which has been noted by many of its critics.

The three parts of the novel are dominated by separate voices which provide a certain tone and attitude to those parts. The first part, 'The Window', is largely presented through the consciousness of Mrs. Ramsay as she sits by the window knitting, and later as she presides over the dinner party. The middle section of the novel, 'Time Passes', depends upon the voice of omniscient narrator. The third and final section, 'The Lighthouse', is presented largely through the alternate consciousness of Lily and those on board the boat.

Characters in the Novel:

One effect of Virginia Woolf's choice of this multiple point of view narrative mode is immediately obvious when we examine the characters and characterization of To the Lighthouse. Not only are these characters observed in action, or reflected in the consciousness of themselves and others, but their very perspective on external reality serves to define them. We cannot, for example, speak with confidence of Mrs. Ramsay's goodness without acknowledging the reservations imposed by herself and the other characters upon that goodness; as well as taking into account the characteristic quality of Mrs. Ramsay's view of the world. It is impossible, therefore, to make any clear-cut distinction between the characters in this novel and its narrative mode. Virginia Woolf's method of creating the characters in To the Lighthouse is, in a sense, a cumulative one. Our knowledge of the characters depend on the accumulated impressions of them we receive, both from their own reflections and observations and from the responses they elicit from the other characters. The reader is obliged to re-create for himself the characters of this novel.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay

The opening section of the novel gives us a clear impression of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. The two, as they are presented here, provide a study in contrasts; Mrs. Ramsay is portrayed in images of softness and fertility-the fountain, the flowering fruit tree- while Mr. Ramsay is symbolized by the arid scimitar, the beak of brass. The husband-wife, male-female polarity of this opening section is a theme developed through the novel, and is reflected in the contrasting qualities of intellect possessed by both. Mrs. Ramsay is portrayed as possessing instinctive, intuitive intelligence, while her husband's intellect is of the rational and orderly variety symbolized by his perception of human knowledge as a series of letters of the alphabet.

The other guests

The other guests display in their portrayal a range of particularization, from Tansley who is presented in some detail, to Carmichael the poet who seems to hover at the edges of the novel as a presence rather than a fully-realised individual.

Charles Tansley is an unsympathetic character, a young academic who has struggled against his poverty-stricken background and is bitterly conscious of his social inadequacy when confronted by the upper middle-class world inhabited by the Ramsays and their other guests. His bitterness is more profound than his sense of social in-adequacy because, as lily remembers, even when he does achieve a measure of success, his attitudes remain harsh and unloving:

She had gone one day into a Hall and heard him speaking during the war. He was denouncing something: he was condemning somebody. He was preaching brotherly love(p.181).

William Bankes provides quite a different perspective on the Ramsays. He can remember Ramsay before his marriage, and he has the experience and confidence to make a professional judgement on his friend. Bankeys's austere emotional life, which he has deliberately chosen, provides a contrast to the emotional perspectives of the three central characters, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and Lily.

Carmichael, the elderly poet and opium addict, exists in the first section of the novel through the eyes of the other characters. We are informed by the omniscient narrator, and later by Lily, that the war has somehow stimulated his poetry and he has become famous. As an artist, he is a companion figure to Lily and stands with her on the edge of the lawn as she completes her painting.

Although Paul and Minta are given a number of individual characteristics, their experience in the novel is more symbolic than realistic. They represent youthful passion in the eyes of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, and the radiance of this passion is an important element in the fulfillment achieved by Mrs. Ramsay at the dinner party. Their marriage is, however, a failure, so they provide yet another perspective on the successful Ramsay relationship.

Mrs. McNab and the even shadowier figure of Mrs. Bast, who come to put the house in order following the ten-year absence of the Ramsays, exist primarily as symbols of human effort against the ruthless forces of cosmic disaster. Mrs. McNab, in particular, seems to be the embodiment of womankind at its most basic, at one remove from the fertility of nature. She seems indifferent to the world, and despite occasional flashes of humour, her lack of intelligence, her insensitivity to a life other than the warmth of the local public house and its gossip, make her a direct contrast to the Ramsays. Yet it is she who physically rescues the house from the ravages of the elements.

Symbolism

Much of the significance of To the Lighthouse is created by its symbolic structure, which pushes the immediate reference of the story and the individual characters on to a more general level, where they represent the common human experience of the encounter against time, death and the cosmic forces that forever threaten to destroy man.

So closely is the symbolic material interwoven with the psychologically realistic details of the novel that the separation of symbolic elements from the rest of the novel and from each other does to the lighthouse an injustice.

When literary critics use the word 'symbolism', what do they mean? In Theory of Literature, Wellek and Warren suggest that in literary criticism the usage of 'symbolism' be confined to discussion of '….an object which refers to another object but which demands attention also in its own right'.[1] This description of symbolism indicates the dual nature of the symbol in literature, existing on the level of representational realism (demanding attention in its own right) as well as pointing towards another object or area of experience. Thus, an object like the lighthouse in To the Lighthouse exists on one level as a lighthouse in the fictional world of the novel, while also directing the reader towards another kind of truth. In a letter to her friend, the artist and the critic Roger Fry, Virginia Woolf seems to have agreed with such an understanding of symbolism:

> I meant nothing by The Lighthouse. One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together. I saw that all sorts of feelings would accrue to this, but I refused to think them out, and trusted that people would make it the deposit for their own emotions – which they have done, one thinking it means one thing another. I can't manage Symbolism except in this vague, generalized way. Whether it's right or wrong I don't know; but directly I'm told what a thing means, it becomes hateful to me.[2]

Virtually every detail of the world created in To the Lighthouse can be seen to contain some symbolic suggestion and it would be impossible to trace and assess the development of each individual symbol. What follows is an attempt to describe, in the widest sense, certain major groups of associated symbols which, intertwined with each other and with the diverse elements of the novel, create what we may describe as the 'meaning' of the novel.

The Sea

The sea is a powerful element in the setting of To the Lighthouse. The Ramsays' summer house is situated on – an island faces the smaller island on which the lighthouse stands.

The Land

In contrast with the mysterious cosmic forces that are symbolized by the sea, the land – the house on the island, the garden, the sand dunes – represents a precious human stronghold. The house, Mrs. Ramsay's domain, is a haven of tranquility for family and guests, but its invulnerability is an illusion. In the early part of the novel, we learn that the children bring their sea treasures into the house, and after the death of Mrs. Ramsay, the house falls prey to the destructive forces in nature. The garden also, time-honoured symbol of man's ability to tame nature, is quickly overpowered by the elements in man's relatively brief absence.

The Lighthouse

The lighthouse, as the title of the novel suggests, and as Virginia Woolf acknowledged in her letter to Rodger Fry[3], is the central symbol of the novel. It is associated with the many images of light and darkness that occur in the novel, as well as with the sea and land imagery. Mrs. Ramsay, as the bargains with death and change, attempts to create and preserve the light. Ramsay is concerned with the dark reaches of human ignorance. When Carmichael extinguishes his lamp at the beginning of 'Time Passes', it is the signal for the invasion of the house by the sinister forces of nature. Lily's painting attempts to capture this quality of life, of light:

The alternating light and darkness represented in this imagery is amplified by the lighthouse itself, sending its beam across the sea to the house and land.

In the 'Time Passes' section, the lighthouse, cut off from human associations, becomes an ambivalent observer of the chaos which descends upon the house:

The final section of the novel, 'The Lighthouse', uses the lighthouse as a central focus for the narrative and symbolic structure of the novel. On the narrative novel, Ramsay and his two children finally make the journey to the lighthouse, and on the symbolic level these three characters, and Lily Briscoe, accomplish an internal journey until they can accept that truth is frequently contradictory. The dual image of the lighthouse as it is seen by James represents this synthesis very powerfully:

Mrs. Ramsay's spiritual renewal is signaled by the last glimpse we have of him, springing 'lightly like a young man', towards the lighthouse(p.191). For Lily, the final stage of their inward journey occurs at the moment of Ramsay's landing, when the lighthouse has become almost invisible (p.191). The final line of her painting, drawing all together, represents the lighthouse, 'a line there, in the centre' (p.192).

Plot in To the Lighthouse

Plot as a sequence of events taking place in clock time exists in To the Lighthouse but it is not the sole organizational structure. Plot hinges on an answer to the question: will the Ramsays visit the lighthouse? The incidents depicted by Virginia Woolf are selected to have some bearing on the answer, but what makes this novel so innovative is the subservience of plot to another kind of development based on symbols and usually associated with poetry. Two equal levels of reality are portrayed in To the Lighthouse: the surface level of external action and appearance governed by clock time, and the inner level of mental reflection and personality expressed through symbol rather than plot.

When the novelist shifts our attention from the depiction of external reality to internal experience, from objectivity to subjectivity, some substitute for plot must be found to bring the novel together and sustain the reader's interest. Questions about the Ramsays' possible visit to the lighthouse do not stimulate of themselves sufficient interest to the lighthouse do not stimulate of themselves sufficient interest to maintain the reader's attention and so Virginia Woolf provides parallel development in a series of interlocking symbols whose deepening meanings give momentum to the depiction of internal truths.

It must be emphasized that these parallel structures of plot and symbol do not cpmpete in To the Lighthouse but coincide almost exactly. If we examine four of the central episodes of the plot- the opening section which introduces Mr and Mrs. Ramsay, the dinner party, the landing at the light-house, and the completion of the portrait – it is clear that all these external incidents have an equally strong significance at the symbolical level. Similarly, the most obviously symbolic section of the novel, 'Time Passes', never strays far from the depiction of realistic detail.

9. 6. Sample Questions

1. Comment on the symbolism in the novel.
2. "To the Lighthouse" is not a novel because it lacks a plot" Discuss.
3. Write a note on the characters.
4. Appropriateness of the title.

9. 7. Suggested Reading

1. Bell, Quentin: Virginia Woolf, A Biography Hogarth Press, London, 1972.
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3. Beja Morris(Ed) Virginia Woolf. To the Lighthouse. A Case book Macmillan London, 1970
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Lesson - 10

"Andrea Del Sarto"

— Robert Browning.

Contents :

10. 1. Biography :

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in Camberwell, England, to Robert Browning Senior and Sarah Anna Browning. His mother was an accomplished pianist and his father, a bank clerk, was also a scholar with an impressive private library. Most of Browning's early education came from this collection of literature. Though he attended London University for a year he could not accept the constraints of formal learning and left to pursue his own plan of study.

Browning's early poetry was influenced by the styles of both Byron and Shelley. In 1833 he anonymously published *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession*. Between 1834 and 1836 *The Monthly Repository* published several shorter poems by Browning. *Paracelsus* appeared in 1835 and was followed by *Sordello*. From 1837 to 1846 Browning attempted to write verse drama for the stage but without great success. He began to discover that his real talents lay in the dramatic monologue, a form in which a single character unconsciously reveals more than he realizes of himself in his speeches. Browning published *Bells and Pomegranates* between 1841 and 1846. It contained several of his best-known lyrics, such as "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix", and also a dramatic poem *Pippa Passes.*

Browning became an admirer of Elizabeth's Barrett's poetry in 1844 and began corresponding with her by letter. Their courtship lasted until 1846 when they were married in defiance of both her ill health and domineering father. The couple moved to Italy that same year and had a son, Pen, later in 1849. Her love for him was demonstrated in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, and he dedicated *Men and Women* to her. They lived in Italy until her death in 1861 after which Browning moved back to England with his son. In England, Browning wrote *The Ring And The Book* which dealt with narra-

tives from 10 different perspectives of the same incident. *Men and Women* appeared in 1855 and *Dramatis Personae* in 1864. *The Inn Album* appeared in the 1870's. His reputation continued to grow as indicated by the formation of the Browning Society. Browning died on December 12, 1889, in Venice, on the same day that his final volume of verse, *Asolando,* was published. He is buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

"Andrea Del Sarto"

10. 2. Introduction.

"Andrea Del Sarto" is a dramatic monologue in Browning's best poetical tradition of portraiture. The basic account of the Renaissance painter, Andrea del Sarto (1486-1531) is taken from *The Lives of the Painters* written by his pupil, Giorgio Vasari. The poem builds on some of the known facts of Andrea's life, but the psychological portrait of the painter is Browning's own creation. The poem is less a study of an actual person than it is a study of the psychology of awareness, self-deception, and the labyrinthine intricacies of success and failure. Andrea was a highly skilled painter, indeed he is referred to as "faultless" but he apparently does never reach the heights achieved by the Renaissance greats- Michelangelo, Raphael or da Vinci. Browning also follows Vasari's account of Andrea's marriage to a beautiful widow, Lucrezia, "an artful woman who made him do as she pleased in all things." Accordingly, Andrea's immoderate love for Lucrezia leads him to cheapen and commercialize his art to satisfy her demands and keeps him from fulfilling his potential. One of the notable features of this poem is its exposition of a paradoxical theory of success and failure- "a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's heaven for?"- constant striving after greater perfection is true success while to settle for an easy achievement, however apparently remarkable is actually failure.

10. 3. Paraphrase.

Andrea del Sarto initially lived and worked in Florence, and was later appointed court painter by Francis, the King of France. To please his wife Lucrezia, (whom he speaks to in this poem,) he left the French court for Italy and also cheated Francis of a large sum of money entrusted to him. He spent all of the money on a house for himself and his wife in Italy and never returned to France. In the beginning of the poem, Andrea is in the house he has bought with the stolen money, and thinking back on his career he laments that his worldliness and moral flaws have kept him from living up to his potential as an artist. He knows that he is actually a better craftsman than even Michelangelo or Raphael, but his is a technical perfection. He succeeds as a craftsman, but their works have more "soul" and this is mainly because of their single minded dedication and commitment to their art. Andrea on the other hand has dissipated his energies, he succeeds technically where they do not, but their work ultimately triumphs for its emotional and spiritual power. Andrea realizes that his undisciplined compliance with all Lucrezia's whims has also contributed to his lack of achievement. Ironically, even his marriage is not a success, there are clear indications that Lucrezia is having an affair, she cannot understand or is not interested in Andrea's hopes or sorrows and she insists on Andrea setting his ambitions aside and selling his work so as to ensure a steady availability of money. In the end, Andrea gives her the money and promises to sell more paintings to pay off her gambling debts. She goes of gaily to join her "Cousin," (probably a lover) and he wistfully daydreams of a second chance to make full use of his talents in Heaven.

10. 4. Analysis.

In this poem we have an artist's self evaluation while comparing his own work to that of the Great Masters. Andrea feels that his failure is because he could never match his technical perfection with appropriate dedication and commitment. Raphael and Michelangelo may have made technical "mistakes", indeed, Andrea mentally corrects a line in Raphael's painting, but on a spiritual level their work far exceeds his. Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci lived for their work. But for Andrea, painting becomes a means to a commercial end as he had to meet Lucrezia's constant demands for money. He has in a way, sold out, prostituted his art and even compromised his integrity by cheating King Francis who trusted him, and even when he realizes his mistake he is too infatuated with Lucrezia to consider leaving her. With all this in the scale against him, mere skill or technical perfection counts for little, and Andrea remains, in his own estimation, a failure.

Andrea has shamelessly courted popularity, tailored his art to suit the market and allowed commercialism to determine even his choice of subject. "I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,/ Treat his own subject after his own way,/ Fix his own time accept too his own price."- commercialization could hardly go further, he is willing to let the buyer dictate the subject, method of treatment, time and price and it becomes even worse when we realize that the "friend" referred to is probably Lucrezia's lover! He is obsessed with Lucrezia to an extent where hers is the only female face he can paint, whether the subject be lady or Madonna. The error lies not in his hand with its matchless skill, but in his soul which should direct that hand. Preferring any compromise to the loss of his wife, he has silenced the admonitions of his spiritual nature. He realizes that against the towering, passionate if flawed geniuses of Rafael or Michelangelo, he can put forward only a cold technical proficiency. Ironically, Andrea's fault is to be "faultless"; he has execution, but falls woefully short in conception. "Less is more"- Raphael may make errors, but his vision is so immense that finally Andrea can only shrink back abashed at his temerity in daring to compete, let alone correct. Andrea laments his facile ability to draw with perfection. He sees in the works of his fellow artists, who are less naturally gifted than he, the burden and struggle that they must go through to achieve what for him is effortless. His realization is that, although less naturally gifted technically, the adversity felt by his contemporaries pulls out of them so much more depth and soul than his perfect craftsmanship could ever realize.

Success and failure are relative and very complex issues here. Success, the poet seems to be saying, lies in endless growth and striving after perfection and not in its actual attainment. The "mistaken" arm in Rafael's painting is not a defect but a sign that although he was not technically faultless, the grandeur of his conceptions was such that he could overcome such handicaps. Browning has a "philosophy of the imperfect", an idea that ceaseless striving is better than effortless perfection. A certain spiritual, ennobling value is propounded in relation to ambitious "failure", which is absent from everyday "success." The connection between art and morals is precisely what most interests Browning in much of his work—indeed; it much preoccupied Victorian society in general. Browning and his contemporaries asked, What can be forgiven morally in the name of aesthetic greatness? Does art have a moral responsibility? Indeed, Andrea's paintings in particular, which often depict religious scenes, get right at the heart of the art-morality question, especially given his works' imbalance between technical skill and lofty intentions.

Ironically even though the general assessment is that Andrea sacrificed his art to his marriage, he does not even have a really happy or successful marriage. Lucrezia obviously has several entanglements and Andrea "allows" them in a rather pathetic fashion. She is to Andrea "my everybody's moon" – not "his" in any real sense. It is almost as if Andrea to a certain extent actively "encourages" Lucrezia's infidelities and her lack of understanding with his art- it provides him with the perfect alibi. He does not have to face up to the consequences of his actions so long as he can keep on repeating that it was all because his wife did not love him, did not understand him, inspire him etc. to this extent, the initial part at least of the poem is a brilliant expose of bad faith, casuistry and evasion.

Andrea seems not to know himself at all even at those moments when he is being apparently most confiding. Just at the moment when he says something appealingly revealing like he cannot enter the true artists heaven like Michelangelo or Raphael because he is too earthbound, he says something patently untrue like he is not influenced by the world's praise or blame. He is literally hiding in his house as he is scared of the comments and sneers of the followers of the king who he had betrayed. What is more he is almost childishly elated when he remembers that Michelangelo had once compared him favorably to Raphael. Obviously praise and blame mean very much indeed to him, and he is deceiving himself or lying when he says that he is indifferent. We begin to suspect that it is not perhaps self revelation that is taking place, but self presentation. And this adds a further dimension of complexity to the dramatic monologue. Katherine Kelly remarks that "Browning's Andrea del Sarto, is finally a voice directing talk about itself to itself". It seems possible however that Andrea is intended to be uncannily aware not only of Lucrezia but of an audience beyond.

Andrea tries to rationalize- first by blaming God. "Love, we are in God's hand? / So free we seem, so fettered fast we are. This brings up the vexed question of free will and morality. Andrea conveniently ignores the small matter of his conscious choices and argues that God controlled him. But that argument falls flat as he has to accept finally that whatever he did, he did out of free choice and what is more, if he had to live his life over he would repeat his actions as otherwise he would lose Lucrezia, his love and obsession. "So- still they overcome/ Because there's still Lucrezia, - as I choose." Next he tries more realistically to blame Lucrezia, she wanted too much money, she did not love him, she did not care for his art, she was unfaithful – the charges reach their climax when he says that if only she had inspired him, he might have done better –"Had you . . . given me soul, We might have risen to Rafael, I and you". But an innate honesty intervenes at this point and makes him admit that he himself is the one at fault in the ultimate analysis. Rafael or Michelangelo were not dependent on a wife's favors for their inspiration, they found it within themselves. "What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?" he asks, facing up to his own inadequacy. It is this final honesty about his failings that is endearing in Andrea despite the exasperation induced by his litany of complaints which comes close to being a "whine". He judges himself to be a failure and hopes for a second chance only in Heaven. Browning presents us with a self-absorbed, slightly warped speaker who, in the process of unburdening his soul, either recalls or receives a redemptive vision; this vision offers him the potential for salvation (whether theological, emotional, or aesthetic) but, in the end, he fails to act on it, and his life goes on as before. The realism and the remnants of hope expressed here add to the poignancy of "what might have been". Since Andrea, the "faultless painter" was noted for his lack of "grandeur, richness, and force," he is a perfect example of Browning's philosophy of "failure in success." Still, the poem is not just the vehicle for a moral, but a study in character.

In fact, it is partly Lucrezia's very separateness from him, his soul separated from his body, which supposedly causes his fall from greatness as an artist. Andrea laments that he has fallen far below himself, that he has not realized all the artistic possibilities of his genius, half accusing, from the better side of his nature, half excusing, the woman who has had no sympathy with him in the high ideals which, with her support, he might have realized, and thus have placed himself beside Angelo and Rafael. In patriarchal Victorian society, the pleasure of looking is a role specifically reserved for men, whereas the female always assumes the role of object. In poems such as "My Last Duchess" and "Andrea Del Sarto" paintings depicting a female model actually create viewing conditions which facilitate for the male viewer an exercise in voyeurism. Andrea blames his incapacity to attain the sublime on his wife and model Lucrezia, claiming that her greed prompts her to betray him as both husband and artist, by inducing him to vilify his art in a quest for money rather than glory. The psychological pathos and drama in his monologue lie precisely in the ambiguous link connecting Andrea's artistic failure and his relationship with his wife: on the one hand, Lucrezia's greed and moral emptiness are the motive for her husband's failure; on the other hand, she represents the painter's alibi for that failure, and thus hints at deeper psychological dimensions.

Andrea follows up with the idea that religion, and his fractured self are keeping him in this crippled position. Andrea doesn't seem to want to be as restricted as he is, he complains so much, but he does acknowledge that he has ***chosen*** this particular chamber of restriction.

What Browning accomplishes is not merely a grotesque and heavy irony, but even a type of modesty. For all his egotism, Andrea never goes so far as to suggest that his inability to reach beyond his limitations forbids anyone else achieving transcendence. He freely admits that others are able to overcome their limitations and "rise up to heaven". Andrea sees the struggle as what makes the work worthwhile. He doesn't have to struggle for perfection. He may struggle, however, to evoke passion and tension in his painting, but his technique and craftsmanship has no passion to give. He cannot create emotion, only technical perfection.

Artistically, Andrea panders to material-minded art collectors and is a slave to a realistic tradition which ignores spiritual overtones in its care for anatomic fidelity. Andrea's virtuosity is revealed as simply a skill acquired through patient mastery of others' techniques, handed down in the schools and now corrupted for venal ends. Artists who cannot range outside their own areas of limited expertise like Browning's Andrea Del Sarto are mere technicians, content with only the possible, and therefore unable of even attempting to scale the greatest heights. Andrea is the "faultless" painter, no line of his drawing ever goes astray; his hand expressed adequately and accurately all that his mind conceives; but for this very reason, precisely because he is "the faultless painter", his work lacks the highest qualities of art. And in the youthful Raphael, whose technical execution fell so far beneath his own, Andrea recognizes the true master. It is worthier, to fall just short of something truly spectacular than to succeed perfectly at something less. Technical perfection cannot match up to flawed brilliance. Browning argues through Andrea, because the passion of striving is absent from technically perfect art it is pale and mechanical, while great art that has slight imperfections, in spite of these imperfections, perhaps even because of these imperfections, is often ablaze with the passion of the artist's soul.

10. 5. Dramatic Monologue.

The dramatic monologue is a form perfected by Browning. In such a poem a single speaker utters the entire poem at a critical moment. The speaker has a listener within the poem, but we too are listeners, and we learn about the speaker's character from what they say. In fact, the speaker may reveal certain unpleasant or weak aspects of his character unintentionally. William Harmon defines the dramatic monologue as a "poem that reveals a "soul in action" through the speech of one character in a dramatic situation. The character is speaking to an identifiable but silent listener at a dramatic moment in the speaker's life. The circumstances surrounding the conversation, one side of which we "hear" are made clear by implication, and an insight into the character of the speaker may result." Andrea is the speaker revealing himself to us in a crucially self analytical mode and Lucrezia is the silent listener within the poem. The importance of silence in Browning's dramatic monologues is significant. The speakers' speech has to be connected to the silence which surrounds them to convey their full meaning. Though Lucrezia says nothing in our hearing, she is interrogating Andrea or at least forcing him to go on interrogating himself by the very fact of her charged silence. This is reflected in the many ambiguities in the poems. Browning refuses to conclusively answer any of the questions raised by his poetry, instead trapping the reader in an endless cycle. According to Kenneth Allott " Browning was a great intellectual and spiritual ventriloquist and it may be that he spoke most convincingly through the mouth of other men because he had no *voice* that he could certainly call his own because there was for Browning nothing but congeries of heterogeneous impulses all laying equal claim to his allegiance."

10. 6. Criticism.

"The true glory of art is that in its creation there arise desires and aspirations never to be satisfied on earth, but generating new desires and new aspirations, by which the spirit of man can mount to God himself. The artist who can realize his ideal completely in marble or color or music has thereby missed the highest gain of art. The whole poem, "Andrea Del Sarto" has been divided to the exposition of this thought." – Edward Dowden.

"Andrea's monologue, erected as a hollow edifice of self-definition, reveals itself to be a construct of imaginative self-immolation and artistic immobility—a prison house of creative default**.** Being "faultless," Andrea has fabricated the perfect walls of self-enclosure with the sturdiest of materials: bricks fired in the oven of egocentricity and fused into place with the mortar of disaffirmation. Walls operate not only as literal barriers in Andrea's monologue, but as metaphorical ones as well. The ache of his solitary confinement is heightened by the emerging contours of self-awareness. He anguishes over what he might have been when his life was still an open field of possibilities. The knowledge of his own defections is a whetstone upon which he sharpens his self-pity. As he acknowledges his shallow choices, his duplicities, and his false aspirations, he creates another structure wherein he regretfully wallows. Beneath the weight of this regressive inertia, Andrea becomes further caught in a constricting screen of words; he is plagued by the pain of a personal and artistic incapacity to sustain purposeful action and to meet challenges without swerving. Contending that his "misfortune" is rooted in Lucrezia's beguilement and emotional abuse, Del Sarto is, however, not skilled enough at verbal sleight-of-hand to hide the fact that his adversity is self-scripted and self-inflicted. His yearn-

ing, and his failure, to transform Lucrezia's profane sensuality into the Madonna's transcendent sanctity certainly suggests that he is repelled by matters of flesh in general and by sexuality in particular. By striving to revise and recreate that which he fears and abhors, Del Sarto manufactures a psychological barricade which disrupts the intimate distance between spirituality and instinctual behavior. In his refusal to accept, grasp, or balance the numinous and the corporeal, Del Sarto succeeds in walling himself away from the unrealized harmonizing properties of his own body and soul." – Keith Polette

"In "Andrea Del Sarto", the artist calls his wife to sit by the window with him to look out at the city, while he talks to her silent form about his work as an artist, his goals, and his failures. In this poem, the artist is restrained or has restraints placed upon him, as he chooses, by the four walls of the room in which he sits and the window from which he looks out. He is also indebted to the beautiful body of his wife Lucrezia. What most pervades the speaker's tone is a sense of victimization. Andrea distances himself from his subsumed "other" in order to better patronize her, and inspire a sense of pity for his own plight. He appropriates the aspects of Lucrezia that are most useful to himself. Andrea "supposes" that Lucrezia might possibly be of the capacity to look back on others, but instead of making the action of the phrase the event of her looking back, he writes that her viewers are looked back on "while" she looks, not in her looking. This implies that "while" Lucrezia looks, there is some other action occurring. Andrea's voice is narrating this hypothetical situation, so, possibly, Andrea is the one who is looking back on her behalf. This is supported in the fact that he also constantly directs gaze, whether towards whatever objects he deems important at the moment, or back towards the room in which they sit enclosed together". – April Freely.

"Browning's imagination seized on Vasari's statement that "there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his [Andrea's] nature," and presented a man whose high capabilities were undermined by an essential weakness" – Walter E. Houghton.

"Andrea has, for instance, a predilection for enclosure, and he imputes this particular preference of his to everything around him: because he himself feels "safer" in his limited mediocrity, he assumes that the trees he sees feel "safer" inside the convent-wall."– Erik Grey.

"The reasons for the failure of Andrea Del Sarto are at once complex and symptomatic of the iconoclastic bias which carries over into Browning's aesthetic thinking. Reluctant to acknowledge where he has gone wrong, Andrea, initially at least, hypocritically pretends to exist in the realm of his imagining." - E.D.H. Johnson.

"Andrea is unable to make a choice, and thus wavers between claiming and regretting his allegiance to his wife. He alternates between extolling his physical possession of her as compensation enough and making invidious comparisons between the "wifeless" masters' work and his own. He ends up simply confronting his failure once again, simultaneously blaming it on Lucrezia and claiming it as his own" – Donatella Izzo.

"In "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea Del Sarto", Browning addresses the problems suffered by men being true to their natures in a world which expects more of them. Though they are compelled to live as others wish them to live, to seek higher goals, they are ill-suited by their natures to live within

the constraints thus imposed. This chafing between their desire to follow their natures and the restrictions imposed by the expectations of the world around them leads them into conflict. Andrea feels he has done wrong and expresses regret. He sees that the price he pays for keeping his wife is that other painters "reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me." This is the plight of man- to be caught between heaven and earth; to be forced to choose between flesh and glory. Both Andrea and Fra Lippo are men whose natures compel them to cling to fleshly pleasures, at risk of severe sanctions from society, and at the expense of a greater glory lost. They both seem aware that they are not living up to a higher standard; Andrea even expresses regret for his sins. Neither seems to seriously have considered change— it would require they give up what they love most. Fra Lippo can not give up all women. Andrea can not give up the woman who is, to him all women. Both must struggle through their lives, between what they desire, and what they may have." –Michael Reichold.

"Writer's block, Artistic block. It's a self-imposed paralysis of the mind. In their minds, artists perceive—not necessarily clearly see, but *sense*—this perfect and profound *idea*. This bubble of creativity forms and we clumsy, gossipy humans yearn to share it with others. But then the paradox appears. How can we possibly recreate that unblemished orb, that notion, in the tangible world, without somehow changing it in the transition? How do we get the point across? The idea is so fragile, so important... Confronted with our own inadequacy, we are terrified that our flawed hands will destroy the idea. Browning's Andrea speaks of "amateur" painters—at least, those with inferior techniques—who stretch themselves to the limit, striving to accomplish work of much less accuracy than his and "there burns a truer light of God in them" than in Andrea's own work. Why? Precisely because success does not come easily to them and because they have to work for it."– R. Quimby.

"In "Andrea Del Sarto," in which the silence of the painter's wife, Lucrezia, is motivated not by fear, as in "My Last Duchess," but by indifference. I can never imagine her listening to Del Sarto's words, but rather for the whistle-signal of her "cousin" outside. Del Sarto's monologue is to some degree a delay tactic to keep her indoors with him for once. While, however, she is temporarily held captive by the painter's desire to speak—and perhaps by a momentary but shallow sense of politeness—the apparent irrelevance of his speech to her behavior or thoughts is thematized in the poem precisely as the painter's own, crushing fault. His irrelevance is in fact the gist of his self-portrait—for which he knows he will be judged as an artist, and for which he judges himself now as a man. The poem exploits the ambiguity of silence: Lucrezia at once humors and dismisses him, as he seems well aware, by sitting with him at all; he wonders, hopelessly, if her acquiescence is a mark of favor. And yet simultaneously, she rejects him by not disagreeing with his negative self-delineation. Her judgment of him and her worst punishment as well, is implicit in her very silence." – Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor.

"The painter of Robert Browning's poem "Andrea Del Sarto" gives us much to think about. This is a man known as a faultless painter, a perfect technician who can execute any idea flawlessly but who lacks one crucial thing – a compelling style or vision of his own. The issue is focused with the much quoted "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp/Or what's a Heaven for?" Browning's painter raises in a peculiarly sharp way an issue that everyone struggles with sooner or later: the need to have goals that will stretch but not overwhelm us. Unlike the painter, whose reach 'is' his grasp, we

need to grasp for something not quite within our reach to give our lives a challenge and a meaning. If the goal is so beyond reach that we have no chance of attaining it, we end up disillusioned and bitter; if it is so close that it is easily reached, it will have no meaning. Browning uses his painter as a means of examining a central principle in human life. Once we encounter his poem, it becomes a permanent part of the way we think about ambition. No philosopher could have captured the principle so vividly, because abstract formulae will not do the job." – Kim Metzger.

"Browning, who analyzed, and perhaps overanalyzed, Andrea del Sarto as the "faultless painter," has, by dint of forcing us to consider what Andrea lacked, made us too forgetful of what he really possessed. Once made aware of the Florentine's limitations in passion and imagination, we tend, under the spell of Browning's genius, to give him insufficient credit even for his grace in composition, his pleasant coloring, his suave facility. And it is true that the greatest painters have something which Andrea somehow missed. But that is no reason for failing to recognize qualities which he did command in well-nigh flawless perfection." - Bliss Perry.

"Feminist critics as part of a project of asking readers to listen carefully for voices that are systematically silenced consider a Lucrezia who actively engages with the dominant culture represented by Browning's poem. They repudiate, by implication, Browning's Romantic typology of the beautiful woman as Muse." - Peggy Boegeman.

"In 'Andrea del Sarto' the reader and the absent 'Cousin' are both more intimate with the model, Lucrezia, than Andrea, her husband, is. In painting a picture for his wife's friend, Andrea half recognizes the disquieting truth that the lover is not usually the man who appears with the woman in the portrait but the spectator-owner at whom the woman is directing her gaze. Just as the proprietor of a portrait at whom a female model is looking exercises control and power over her, so Lucrezia's true lover is the friend for whom Andrea offers to paint his picture, not Andrea himself." – V. David Shaw.

"Browning valued most in the relationship between art and life is what Bakhtin would define as that which takes place on the boundary, on the threshold between one's own and someone else's consciousness. As readers of the dramatic monologue, we occupy a threshold space betwixt and between varying perspectives, a space which forces us to understand that truth and meaning, for Browning, were always expressed as a matter of potential—as that which is always worth seeking." – Karolle Lynn Wall.

"A dramatic monologue tilts seductively in the direction of lyric poetry, since it uses the first-person pronoun. According to Alan Seinfield, however, this lyric tilt turns out to be a mere "feint" because, unlike a private lyric poem, the monologue adopts a third-person or public view of its world. The "I" of the dramatic monologue is always a third-person public voice in disguise, a voice which is often teasingly at odds with the poet's private voice even when the poet appears to be using it as a mouthpiece. By occupying an imaginative space halfway between public and private worlds, Victorian monologues accurately reflect the uncertainties and doubts of a culture caught between two worlds, "one dead," as Matthew Arnold says, "the other powerless to be born". – W.D. Shaw.

10. 7. Sample Questions:

1. Andrea Del Sarto is Browning's Finest Dramatic monologue - Examine

2. The form of Dramatic monologue is effectively utilized in Andrea Del Sarto – Substantiate.

3. Consider Andrea Del Sarto as the soul study of the artist artistic failure – examine

4. Andrea is about infatuated unfortunate painter who tasted artistic failure – examine.

10. 8. Suggested Readings

1. Barnard Richards English Poetry of the Victorian Period – 1830-1890

2. Werdel Stacy Johnson. Sex and Marriage in Victorian Poetry 1975

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Lesson –11

“My Last Duchess”

-Robert Browning.

Contents:

11. 1. Biography.

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in Camberwell, England to Robert Browning Sr. and Sarah Anna Browning. His mother was an accomplished pianist and his father, a bank clerk, was also a scholar with an impressive private library. Most of Browning’s early education came from this collection of literature. Though he attended London University for a year he could not accept the constraints of formal learning and left to pursue his own plan of study.

Browning’s early poetry was influenced by the styles of both Byron and Shelley. In 1833 he anonymously published *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession*. Between 1834 and 1836 *The Monthly Repository* published several shorter poems by Browning. *Paracelsus* appeared in 1835 and was followed by *Sordello*. From 1837 to 1846 Browning attempted to write verse drama for the stage but without great success. He began to discover that his real talents lay in the dramatic monologue, a form in which a single character unconsciously reveals more than he realizes of himself in his speeches. Browning published *Bells And Pomegranates* between 1841 and 1846. It contained several of his best-known lyrics, such as “How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix”, and also a dramatic poem *Pippa Passes.*

Browning became an admirer of Elizabeth’s Barrett’s poetry in 1844 and began corresponding with her by letter. Their courtship lasted until 1846 when they were married in defiance of both her ill health and domineering father. The couple moved to Italy that same year and had a son, Pen, later in 1849. Her love for him was demonstrated in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, and he dedicated *Men and Women* to her. They lived in Italy until her death in 1861 after which Browning moved back to England with his son. In England, Browning wrote *The Ring And The Book* which dealt with narratives from 10 different perspectives of the same incident. *Men and Women* appeared in 1855 and

Dramatis Personae in 1864. *The Inn Album* appeared in the 1870's. His reputation continued to grow as indicated by the formation of the Browning Society. Browning died on December 12 1889, in Venice, on the same day that his final volume of verse, *Asolando*, was published. He is buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

11. 2. Introduction.

"My Last Duchess", published in 1842 is one of Browning's best known dramatic monologues. This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The note 'Ferrara' at the beginning of the poem indicates that the speaker of the poem is the Duke of Ferrara; this enables the reader to deduce Italy as the location, the class environment as aristocratic and Renaissance as the time Frame. The Duke is the speaker of the poem and the silent listener within the poem is an emissary who has come to discuss a possible remarriage of the recently widowed Duke. The emphasis in the title is on *last*, as the ending of the poem makes clear; the Duke is now negotiating for his next Duchess. Browning gives us a chilling portrayal of a Renaissance autocrat and he handles it very subtly so that the whole revelation seems to arise naturally out of the Duke's personality. In this poem, Browning not only depicts the inner thoughts of his speaker, but ironically allows the speaker to reveal his own failings and imperfections to the reader exactly when he is most secure in his egotistical conceit. The duke is motivated in all he does by a zealous pride of rank, but we see through the urbane demeanor to the cold and hollow shell of a man within. The Duke of Ferrara is jealous to an extreme degree not generally associated with the sound of mind. The crime of the Duchess is that of not living solely for the Duke's pleasure. She is put into a double bind, however - so prideful is the Duke that he refuses to tell her the nature of her crime. The true chill in the Duke's statement comes at the end of the poem, however, when he calmly shows off another of his paintings, this one a mythological piece. The most recent wife is reduced to a show-piece, objectified even more in death than she was in life. The duke tells us too much, just as he tells the emissary too much. Brilliantly, Browning has the Duke condemn himself out of his own mouth; although he offers us no judgment himself, the poet would have us judge the Duke and the age in which he ruled. Browning's primary interest is in the villain's psychology, but in vividly, fascinatingly revealing the Duke's motivations the poet reveals him as the product of a definite set of traditions. The Duke regards artists as names to conjure with, but also as social inferiors, lackeys who do his bidding and by their works attest to his refined tastes. Ironically, for the Duke the portrait of the duchess is better than the living duchess herself because he can control who sees and enjoys the portrait; the duchess was beyond his control. Browning allows the reader to assess the Duke for himself. The reader sees that such powerful Renaissance rulers were ruthless and rapacious. The Duke belongs to a particular context where art and its acquisition are to be considered over and above more humane concerns. The Duke remains a contradictory figure; he is a brutal, amoral murderer who possesses an apparent sensitivity for artistic taste.

11. 3. Paraphrase.

In this poem the speaker, the duke of Ferrara, is addressing a second character, an agent of an unnamed count whose daughter the duke plans to marry as his "last duchess" has died. As he shows

the visitor through his palace, he stops deliberately before a portrait of the late Duchess painted by the artist Fra Pandolph. The Duke starts to talk in a very confidential manner about the painting sessions the artist had with the Duchess and from there progresses to roundly criticizing the duchess's behavior. He claims she flirted with everyone, including the artist, had no sense of proper pride or dignity and did not appreciate the honor of being his wife! Her behavior in fact, seems quite natural and nice to us, she was friendly, sociable and unspoilt by pride of rank. But evidently, the Duke chose to misinterpret everything and we soon realize that he was in fact responsible for killing or at least disposing of his wife somehow: "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." After this startling revelation, the Duke coolly returns to the business at hand: arranging for another his next marriage. As the poem ends, the two men turn away from the portrait and go downstairs to join the rest of the company at the Duke's palace. As they go, the Duke casually points out one of his other works of art, a bronze statue of Neptune apparently made by another famous artist, Claus of Innsbruck.

11. 4. Analysis.

The poem has an eerie and chilling note right from the first line: "That's my last Duchess painted on the wall" Depending on the reader's inclination either "my" or "last" can be emphasized in this line. Either way the effect is equally disheartening. If "my" is emphasized, the duke reveals his sense of "owning" his wife; a person is reduced to a possession, to be casually pointed out to visitors. If "last" is emphasized, then we get the idea are like sequential collectibles to him, each to be replaced by a newer model when they become obsolescent.

Describing the painting, the Duke is careful to point out that it is curtained off and only he opens the curtains. This is ironic in the light of the fact that he later accuses his wife of having been too easily accessible. The duchess, who was open and friendly in life, is forced into aloof solitude after her death. However, now that her organic being is safely confined on canvas, the Duke seems to be more than willing to display the painting, witness his conspicuous parade of it in front of the envoy who is a total stranger. And clearly the envoy is not the first person to see the picture; others have seen it and even remarked on her expression. Apparently, "strangers" on seeing the picture noted it's "earnest glance" and it's "depth and passion". Indeed they noticed it so much that they looked as they would like to question the duke on how such an expression came to be. We wonder in the first place why the Duke had to go around displaying the picture to strangers and whether he is not imagining the spectator's reactions. We certainly never hear the envoi saying anything, and as the monologue progresses, it becomes increasingly likely that the whole thing arises from the Duke's paranoid brain.

Ferrara is overly keen to answer the unasked question of what gave rise to the look of "passion" in the face of the picture. The idea of sexual arousal is hinted at and though it is promptly dismissed, it continues to exist along the margins in a disquieting fashion. According to the Duke, she was too easily pleased, she blushed and the look of "passion" arose at the most trivial of compliments. The painter, the Duke speculates might have paid her a casual compliment and immediately her embarrassed, but not at all displeased, awareness that someone likes her reveals itself in a blush. The sum total of his complaint against the duchess was that "She had a heart – how shall I say? –too soon made glad." He feels that she should have been as stand-offish and proud as he is and should reserve even

the barest courtesies for his pleasure alone. This of course is the note of challenged possession, in his megalomaniac world view, he was being degraded if his wife, one of his 'trophies' allowed others to glimpse her smiles or was even polite to them. Browning himself said that "The Duke used his wife's supposed shallowness as an excuse—mainly to himself—for taking revenge on one who had unwittingly wounded his absurdly pretentious vanity, by failing to recognize his superiority in even the most trifling matters."

Paradoxically, the more contemptuous Ferrara is of his wife and the more he tries to pile up his self justifying indictments against her, the more we tend to approve of the late Duchess' character. Obviously she was sincere, simple, innocent and most emphatically not a snob like Ferrara himself. It is precisely for these likeable qualities that Ferrara indicts her and despises her. She was pleased by compliments and simple gifts and this appeared to Ferrara as if she was scorning what he could give her. She was, he says no doubt, happy at his gifts, "my gift of a nine-hundred-year old name" for example but she was also happy if a courtier got her a bough of cherries. She smiled on him, certainly, but his complaint is that she smiled on everyone else too! This, he tends to see as devaluing his gifts and demeaning his stature and authority. Browning leads the reader to conclude that the Duke found fault with his former wife because she did not reserve her attentions for him, his rank, and his power. More importantly, the Duke's long list of complaints presents a thinly veiled threat about the behavior he will and will not tolerate in his new wife.

Most exasperatingly, Ferrara does not even condescend to tell his wife that he is angry or to explain what he thinks she is doing wrongly. Lacking the cunning to discriminate publicly, to flatter Ferrara, she also could not detect his outrage; and he said nothing to her about what he felt. He goes so far as to almost admit that if he had given her any indication of his irritation, she would not have argued but would have submitted to his will. But even that according to him is not dignified enough, "- E'en then would be some stooping, and I choose/ Never to stoop." In order to be safe from his wrath, the duchess, if she could not share his temperament would have had to be clever enough to intuit his feelings without being told and to dissemble accordingly. Since she was not so equipped, she had to be punished, sacrificed at the altar of Ferrara's self importance.

As eavesdroppers to the Duke's incriminating speech, our moral indignation at his cold-blooded act is tempered by a fascination for his confidence, his effortless courtesy, his refined taste for art and a chilling amorality. That the envoy offers no protest to the Duke's silvery eloquence implies that he, too, has been overwhelmed by his host's ease of manner and moral judgment is temporarily suspended. However, our sympathy for the unfortunate late Duchess is always there. We warm to her natural, spontaneous generosity towards those of inferior rank, and her beneficent smile and innocence stand in stark contrast to the cynicism of the haughty Duke.

The punishment is announced in the chilling sentence "I gave commands; / Then all smiles stopped together." The immediate reaction is that the Duke has had his wife executed. Even if we consider the alternative possibility that he just divorced her and put her in a convent, it is a fate worse than death – Ferrara finally managed to control her as she is now a picture whose times and audiences of being exhibited are subject to his decision. The value of a commodity is in direct proportion to its scarcity and desirability; to make the Duchess more valuable, the Duke had her commodified, made

into a painting by a certified "Master" to which only the Duke himself controls the access. The living Duchess inconveniently took pleasure in things other than the Duke, her picture; the realistic representation of a photogenic woman is a suitable trophy for a collector in that it is a distillation of only her beauty and is not encumbered by embarrassing individual traits of behavior and personality. But it is also possible that the curtain over the portrait is meant by the Duke to protect himself from it's potency. The vividness of the portrait represents so fully what Ferrara felt about his wife that the effect of his demonstration leads the reader in a different direction.

When the duke casually says ". . . as if she ranked/ My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name/ With anybody's gift"; it clearly shows an importance placed upon ancestry, birthright, and a clear cut separation of the classes. It also portrays the speaker as an arrogant, egotistical member of the elite.

After this narrative which arouses intense indignation in the reader, the Duke moves seamlessly and with an almost inhuman *savoir-fair* to discussing his remarriage. Typically the item on top of the agenda is the dowry he hopes to get and his delayed assertion that the girl is his primary objective rings very hollow indeed!

The poem ends with Ferrara drawing the envoy's attention to another of the "objects" in his art collection, a Bronze figure of Neptune made by a famous sculptor. To hear him anyone would think that for the last few minutes, all he has been talking about is the aesthetics of connoisseurship – and perhaps that is all it really has been to him! This conclusion has ominous overtones in a suggestion that history could be repeated and that the new wife could end up as another picture on the wall, another object in Ferrara's collection. At this point, the whole poem takes on a new guise as a sinister warning that the new bride had better behave herself, or else….!

11. 5. Criticism.

"The complexity of unspoken social rules, gender interaction, and status-related power in the poem is worth noticing. The Duke's materialism seems to extend to his wife, as aspects of his possessiveness and need for (but lack of) control emerge in the monologue. In this world of status and wealth, the painting is the ultimate metaphor for the possessed and objectified wife. The painted image and the Count's representative give the Duke what he cannot get directly. The painting stands for the duchess; yet, it also stands for other things — power, control, pleasure, denial. The character of the Duke is revealed just as he thinks he is displaying the duchess; the revelation of the duchess is the revelation of the Duke. I am uncomfortable in the voyeurism suggested by the "none puts by/ The curtain I have drawn for you, but I". I learn of the secrecy, the discretion, the obsession surrounding the picture. The "virginity" of the painting is defiled by the Duke's uncovering of it. I am implicated in the duchess' defilement, since it is my act of reading that leads to her exposure. The reader becomes a voyeur, isolated and egoistically detached as he or she wanders through the Ferrara gallery, gazing at the late Duchess and her surviving, arrogant Duke. The true violence is not the Duke's act of murdering his wife, but rather the detachment of sensibility experienced by the reader as the reader grows more attuned to the Duke's character, witnessing all the figures in the poem as portraits, actors, and things to be watched." – Heidi Tedesco.

"We always drop unprepared into a Browning dramatic monologue, into several lives about which we know nothing. Soliloquies or speeches in a play have a context that orients the audience. Browning's readers have only a title and, in "My Last Duchess," a speech prefix, "Ferrara." Yet these are transfixing clues to a drama that we observe, helplessly, unable to speak or to act, as if we turned on a radio and, having selected a frequency, overhear a very private conversation, already in process and, as we may come very gradually to appreciate, about a murder and the maybe-killer's search for the next victim. Readers familiar with Browning's writing and sensitive to nuance perceive the speaker's pride and cold-bloodedness. Many miss the point and are astonished. "You say what? there's nothing in the poem about him killing her! where do you find that?" In his psychological portrait of the Duke of Ferrara Browning was as much inspired by his general notions of Italian court portraiture as he was by any specific individual—and yet there is an actual historical figure behind the poem.

Under Browning's hand, the Duke becomes a portrait of a type: the petty aristocrats who governed the city-states of Renaissance Italy. he finds the picture preferable to the original because he now has total control over who will view her and because she can no longer mar her beauty by unseemly behavior or emotion. Ironically, Browning's Duke, displaying the picture of his last Duchess, is himself a full-length portrait. His dignity, courtesy, cruelty, interest in sculpture, in painting, unites, unconsciously and without exaggeration, to show this cross-section of a Renaissance aristocrat. He literally encloses his Duchess in a tomb or convent and imaginatively encloses himself in an icon of possession, a bronze statue of Neptune, in order to avoid confronting what he perceives as an absence of meaning in his surroundings, in his marriage, and in himself." – Ian Lancashire.

"The appeal of Browning's Duke sometimes has is because there is someone like him somewhere in every reader; and, although Browning knows better than to attempt an outright exorcism, his poetry has a salutary if not always flattering way of making readers confront this ducal reader or Duke within" – G. Tucker.

"The dramatic action, renders the poem "a novel [which] in about sixty lines conveys a sense of the infinite complexity of life, of the under and overtones of existence"- Thomas Blackburn.

"We enter into the poem at the side of the envoy, and at that level we feel the pull of the Duke's commanding rhetoric. In order to read the poem, we must create the scene in imagination, which means "losing ourselves" within it, forgetting, for the moment, our real, present surroundings in favor of active involvement in the dramatic situation. Our entry is facilitated by its most striking feature, which is the way the Duke so directly addresses us. His narrative in the center of the poem is carefully framed by the first ten lines and the last ten, in which he addresses someone as "you." Because we do not discover until after he has told his tale that this second person is in fact present in the poem, at the moment of our reading we can only assume that it is us to whom he is speaking. We are slightly disoriented, on a first reading, by that direct address, and we recognize that an effort is being made to suggest that we are the silent partner in a conversation; even the omission of quotation marks helps sustain the illusion that we have encountered a character who is speaking directly to us. Trusting that our curiosity about what is going on in the poem will keep us reading despite our lack of information about the character of the auditor, Browning leaves us only one source for that information, the Duke's monologue." – Glenn Everett.

"While the Duke tried in vain to fully possess the Duchess when she was alive, once he gave commands to have her smiles stopped, he was able to fully possess her—as a piece of artwork, the portrait he had painted of her some time before her death. In fact, this painting may have been what eventually killed the Duchess. Once the Duke had the portrait painted, he had no need for the real Duchess anymore. He had the best of both worlds—the beauty of the Duchess, which he could now fully possess, and the absence of the actual person he could not possess. The Duke, in a way that proves his possessiveness, exhibits the portrait of his late wife as the object he has convinced himself that she is. He likes to show off his possessions and then explain the suffering he went through to finally possess what he feels is probably the greatest piece of art he owns. He likes this possession because it brings attention to him. In person the Duchess was a nuisance because he could not possess her. Framed, the object of inquiries which appeal to his vanity and, therefore, the subject of what he considers a great portrait, she was kept in his art gallery. The Duke wants to posses her because she brings attention to him. There is another large reason that the Duke needs this possession of the Duchess. He was very insecure when she was alive because everyone could make her smile, not just him. He can now turn that smile on or off at will, simply by pulling on a rope. There are many reasons that the Duke wanted to posses the Duchess. There is one main reason, though, that underlies everything else about the obsessive possessiveness of the Duke. The fact that the Duchess exuded freedom was what made the Duke so obsessive about possessing her. This freedom that the Duchess exhibited, when she rode her white mule or received gifts from different people, was something that the Duke could not live with. This freedom is the underlying cause of the possessiveness of the Duke, and the eventual erasure of the Duchess' smile." – Kevin Delecki.

"The specific historical setting of the poem harbors much significance: the Italian Renaissance held a particular fascination for Browning and his contemporaries, for it represented the flowering of the aesthetic and the human alongside, or in some cases in the place of, the religious and the moral. Thus the temporal setting allows Browning to again explore sex, violence, and aesthetics as all entangled, complicating and confusing each other: the lushness of the language belies the fact that the Duchess was punished for her natural sexuality. The Duke's ravings suggest that most of the supposed transgressions took place only in his mind. Like some of Browning's fellow Victorians, the Duke sees sin lurking in every corner. The Duchess is nevertheless victims of a male desire to inscribe and fix female sexuality. The desperate need to do this mirrors the efforts of Victorian society to mold the behavior—sexual and otherwise—of individuals. For people confronted with an increasingly complex and anonymous modern world, this impulse comes naturally: to control would seem to be to conserve and stabilize. The Renaissance was a time when morally dissolute men like the Duke exercised absolute power, and as such it is a fascinating study for the Victorians: works like this imply that, surely, a time that produced magnificent art like the Duchess's portrait couldn't have been entirely evil in its allocation of societal control—even though it put men like the Duke in power." – Melissa Martin.

"The poem affords the reader a glimpse into the mind of the unwitting Duke via his conversation with the envoy, laying bare his jealousy, possessiveness, and controlling personality. However, "My Last Duchess" goes beyond merely illustrating the defects of the Duke. The poem functions as a vehicle that illustrates the paradoxical, illusory, and ironic nature of control**.** The illusory quality of

the control he appears to command becomes manifest: regardless of the Duke's manipulation, control over speech, and careful placement of words, the envoy's thoughts are ultimately his own. The Duke is powerless over the envoy's and the reader's view of him. The Duke takes solace in exerting control over the portrait of the Duchess; he says, "Since none puts by/The curtain I have drawn for you, but I" (lines 9-10). The Duke can finally keep all her smiles to himself. Yet, this is a morose notion: he is attempting to exert control over an inanimate representation of the Duchess. Ironically, even this wielding of control is fallacious: he is compulsively compelled to show "strangers" the picture in a vain attempting to refortify his belief that, over it, he possesses some power (line 7). It would seem, then, that by drawing him back again and again, the painting controls him more than he controls the painting; the Duke's power is ultimately denied. The central paradox of the poem: the more control is exerted, the more it is subverted. Additionally, close reading uncovers the envoy's actions through the words of the Duke. The envoy's attempt to escape the Duke's presence illustrates the Duke's powerlessness and the illusory nature of control: human beings are ultimately autonomous and no one has governance over opinion or point of view.

The Italian duke in "My Last Duchess" avoids any self-examination of his faults or even an acknowledgement that he is flawed. The power wielded by the duke is equated with his level of depravity as he executed his wife because of his gratuitous jealousy and monumental pride, but under the pretext of alleged impropriety. The enormity of his wickedness is emphasized by his exquisite taste in Art as this suggestion of high culture derives a theatrical quality from the insane murder of his wife. He inadvertently reveals his own character through his speech and the image of an over-zealous, over-possessive ***collector*** emerges. The duke lives a perfect marriage vicariously through his paintings and the portrait of the duchess is ironically more suited to him as his wife."- J.M. Beckham.

"Ironically, the ostensibly male-authorized text of the portrait subverts male authority, effecting a double displacement—a displacement that, itself, displaces. The living Duchess is shifted and relocated onto an icon, becoming a counter text which then deconstructs the Duke's authority to textualize." – Joseph A. Dupras.

"Usually in a dramatic monologue, the body of that shadowy figure, the text's implied listener that "you," is intentionally kept out of the spotlight by the speaker, whose sole purpose is an often narcissistic self-delineation. A perfect example of this is the infamous Duke of Browning's "My Last Duchess." So much attention is paid to the Duke and his rhetorical manipulation of the envoy that little attention is paid to the third figure present, the painted figure of the Duchess herself. Her imposed silence does coincide with oblivion, since she is both silent and dead. And yet, is she truly oblivious? Literally, of course, the answer is yes. Figuratively, however, reports of her death may have been exaggerated. For what is most remarkable about this figure? That she looks "as if she were alive." The picture so accurately portrays the essential generosity of spirit) that animates her face in life and death alike, so that whether the Duke realizes it or not he has not, in fact, escaped her as an irritant. This painted portrait powerfully provokes the desire for dialogue about its subject, and the reason for this is not simply because the Duchess is so strikingly "there" as if alive, but also because she is so silent in her very presence. Her image alone tells a story that strangers "read," and while the Duke would control the interpretation of this visual text, he betrays a recognition that the viewer's interpretation must already have begun. A man obsessed with possession, whether of property or persons, the Duke is finally "possessed" to the extent of obsession himself by the life-like figure, with its immortalized "glance" over which he has no more control now than he did before; the sympathetic

glance that "went everywhere" and the blush that favored all continues to do so. He can control it only by not drawing the curtains, but on his own showing he seems to have a compulsive desire to display the portrait. The resistance to the Duke's narcissistic self-delineation, to put it another way, comes from the "liveliness" of the painting itself." – Jennifer Wagner Lawlor.

"We suspend moral judgment because we prefer to participate in the duke's power and freedom, in his hard core of character fiercely loyal to itself. Moral judgment is in fact important as the thing to be suspended, as a measure of the price we pay for the privilege of appreciating to the full this extraordinary man. The nobleman does not hurry on his way to business, the connoisseur cannot resist showing off yet another precious object, the possessive egotist counts up his possessions even as he moves towards the acquirement of a new possession, a well-dowered bride."- Robert Langbaum.

"The "truth" of the Duchess' life exists only in a series of verbal and pictorial transactions by men. Browning demonstrates to me how deeply women have been oppressed by male language, and by exploiting the form of the dramatic monologue, Browning becomes both a participant in and a critic of this artistic tradition." - Cynthia Scheinberg.

"The Duchess's spirit may haunt the poem but it is her beauty, perfectly plasticized upon the canvas, that will endure, and Art is the medium by which this has been achieved. Art claims only that part of the Duchess which is of interest to the connoisseur husband – her loveliness – and, by so perfectly rendering his subject in oil so that she looks "as if she were alive"; Fra Pandolf has succeeded in raising Art to the level of Nature. The embodiment of artistic sympathy – the Duke – survives; the luckless young bride is tossed easily aside, only her beauty preserved. There is also the suggestion that the Duke has rehearsed this speech and that his attempts at searching for the correct means of articulating how he feels are a part of the pantomime of his performance. The Duke's monologue shows Browning's interest in the way people use speech to try to justify their actions, how speech becomes, ultimately, a means of rationalization. The Duke is not psychopathic; he does have a motive for the killing even though it is scarcely justifiable. However, the logic of his argument becomes such that his commands are explicable in the context of the depraved universe he inhabits. The setting of the poem is Renaissance Italy. The color and richness of the period is part of its fabric and is in keeping with the Duke's cloak and dagger criminality. Art, to this man, carries all before it and we acknowledge that the Duke's predominant interest with possessing artifacts, of which the disarmingly lifelike portrait of his last wife is one of the most recent acquisitions, is, by his own standards at least, above adherence to moral law." – Adam Naylor.

11. 6. Sample Questions:

1. Browning avoids the judgment of failed Love – examine in the tight of my last Duchess
2. Browning brings back the period of Indian Renaissance – Examine

11. 7. Suggested Readings :

1. Bernard Richards. English Poetry of the Victorian Period – 1830 – 1810.
2. Wendell stacy Johnson. Sex and Marriage in Victorian Poetry. 1975

Lesson Writer

Prof. Sindu Meenan

Lesson - 12.

The Mayor of Casterbridge

-Thomas Hardy.

Contents:

12. 1. Biography.

Thomas Hardy, the son of a stonemason, was born at Upper Bockhampton in Dorset, on June 2, 1840. Hardy's mother, who had literary tastes, provided for his education. After schooling in Dorchester, Hardy was apprenticed to an architect and worked in an office which specialized in restoration of churches. In 1874 Hardy married Emma Gifford. They moved to London and Hardy started to write poems which idealized the rural life. In 1867 Hardy left London, returned to Dorset and resumed work briefly again in architecture. As his poetry was not appreciated, Hardy turned to fiction. He once commented to a friend that he would never have written a line of prose if he could have earned his living as a poet, yet it is as the author of some of the greatest novels ever written in the English language that he is best remembered. People who have never read his works have at least heard of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.

Hardy's first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* was written in 1867, but the book was rejected by many publishers and he destroyed the manuscript. His first book that gained notice was *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874). After its success Hardy devoted himself entirely to writing and produced a series of novels, among them *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) came into conflict with Victorian morality. Hardy's next novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895) aroused even more debate as the story challenged all moral conventions and norms of the day. In 1896, disturbed by the public uproar over the unconventional subjects of two of his greatest novels, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy announced that he would never write fiction again.

During the remainder of his life, Hardy published several collections of poems. His poetry is terse and unromantic, and its pervasive theme is man's futile struggle against cosmic forces. His verse

drama *The Dynasts* (written 1903–8), is a historical epic of the Napoleonic era, expressing the view that history, too, is guided by forces far more powerful than individual will. Hardy's vision reflects a world in which Victorian complacencies were dying but its morality was not, and in which science had eliminated the comforting certainties of religion.

Hardy later became the president of the Society of Authors, received the Order of Merit from King George V and in 1912 he received the gold medal of the Royal Society of Literature. Emma Hardy died in 1912 and in 1914 Hardy married his secretary, Florence Dugdale.

Many of Hardy's novels are set against the bleak and forbidding Dorset landscape (referred to as Wessex in the novels). The physical bleakness of the topography reflects the cosmic harshness of an indifferent, if not malicious, universe. Hardy's characters, who are for the most part of the poorer rural classes, are sympathetically and often humorously portrayed but he never diminishes the tragic potential in their existence. Their lives are ruled not only by nature but also by rigid Victorian social conventions.

Hardy often wrote from his personal knowledge and experience. His characters were drawn from people, real and remembered, and his settings were in locations known to him. He did move buildings and places from their precise geographic positions to suit the requirements of his plot. He also changed the names, to indicate that though the places he described were real, the events were fiction.

From 1920 through 1927 Hardy worked on his autobiography, which was disguised as the work of Florence Hardy. It appeared in two volumes (1928 and 1930). Hardy's last book published during his lifetime was *Human Shows* (1925). Hardy died in Dorchester, on January 11, 1928. He was cremated in Dorchester and his ashes were buried with impressive ceremonies in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

12. 2. Introduction.

The title and subject matter of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* reflect a time in English history when the common people had little opportunity to express themselves in a political realm. Mixen-Lane, where the villagers behave in unbridled and malicious fashion, for example, is a comprehensive portrayal of country folk at their worst, in extreme isolation, separated by makeshift bridges from the rest of society.

The novel also sheds light on the mechanization of several areas in agriculture, including various public perceptions of the new technologies. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is set in a land that has clung on to the age old beliefs of the farming folk for centuries. The old order symbolized by Henchard is confronted by the new scientific spirit represented by Farfrae.

One of the forces of nature is cruel Fate, which usually works through chance and irony. Chance introduces new characters and twists unexpectedly and irony works upon the people who are already there, making the best laid plans go wrong. Yet it is not ***only*** the whims of fate that leads the

characters to their downfall. When *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was first published in serial form, Hardy wrote, "It is not improbabilities of incident but improbabilities of character that matter." This is the basic theme of the novel, which has the additional title, ***"The Story of a Man of Character."*** Fate may create the situations for the characters, but in the end their personalities determine how they will react.

It is significant that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was originally published in serial form and this can be noted by the many mini-climaxes embedded in the narrative. Eventually, it was published as a book in 1886. In his preface to this novel Hardy writes, "Readers of the following story are asked to bear in mind that in the days recalled by the tale, the home Corn Trade on which so much of the action turns, had an importance that can hardly be realized by those accustomed to the sixpenny loaf of the present date and to the present indifference of the public to harvest weather. The incidents narrated arise mainly out of three events which chanced to arrange themselves in the order and at or about the intervals of time here given in the real history of the town called Casterbridge and the neighboring. They were the sale of a wife by her husband, the uncertain harvests which immediately preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws and the visit of a royal personage to the aforesaid part of England." It is clear that the period Hardy intended to portray was immediately after the repeal of the Corn Law in 1846. Until then the rich landowners had the perfect excuse for exploiting the poor farmers.

Meanwhile other important changes were taking place. New systematic proceedings were replacing the old methods of agriculture and industry, mechanization was ousting men from their traditional occupations. As a result, people were migrating in huge numbers to towns and cities looking for some employment and the tide of urbanization was in full flow. The face of the land was changing as big estates encroached on and absorbed small farms. In short, England was in flux due to the industrial revolution.

These changes were very apparent in the rich farming lands of Southwest England, the area Hardy called Wessex. Most of Hardy's novels are set in this imaginary county which consists of Dorsetshire and other western English counties. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* Hardy's regional knowledge and architectural background are

Also clearly evident. A contrasting treatment of both the old and the new, of country and town are woven into the novel. Michael Henchard belongs to the old order and is symbolically defeated by Farfrae who stands for the winds of change. Several factors contribute to Henchard's downfall-his refusal move with the times, his tragic flaw of pride, his intense nature combined with lack of self control and finally Hardy's philosophy that the human predicament was essentially tragic, with an unequal contest between the individual and a malignant fate. Many critics accuse Hardy of an undue pessimism, but we need to remember that he was living in an era when science had called all the old "truths" in question. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* reflects this conflict.

Synopsis.

Michael Henchard is traveling with his wife, Susan, looking for employment as a hay-trusser. He gets drunk, and in an auction that unexpectedly turns serious, sells his wife and their baby daugh-

ter, Elizabeth-Jane, to Newson, a sailor, for five guineas. Next day, Henchard regrets what he has done and searches for his wife and daughter. He cannot find them and ashamed of what he has done, he vows that he will not drink alcohol for twenty-one years. Eighteen years later, believing that Newson is dead, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane seek Henchard; Elizabeth-Jane believes he is merely a long-lost relative. Arriving in Casterbridge, they learn that Henchard is the mayor. Henchard and Susan decide that Elizabeth-Jane should be shielded from knowing about the disgraceful wife sale. So they plan to remarry but act as if they had met only recently and developed a new attachment. Meanwhile, Henchard hires Donald Farfrae, a young Scotchman, as the new manager of his corn business. Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae are attracted to each other. However, Henchard starts resenting Farfrae, as the younger man consistently does better than he does, both in business and personal relations. He asks Farfrae to leave his business and to end his courtship of Elizabeth-Jane. Susan falls ill and dies soon after her remarriage to Henchard. Henchard reads a letter that she had left behind and learns that Elizabeth-Jane is not his daughter but Newson's and becomes estranged from her. Elizabeth-Jane finds it uncomfortable to go on living with Henchard and accepts the offer of a mysterious lady who has just arrived in Casterbridge to live with her instead. The strange lady turns is revealed as Lucetta Templeman, a woman with whom Henchard was involved before Susan returned. Lucetta had come to Casterbridge hoping to marry Henchard but she and Farfrae fall in love and are eventually married. Henchard's fortunes have declined dramatically with his financial situation being almost as bad as it was in the beginning and Farfrae is now the Mayor instead. Lucetta now asks Henchard to return to her all the letters she has sent him. On his way to deliver the letters, the messenger reads the letters aloud in an inn. When they realize that Lucetta and Henchard have been romantically involved, the villagers cruelly plan to hold a "skimmity-ride," a humiliating symbolic parade portraying Lucetta and Henchard together. The event takes place one afternoon when Farfrae is away. Lucetta faints upon seeing the spectacle and dies soon after. Henchard has now grown closer to Elizabeth-Jane and she consents to live with him even in his now poverty ridden state as she still thinks he is her father. The morning after Lucetta's death, Newson, who is actually still alive, comes to at Henchard's house and asks for Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard, terrified at the thought of losing her tells him that she is dead and Newson leaves unhappily. Elizabeth-Jane stays with Henchard but also begins to develop a relationship with Farfrae. One day, Henchard learns that Newson has returned to town, and he decides to leave as he is too drained to keep up appearances any longer. Elizabeth-Jane is reunited with Newson and is shocked to know how Henchard had lied. They plan for a wedding between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae. Henchard comes back to Casterbridge on the night of the wedding to see Elizabeth-Jane, but she rejects him. He leaves, telling her that he will not return again. She soon regrets her behavior, and goes with Farfrae to find Henchard. Unfortunately, they are too late and find that Henchard has died alone and lonely. He has left a will: his tragic dying wish is to be forgotten by everyone.

12. 3. Analysis.

The setting often reflects the state of mind of the characters. In the beginning of the novel, there is a sense of decay. Nature reinforces the negative feelings that both Henchard and Susan have about their marriage. Ironically, this is the mood throughout the novel, the decaying corn is what leads Henchard to appoint Farfrae in the first place, but at the en, after Henchard's lonely and tragic death there is an almost over abundant fertility in nature. It is almost as if there was an elemental conspiracy to keep the fruits of the earth in abeyance till Henchard could no longer enjoy them.

Henchard frequently shows his darker side as a sharp contrast to his occasional goodness. His is a nature of constant paradoxes. He drinks himself into a state where he actually sells his wife and child. He does show great determination in tirelessly searching for his wife and daughter, and he takes responsibility for his actions in accepting the blame for the sale. However, he also shows his excessive pride when he refuses to tell anyone why he has lost his family. The tension between Henchard's good and bad qualities will be one major theme of the book that concerns itself with "a man of character." The fates *are* against him, but he contributes to and encourages his own downfall; Henchard would be spared his tragic destiny if he was not Henchard, but he would then also be diminished as a person.

The overall pessimism of the novel is summed up in the last sentence of the novel when Elizabeth-Jane thinks that in her youth she had learned that "happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain." This feeling is reflected in the life of the tragic hero Henchard who fights for an increasingly elusive personal happiness and is finally defeated by a dual pronged attack of character and fate. There is an ennobling quality in Henchard when he accepts his fate with dignity and declares "my punishment is not greater than I can bear." There is a certain Promethean grandeur in this acceptance of suffering and stoic endurance.

The primary dramatic scene within the novel is definitely the wife auction which will come back to haunt all the characters involved. The events of eighteen years ago still haunt the personalities of Susan and Henchard. Susan continues to be swayed by the power that men have over her and Henchard still has the initial paradoxes inherent in his character. Gender issues, market values, morality and public opinion are all brought together in this one episode. The wife is seen as "property"- and also, in her individual right as an encumbrance to be divested of at the earliest opportunity. However, even the "sale" is not conducted in an amoral consensus, hard as it is to accept, Hardy clearly says that Susan was convinced that she belonged to her "buyer" and thus justified the relationship to her own conscience. Public opinion is seen as a constant bugbear, even in his destitute state, Henchard is too proud to confide the actual circumstances of the sale in anyone and after becoming the Mayor; he is more paranoid than ever about safeguarding his reputation. Of course, all his precautions are of no real use as his secret is revealed in the most dramatic and public way possible, in an open court of law by the woman who was an actual witness to the sale. The court setting of this revelation is significant, though there is no formal arraignment; Henchard for all actual purposes is summoned, tried and found guilty at the bar of public opinion.

Casterbridge is described in great detail. Hardy's gift for description brings the town to life. Public opinion is a powerful force in Casterbridge, as we shall see through the novel and the villagers often set themselves up as judge and jury as in the case of the skimmity ride.

Hardy is very skilled in bringing his minor characters to life, a talent that is revealed in portrayal of the townspeople of Casterbridge. Because of their running commentary on all the events, the people serve as a Greek chorus in some sense. They are observers, but keenly interested and often shrewdly perceptive observers of the drama the main characters are enacting. They often make pertinent comments on the action and act as aids to understanding.

As L. Wright remarks, “Casterbridge is covered up with “clean linen,” false fronts, that will eventually be swept away to reveal the crookedness of the gossipy villagers. Henchard stands at the center of this, dressed in mayor’s clothing that covers the obscurity of his past”. His own pride leads Henchard to meet Susan in a secret place—he is too ashamed to meet her openly, lest some villagers learn the truth and mock him. Over time, pride, anger, and tactlessness will continue to bring him down.

The descriptions of the farmer’s connection to the weather are in keeping with the villagers’ beliefs earlier in the novel. As stated before, the people derive their strength from the nature and from the pagan beliefs, even as they progress and use the latest technology. The danger is in believing in the old ways too much, as Henchard does. Farfrae relies on sound business planning and that shrewd commonsense and as a result he is a success.

Hardy describes “the Ring” in Casterbridge in detail. It is a marvelous example of the author using his life experience with architecture. In keeping with Suzanne Keene’s analysis of architectural motifs, the description of the Ring’s shape and dimensions reflects Hardy’s many years as an architect. Yet the place, despite its architectural glory and reflection of cultures past, has a sinister aura. A spot such as the Ring is a common setting in Hardy’s works—an outdoor place, steeped in pagan superstition, with a grotesque past. Positive experiences are kept away by “the ghosts of the past” and. these past ghosts serve as “metaphors” for Henchard and Susan, who have their own past problems haunting them.

The punishment that Henchard deems fitting for himself is self-destruction, he also appropriately enough, returns to the depressing and barren side of town, assisting Nature in bringing himself down. As Farfrae continues his climb to power and acquires nearly everything that was earlier Henchard’s the latter gradually reverts to his original situation of twenty-one years ago. To complete the collapse, such a dire repetition of events leads Henchard to drink once again.

A royal visit to Casterbridge is a significant turning point as Henchard refuses to accept his fate and tries to meet the dignitary as a prominent councilor instead of in the crowd so as to signal his individuality and determination. His attempt to greet the royal visitor is merely an attempt to retain his personality and regain some of the dignity that fate has stolen. Naturally, the arrangements are thrown out of gear and Farfrae intervenes, adding fuel to Henchard’s anger and leading to direct physical confrontation later. But though Henchard is the stronger he realizes that he cannot defeat Farfrae in any essential way except by brute force. Farfrae is capable of taking more from Henchard than Henchard can ever retaliate adequately for.

Irony is blended even with the sadness of Lucetta’s death. Social responsibility is called into question here. The townspeople saw the skimmity ride as a joke, but it became a deadly trick. Now they disregard any role they had in her death, pretending that the skimmity- ride never happened.

As Elaine Showalter points out, Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane switch Victorian gender roles after his downfall. Henchard, once the strong, powerful Mayor, has now been “unmanned”; all his masculinity has been removed. He cares for Elizabeth-Jane as a mother would—doing tasks that are

traditionally classified as feminine and which no self respecting Victorian man would normally have undertaken, like cooking, house cleaning etc. Hardy's comment is that Henchard now acts "with housewifely care, as if it were an honor to have her in his house." Elizabeth-Jane's decisions control the now weak-willed and vulnerable Henchard. She issues the commands now and is really in charge.

Even this relationship, however fails Henchard in the end. Hardy does make us see Henchard's motivations so that we hope that there will be a chance for forgiveness. Yet the one person, who can forgive him, Elizabeth-Jane, refuses to do so as she cannot move away from the baggage of the past.

12. 4. Criticism.

"Henchard is pitted not against another man, but against something outside himself which is opposed to men of his ambition and power. He is standing up to fate and in backing the old Mayor whose ruin has been largely his own fault; Hardy makes us feel that we are backing human nature in an unequal contest. Brief and scanty it may be, is the measure of happiness allowed to each, but so long as the struggle is as Henchard's was, with the decrees of fate and not with the laws of man, there is greatness in the contest, there is pride and pleasure in it and the death of the broken corn merchant in his cottage on Egdon heath is comparable to the death of Ajax Lord of Salamis. The true tragic emotion is ours." – Virginia Woolf.

"In Hardy's tragedy, one finds the tragic protagonist, defined for his role by a tragic greatness that intensifies the sense of life, and flawed by a tragic vulnerability that unfits him for the particular situation he has to face. Henchard's rash and inflexible temper cannot cope with the changes that overtake Casterbridge. In this tragic universe, human errors become tragic errors which cooperate with Fate to bring evil out of goodness and good intentions and tragic suffering and catastrophe out of all proportion to its cause." ——Jean Brooks.

"The social forces within Hardy's fiction are deeply based in the rural economy itself, in a system of rent and trade, in the hazards of ownership and tenancy, in what happens to people and families in the interaction between general forces and personal histories. Henchard is not destroyed by a new and alien kind of dealing but by a development of his own trade he has himself invited. It is Henchard in Casterbridge who speculates in grain as he had speculated in people, (the wife auction) who is in every sense, within an observed way of life, a dealer and a destructive one; his strength compromised by that." – Raymond Williams.

"In order that he appear to have the illusion of free-will in determining his fate, Henchard's fate does not seem "inevitable," but the result of a very Victorian series of coincidences that result in his poverty, exile, and alienation. Like Shakespeare's King Lear, Henchard is one who but scantily knows himself (Hardy's phrase is "introspective inflexibility"), and permits his passions, especially the desire to save face in the furmity vendor's tent, to overwhelm his common sense. His is a pathological tragic flaw, for he makes much the same mistake when he fires Farfrae out of jealousy. Hardy himself seems unclear about the nature of Henchard's hamartia when he quotes Novalis: "Character is fate"--certainly a useful aphorism for a Victorian novelist. Still, among Hardy's would-be tragic heroes Henchard is rare; as the title page announces, he is "A Man of Character" – Philip V Allingham.

"The location of the action and the movements of characters through a sequence of different locales link placement and possibility in all of Hardy's novels. Although *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character* has been seen as primarily a character study, Hardy's settings can take on agency more powerful and complicated even than individual characters. Few novelists so successfully convince readers that they have entered a fictional territory, a world with idiosyncratic places, landscapes, and geographical features (even as Hardy compromises the sense of actuality he evokes by employing intricate plots and coincidences). *The Mayor of Casterbridge* differs from *Jude the Obscure* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in that the plot remains fixed on the stage of Casterbridge, while characters appear, disappear, and reappear within its boundaries. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy does not avail himself of the advantages of episodic shifts in setting. He compresses all of the symbolic and narrative functions of changed place and shifted genre into a single narrative annex. One of the most important surprises of the novel comes when the reader realizes that Casterbridge has an area within it, Mixen Lane, where behavior impossible in any other public space not only occurs, but alters the outcome of the novel. Because Hardy demarcates the annex from the main world of the text so explicitly, the alternative place Mixen Lane heightens the significance of spaces in a fictional world already rigorously organized by locations." – Suzanne Keene.

"Henchard's travels now are reflected in the metaphor of the circle: "his wandering... became part of a circle of which Casterbridge formed the center." Once again, he returns to the nomadic state that he held in the beginning of the novel. The metaphor also works to describe the cycle of his rises and falls to power. His love is the one motivation that always changes Henchard. Of course, each time he has thought that the person he loved but hurt would not forgive him, only to be proven wrong. Ironically, he is correct the last time, -Elizabeth-Jane, the one person he truly wanted to make amends to, does reject him unforgivingly. When Elizabeth-Jane finally goes to find Henchard, she arrives too late to extend her love. Henchard's connection to Nature is complete as his life ends. His starvation is also a metaphor for his life without Elizabeth- Jane: without her love, he is starved for affection. However, the whole earth seems to become unusually fertile in the wake of Henchard's exit. Although fate has dogged him for most of his life, the love for Elizabeth-Jane has brought him to a level of goodness—one that makes him more able to join with Nature."- Latonya Wright.

Traditional mythic conventions are apparent in many of Thomas Hardy's works, especially *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Of particular interest in this novel is the construction of the hero. It is helpful to consider Joseph Campbell's hero circle in order to understand Michael Henchard as an archetypal mythic hero. Campbell defines a hero as one who battles either personal or historical limitations and who becomes a source through which his society is reborn (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*). Essential to the idea of the mythic hero is that either he or the society in which he lives suffers from some shortcoming. The characteristics of the hero that Campbell has identified, in myth, offer a model which can be applied to literature. Campbell describes a hero circle, which is divided into three stages. The first is the Separation/Departure. Destiny calls the hero to his quest. The failure of the hero to advance in the direction destiny has set is called the refusal of the call. Here, the hero experiences the crossing, when he accepts the call and begins his journey. This quest can be for either internal change, or external change for the society. During the initial crossing, he encounters his first trials. In the final step of this stage, the hero is reborn to make the journey destiny has called him to make. The

second stage is the Trials and Victories of Initiation. Here the hero often encounters women as the "temptress" and symbols of defeat. Extremely important in this stage is the atonement with the Father (God).The final stage of Campbell's hero circle is The Return and Reuniting with Society. Typically this is the most difficult for the hero. Often the hero refuses the return, for he is uncertain how to go back after all that he has experienced. The mythic hero archetype is especially evident in the character of Michael Henchard who fulfills the call to adventure when he sells his wife and his child. After a fruitless search to find them, two more stages of the hero circle are completed. When Susan and Elizabeth-Jane are not found the "refusal of the call" occurs and the adventure takes another direction. Other mythic elements occur along Henchard's "road of trials" as he encounters what Campbell sees as "Trials and Victories" for the hero. Along the "road" Henchard finds success as the Mayor of Casterbridge, but he also meets with challenges. These struggles lead to the most mythic aspect of the novel: Henchard's relationships with women. As Campbell points out, women are a symbol of defeat for the hero. Henchard is emotionally defeated by his lover Lucetta, who returns to him with the mythic qualities of the goddess of love, Aphrodite. This event, recalls Campbell, is, "meeting with a goddess." Also, Elizabeth-Jane is symbolic of his defeat, as Henchard learns that she is not really his flesh and blood. He is miserable when he is with her, and he is more miserable when he disowns her. These conflicts with women epitomize Henchard's heroic struggle against defeat. Throughout *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Henchard manifests many archetypes of heroic behavior. Whether or not Henchard truly completes the hero circle remains open to interpretation." – Amy Rose.

"For Hardy tragedy lies in man's puzzling incapacity to avoid defeat despite his limited but certainly existent freedom of choice". This is vividly exemplified in the wife-selling scene, which is one of the most original and powerful in English literature. Henchard sells his wife in an attempt to achieve freedom, but only achieves to enslave himself for life- to put himself under a curse. As a result of his guilt and sense of disgrace, Henchard invites the harshest of punishments, seeks the most terrible of fates in order to suffer and understand his existence. What Henchard is actually doing is arranging his destiny." - Martin Seymour Smith.

"The traditional basis of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as tragedy emerges at once in the plainly fabulous and hyperbolic quality of its first episode. Henchard will be forced like Oedipus and Lear and Faust to rediscover in suffering and sorrow the actuality of the moral power he had so recklessly flouted. Henchard stands for the grandeur of the human passions, for the heroism of spirit that prefers the dangerous satisfactions of the superhuman to the mild comforts of the merely human, Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane stand for the claims of reason and thought, for the spirit of moderation that is prepared to come to terms with merely human possibilities. The fate that presides over the world of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is not a brutal and insentient force, but the ideal justice and wisdom which Hegel found presiding over the tragic drama of Sophocles and Shakespeare." – John Paterson.

"Two recent discussions of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* exemplify the almost polar extremes to which divergence of opinion can be manifested. As John Paterson has interpreted the novel, Henchard is a man guilty of having violated a moral order and thus brings upon himself a retribution for his crime, but on the other hand, as *The Mayor of Casterbridge* has been interpreted by Frederick Karl, Henchard is an essentially good man, who is destroyed by the chance forces of a morally indifferent world on which he has obsessively attempted to impose his will. It is important to note that Hardy's

treatment of Henchard's character implies his continued respect for an older, pre-scientific conception of man's dignity and worth as a moral agent, and the conclusion of the novel seems to be as much an affirmation of faith in the transcendent worth of the human person as it is an acknowledgement of man's precarious situation in a blind and uncertain universe." – Robert C. Schweik.

"Hardy not only commented upon, and in a sense infiltrated feminine fictions; he also understood the feminine self as the estranged and essential component of the male self. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* Hardy gives the fullest nineteenth century portrait of a man's inner life – his rebellion and his suffering, his loneliness and jealousy, his paranoia and despair, his uncontrollable unconscious. Henchard's efforts first to deny and divorce his passionate self and ultimately to accept and educate it, involve him in a pilgrimage of "unmanning" which is a movement both towards self-discovery and tragic vulnerability. It is in this analysis of this New Man, rather than in the evaluation of Hardy's New Women that the case for Hardy's feminist sensibilities may be argued.

The Mayor of Casterbridge begins with a scene that dramatizes the analysis of female subjugation as a function of capitalism: the auction of Michael Henchard's wife Susan at the fair. However, in an exclusive concentration on the sale of the wife, many critics overlook the simultaneous event which more profoundly determines Henchard's fate: the sale of the child. Paternity is a central subject in the novel, far more important than conjugal love. By his acts, Henchard sells out or divorces his own 'feminine' self, his own need for passion, tenderness and loyalty. The return of Susan and Elizabeth-Jane is indeed a return of the repressed, which forces Henchard to gradually confront the tragic inadequacy of his codes, the arid limits of patriarchal power. In Henchard, the forces of male rebellion and female suffering ultimately conjoin and in this unmanning, Hardy achieves a tragic power unequalled in Victorian fiction." - Elaine Showalter.

"The tensions which are to destroy Michael Henchard exist already, for Casterbridge is by no means so pleasant a place as it seems. Our first impression is one of "great snugness and comfort", but alongside this cozy picture, Hardy shows us aspects of Casterbridge which are altogether more sinister. Gradually we get some idea of the precariousness of Henchard's position which at first seemed so secure." – Merryn Williams.

12. 5. Sample Questions:

1. Discuss Thomas Hardy's Characterization in The Mayor of Casterbridge.
2. Henchand's attempt to become rich leads to tragic end in life – examine.

12. 6. Suggested Readings:

Rosemarie Bodenheimer The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction (1988)

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Lesson – 13

Saint Joan.

-Bernard Shaw.

Contents :

13. 1. Biography

George Bernard Shaw was born on July 26, 1856, in Dublin, Ireland. His father was a weak man, who was also addicted to alcohol. His financial ventures were generally failures and as a result, much of Shaw's childhood was plagued by his family's financial concerns. Shaw attended several different schools but does not seem to have enjoyed formal education at all. By the time he was fifteen, his parents' marriage had broken up. His mother, a much stronger personality, deserted her husband and went off to England to live with her two daughters. Shaw left school to support himself, working as a clerk and cashier for a firm of land agents for nearly four and a half years.

Shaw was a great reader and was interested in theatre, especially Shakespearean plays. In 1876, Shaw left Ireland and joined his mother and sister in London. He undertook a variety of odd jobs, including writing a series of articles as a music critic. From November 1876 to July 1878, Shaw wrote his articles under the pseudonym of Lee and published them in a weekly paper called *The Hornet*. After working for two years at the Edison and Bell Telephone Company, he left in 1880 to establish himself as a writer. He produced five novels between 1880 and 1883, but the response was not encouraging. In1886 he had some level of success in *Cashel Byron's Profession*. In 1887, his final novel, *An Unsocial Socialist* was published.

Shaw considered himself a Socialist, and he joined the Fabian Society in 1884, serving on their Executive Committee for many years. From 1888 to 1890, he wrote as a music critic, under the name of "Corno di Bassetto," for *The Star*, an evening paper of London. Shaw also served as a drama critic for *The Saturday Review* for several years. Shaw's *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, published in 1891 was the first book published in English on Ibsen. Shaw soon began to write plays that explored serious issues, creating "idea plays". Shaw's first effort at a play was *Widowers' Houses*, first per-

formed at the Royalty Theatre in London in December 1892. It was a radical attack on slum landlordism and was not a commercial success. In 1893, he wrote *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, a play about prostitution; it was denied performance by the Examiner of Plays, who considered it immoral. *The Philanderer* was also written in 1893, but not produced until 1905. Shaw's next play, *Arms and the Man*, (1894) was a bitter attack on the romanticizing of war and met with great popularity. Several successful plays followed- *Candida* (1897), *The Devil's Disciple* (1897), *The Man of Destiny* (1897), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), *You Never Can Tell* (1899), *John Bulls' Other Island* (1904), and *How He Lied to Her Husband* (1904). Shaw wrote his best plays between 1905 and 1925- *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905), *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906) *Androcles and the Lion* (1912) and *Pygmalion* (1913). His most serious and intellectual plays were *Heartbreak House* (1920), *Back to Methuselah* (1922), *Saint Joan* (1923) and *The Apple Cart* (1929). Shaw's last plays were *Too True to be Good* (1932), *The Millionairess* (1936), and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939).

Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. He died in 1950, at the age of ninety-five.

13. 2. Introduction

Saint Joan was first produced in New York City in 1923 and in London in 1924. Shaw published it with a long Preface in 1924. The early reception of the play was generally favorable, although some commentators criticized him for historical inaccuracy and inappropriate levity. Over the years, the play, a rare tragic work in his generally comic oeuvre, has been seen as one of his greatest and most important. It has been hailed as being intellectually exciting. Being at least in part a tragedy, though with comic moments, *Saint Joan* is part of a shift in Shaw's work from his earlier optimistic comedies to a more melancholy attitude. Eric Bentley describes Shaw's portrayal of Joan of Arc as the culmination of his girl heroines. *Saint Joan* is an attempt at several kinds of synthesis. "In it Shaw unites the practical and the idea and carries as far as he can take it the spirituality of the girl heroines". The preface to the play promises an accurate account of Joan of Arc and her persecutors devoid of sentimentality, romanticism, or slander. Joan's story is a Shavian tragedy, not because so young and pious a girl was burned at the stake, but because she was burned by learned and pious men. Shaw himself remarked "the tragedy of such murders is that they are not committed by murderers. They are judicial murders, pious murders". In his Preface to the play, Shaw states that "Joan, though a professed Catholic, was in fact one of the first Protestant martyrs as well as being an apostle of nationalism, a Napoleonic military strategist, and a forerunner of feminism". Heather Eaton points out that "Even before *Saint Joan* first appeared on stage, it inspired commentary. At least one critic worried about how Joan would fare in the hands of an irreverent writer like Shaw, but when he finally saw the play he was pleased by Shaw's treatment of the subject." The play had successful first runs in New York in 1923 and in London in 1924, running for 214 and 244 performances respectively. An early production in Paris was also a great success, even though Shaw had previously not been very popular in France.

Religious literature, especially that written in France, claimed that Joan was a saint. But the story current in England until the seventeenth century, painted Joan as a harlot and witch whose

power came from the devil. Shaw blended both views of Joan in his play. Shaw removes the supernatural elements from Joan, but he treats her with respect.

13. 3. Synopsis

In the opening scene of the play, Joan, the protagonist, is introduced as a girl of sixteen or seventeen, a brave, confident girl filled with valor and faith. She asked for a horse, armor, and soldiers, for she planned to help crown the Dauphin as King of France and to aid in the attack in Orleans against the British, who now occupy France. She is convinced that the English are violating God's will by being in her country, and she is determined to drive them back to England. She claims that she has received God's mandate to this effect through her "voices"- i.e. visions she has of saints. Joan has difficulty convincing people of her authenticity, but with the help of certain "miracles" she earns the trust of the soldiers and some noblemen. Things are more difficult at court with an ineffectual Dauphin, a power hungry archbishop and scheming nobility, but in the end Joan gets her way and the army she asks for.

She is successful in her campaign against the enemy, freeing Orleans and winning the admiration of her soldiers and the common people. She plans to march onward to Paris and reclaim the city from the English. But Joan makes enemies among both the nobility and the church as she oversteps the limits prescribed for individuals by religion and for women by custom.

Six weeks later, the Earl of Warwick meets with the Bishop of Beauvais, Peter Cauchon, to plan Joan's capture. The Bishop sees a threat to the established Church in Joan's individualistic religious claims, whereas Warwick fears the erosion of feudal power in her nationalistic politics. The chauvinistic English chaplain, John de Stogumber, declares that Joan must be a witch, since the English could not have been beaten otherwise.

At the cathedral of Rheims, Charles VII is crowned King of France according to the ancient rites. Joan wants to continue her military campaign to regain Paris, but the authorities of court, church, and army warn her that she may lose their support if she presumes too far.

Shaw omits the next year and a half of Joan's life. During this time she led an unsuccessful attack on Paris, violating a truce that Charles had signed with the Burgundians.

A reward is offered for her capture. She is betrayed, sold to the English as a prisoner, imprisoned, tried as a witch and condemned as a heretic. At her trial, Joan is worn out by the strains of long imprisonment. She first recants her stories of the visions and voices but when she learns that she will be imprisoned for life, she tears up the document of recantation. She is excommunicated by the Church and burnt at the stake.

The epilogue takes place twenty-five years after Joan's burning. The previous Dauphin, now King of France, dreams of Joan and her accusers. In his dream, he sees the future, centuries ahead, wherein Joan's case has been reinvestigated; she is cleared of all charges by the church and canonized. Those who earlier accused her now sing her praises. Joan exposes their hypocrisy by asking if they

would welcome her back in real life. They all refuse to have her back and the play ends with Joan wondering when if ever God's Earth would be ready to receive its saints.

13. 4. Analysis

The negative forces in this play are both the church and the state. Both of these are characterized by sets of conventions and rigid beliefs. Shaw believes that the church and the state feared any voice of truth that might expose them and would join hands to crush these threatening elements. The Bishop and the Earl of Warwick, representatives of Church and State respectively, really have no personal malice towards Joan but condemn her because she is seen as a threat to the systems that they represent. The play therefore is a clash of the individual will and liberty against both religious dogma and political authority.

A major concern of *Saint Joan* is the difference between true religious faith and the hypocrisy of organized religion. Joan is a true believer, who however insists on the sanctity of the thinking individual's personal relationship with God. In contrast to her, Shaw pictures organized religion, represented by the Roman Catholic Church of the fifteenth century, as manipulative and hypocritical. Ironically, the Church condemns and executes Joan for being a heretic, but she is really victorious over organized religion as the same Church later declares her a martyr and saint.

In *Saint Joan* we also see the corruption in political echelons. Apart from the Church, Joan is also victimized by "the secular arm", by self-serving and corrupt men who fear her influence. Her crime is not so much that she was a heretic, but that her brand of "heresy" was enough to threaten the political status quo. Although she was unaware of the magnitude of change she represented, Joan's ideas threatened to decenter the entire social and spiritual order.

The Church's power extended over the known Western world. To maintain its control, the far-flung Church used, among other things, miracles to reinforce faith and fear to promote obedience. Adherence to Church doctrine was the essential qualification for salvation, and because the clergy interpreted and enforced that doctrine, they, in effect, held the keys to the gates of paradise. Unmediated communication with God, a privilege Joan alleged to enjoy through her "voices," was an intolerable usurpation of clerical authority and the basis for the charge of heresy against her.

Shaw presents his audience with characters who act with justifiable yet mutually contradictory beliefs. "There are no villains in the piece", Shaw wrote in his preface, "It is what men do at their best, with good intentions, and what normal men and women find that they must and will do in spite of their intentions that really concern us." This forces the audience to judge the moral implications of the play for themselves, and draws them into a dramatic participation with the work.

Shaw further challenges any moral assumptions of both his heroine and her executioner in the dramatic epilogue. Were Joan to live today, Shaw informs us, she would again be put to death, ironically by the very people witnessing and responding to the drama because "mortal eyes cannot distinguish the saint from the heretic". The audience must ask if they accept Joan as a saint because they are told to, or if they could recognize saintliness for themselves.

Throughout the play, Joan must endure difficulties. She is mocked for dressing up like a man, judged as incapable of defeating the English, and is considered mad for believing that God speaks directly to her. In spite of the criticism she receives, she remains true to the direction of the visions and faithful to her God, whom she puts above the Church and the State.

The English feudalists interpret her power as witchcraft, the ordinary French soldiers as miraculous, and the Catholic Church as heretical. In Shaw's words, "When an apparent miracle happened . . . it proved the divine mission to the credulous, and proved a contract with the devil to the skeptical". Shaw does not give the audience the opportunity to interpret the validity or falsity of Joan's inspiration because most of her actions occur offstage. Witnesses then report her behavior in the tradition of classical tragedy.

Part of Joan's misconduct lies in her refusal to accept the medieval woman's role. Shaw remarks that "She was judicially burnt . . . essentially for what we call unwomanly and insufferable presumption". The preface describes her manliness and militarism as an abnormality in an age that demanded strict adherence to gender roles.

Saint Joan like most works by Shaw is largely an "idea play". The characters in *Saint Joan* symbolize abstract conceptions of religion and politics subject to unavoidable shifts in historical perspective, which change the nature of their authorization. Maurice Valency remarks that the difference between Joan and her persecutors is mainly a matter of perception. Each of the six scenes of *Saint Joan* explores the differences between the characters' perceptions of miracle and coincidence, faith and reason, and divine inspiration and demonic possession.

Warwick sees himself as a protector of secular interests. Joan's proposition that kings should reign over their dominions as bailiffs of God's realm supersedes the power of the landed aristocracy and threatens the social structure of the Middle Ages. Cauchon, the Church representative has little interest in the political presumptions of either Joan or Warwick. He pays heed to Joan's nationalistic proselytizing only insofar as it threatens the sovereignty of The Church. Finally however, Joan is condemned by all- by society as unwomanly, by the State as a rebel and by the Church as a heretic.

Shaw attributes Joan's visions to her intuition and understanding of her historical mission. Joan leads France to victory over the English by dint of her innate intelligence and leadership and not through supernatural guidance. Joan is treated not only as a Catholic saint and martyr but as a combination of practical mystic, heretical saint, and inspired genius. Joan, as the superior being "crushed between those mighty forces, the Church and the Law," is the personification of the tragic heroine; her death embodies the paradox that humankind fears—and often kills—its saints and heroes and will go on doing so until the very higher moral qualities it fears become the general condition of man through a process of evolutionary change.

13. 5. Criticism

"Despite the fact that his unwomanly women often shocked Victorian audiences, Shaw actively engaged in the fight against the romantic depiction of love, marriage, and sex in the popular

fiction and drama of his time. *Saint Joan* became a vehicle for him to present a woman in her true role as prime mover of the evolutionary process**.** For Shaw, Joan emerges from history as neither angel nor devil, but as a genius with an active imagination. The Inquisitors rise from the mist of cruelty, and appear as compassionate men who operate only within the scope of their medieval world-view. The Church Militant becomes a sort of tragic hero put into motion by Joan's tragic flaws. Her arrogance, frankness, and pride threaten to disorder the tradition and dominion of the church and state. Shaw sets before himself the task of justifying the ways of the Middle Ages to the twentieth century audience. The audience recognizes the tragedy, understands why Joan was burnt, and perhaps leaves the theatre feeling as though they might have voted for her execution themselves had they been members of the court which tried her.

In his attempt to convey the essence of Joan's character and the fairness of her judges, Shaw focuses too much on her critics' reactions to her and too little on Joan herself. He succeeds in removing the mud from her inquisitors as he promises in the preface, but replaces it with the whitewash formerly applied to Joan. While Shaw accuses anti-feminist historians and ignorant artists of cloaking Joan in prejudiced slander or romantic idealism, he strips her to translucency. She reflects only the light of others' interpretations of her.

The forces of stasis, the feudalists and the Catholic priests in Saint Joan, are never ready to accept the evolution of civilization, so they must destroy the revolutionary. The Church Militant and the aristocracy naturally persecuted Joan's unorthodox and unauthorized opinions because in Shaw's view, "all evolution in thought and conduct must at first appear as heresy and misconduct".

Shaw's assertion that Joan was the sort of woman who wished to lead a man's life appears chauvinistic to modern feminists, but he believed himself to be a feminine sympathizer. The Fabian precept of social equality meant sexual equality, and Shaw was not at all dismayed by the concept of a woman warrior. He accepts her as an able leader of men, and even ventures to term her "the first French practitioner of Napoleonic realism in warfare". Shaw attempts to fashion Joan into a virginal ascetic. He envisioned her as a sort of Amazon: striking and strong, but sexually unattractive. For her to be a true martyr, and maintain authority in her martyrdom, she must be devoid of all romanticism. This argument succeeds in the highly socialist preface, but fails in dramatic realization. Although the stage directions describe her as mannish yet chaste and temperate, Pat M. Carr and Valency point out the inherent sexuality in Shaw's treatment of Joan. Valency describes her trial by an all male tribunal in Scene 6 as "perversely erotic" and "sadistic".

Regardless of Shaw's reported intentions in the preface, Joan is not a sexless superwoman, but a vital and passionate young girl. Her burgeoning sexuality and femininity appear stereotypical and out of place, only when read in light of the preface.

From the historical documents of Joan's trial, and her letters to the French and British kings, she seems not all concerned with altering the Medieval woman's or common laborer's lots. She defied social convention because she was a messenger of God, not because she was an early feminist or social activist. Still, Shaw rightly identifies Joan as a pioneer of change. Her heretical ideas ushered in the age of Protestantism, Nationalism, and Individualism. She embodied the Renaissance spirit that was beginning to sweep Europe. The fact that the aging Church Militant burned such an intelligent

and capable social innovator for heresy is indeed a Shavian tragedy. Joan and her persecutors may not have been aware of the social and historical implications of their actions, but Shaw was. His carefully crafted reenactment of the events leading up to the trial and the comically ironic epilogue demonstrate the unavoidable power of the evolutionary Life Force. As Eric Bentley succinctly points out, if history had not produced The Maid of Orleans, Shaw would have had to invent her." – Heather Eaton.

"While Shaw's Joan is usually seen as the "foremother of Protestantism and of French nationalism" the play can be read in many other ways, as *Saint Joan* lends itself easily to several approaches and parallels. The play could be seen as a parable for Irish nationalism on the troublesome Protestant question in a society run by Catholics. Additionally, it could be viewed as a running political diatribe on British imperialistic tendencies overseas. *Saint Joan* may also be read as an allegory for a France undergoing a painful period of reconstruction after being shattered by World War I. While most critics are aware that Shaw's play was very popular in Paris the reasons behind its popularity have yet to be adequately explained. Betrayal, sacrifice, dogmatic strife, and nationalist power plays fully overlap in the play to historicize the well-known story in terms contemporary audiences, particularly in Paris, found highly compelling. The popularity of Shaw's Saint Joan in 1925 Paris involves the cultural semiotics of constructing an icon like Joan of Arc and the brash display of governance in the trial scene.

As Shaw explained in his lengthy "Preface" to the play, the strong and sophisticated Joan he wished to represent accurately was the heroine who had plotted and directed the "military and political masterstrokes that saved France" during the Hundred Years' War. Shaw's play is not always easy to swallow, and seeing it must have been an ambivalent experience for many, given the dangers of too strongly identifying with Joan and her nationalism.

The trial scene is a significant example of representing governance, on stage. In such a setting, observing the workings of the court must have been one driving force behind the audience's engrossment in the play. Spectators of this scene witness exactly how Joan's destiny takes its course. An important by-product of Shaw's aim of demystifying Joan was the demystification of one of France's most famous trials. In this way drama provides a civics lesson: demystification is didactic.

The dilemma behind classifying Joan as Catholic is that if her contact with God is direct, then she foreshadows Protestant theology. For the Church, this is heresy, because it is the first step toward weakening Catholicism. This is one reason for the political necessity of Joan's death. Another issue here, however, involves nationalism as it factors into the equation. Joan's main crime, and her persecution in the trial, could be seen as the revenge of the left against the right. Such an idea had serious implications, of course. With the interests of nation and religion at odds, Shaw's play challenges the Church's view of Joan because it positions her as a Protestant, against the Church, and thus on the side of the state. This would all be fitting for the nomoscopic aspect of governance, given the setting. In short, spectators see a microcosm of France in the mid-1920s, with a Protestant Joan, this time, left of the center in terms of the organization of power.

In the play's cathartic moment par excellence, justice becomes open for definition as responsibility for the sentence is shared among the French church, the English rulers, and Joan with her self-recriminations. The question of exactly who has jurisdiction and who has the right to send down such

a sentence lingers in the minds of audiences. If anything, French spectators would have left the play with a sense that the trial was not as straightforward as they had thought, with the French defending Joan against English prosecutors. At a time when many of France's problems were simply blamed on wartime Germany, this lesson clearly mattered.

The final aspect of the trial's demystification involves ritual. Simply put, there is no Joan of Arc if there is no court, just as there is no drama in the play if there is no trial ritual. Therefore, the trial is relevant. As we know, audiences appreciated Shaw's sober realism when compared to other plays of the time. Deliberations about running the trial, defining charges, and clarifying jurisdictions forged a new relationship between audiences and Joan that had previously been absent from French theatre. As a new and improved ritual, the trial scene changed a central preformed symbolic complex for 1920s France". – Craig Hamilton.

"Shaw, writing the play in1923, post-World War I Europe shared the fundamental concern of the14th century world depicted in the play: a search for balance that would prevent another slide into the abyss. Conditions were sufficiently brutal in the Middle Ages to justify the fear that civilization could backslide into barbarism at any time. Two institutions—feudalism and the Church working hand in hand—imposed order over Medieval Europe, a map of adversity charting the ravages of the Black Death and the Hundred Year's War.

Shaw was attracted to Joan as a representation of what he labeled the "life force," a force for change in the process of evolution to improve the human race. The great drama of there story lies in the conflict between irreconcilable forces of stability and change. Shaw saw Joan's accusers, not as villains for failing to accept her genius, but earnest people acting in the best interests of society against a pernicious disturbance. In Shaw's opinion, Joan received a fair trial by judges as straightforward as herself. She was right, and so were they—only they had a duty to enforce the law.

In his preface to the play, Shaw made clear that he was not interested in presenting what happened to Joan, but why it happened. By following his characters as they worked through their moral dilemmas, Shaw intended us to understand how, in their place, we too might reach the same verdict.

Judgment is the pervasive action of the play: each scene involves the characters, internally or externally, in acts of interrogation and evaluation. In retrospect, charges if misogyny, bigotry and hypocrisy can be leveled against Joan's judges, but the play avoids that, focusing instead on the human necessity to judge: to make decisions about right and wrong, to identify violators, and to punish transgression. But as the reversal of Joan's judgment illustrates, justice is neither impartial nor permanent, infallible nor immutable. It is, rather, part of a continuous moral debate in a court of changing consciousness.

Indulging his passion for discussion, Shaw brings the characters back in the play's epilogue to confront the consequences of their decisions and to discover what has been learned. In spiritual terms, the scene is a ritual examination of conscience. In contrast to the passionate passages of earlier scenes, a contemplative mood underscores the inferiority of the final moments; personal scrutiny has taken the place of public justification.

Throughout the play, the Church tries to save Joan, whose sense of purpose will not break under the arduous questioning and humiliating treatment. Unlike her judges, Joan is self-acting and self-sufficient; she requires no institutional validation. Interestingly, the word "heresy" derives from the Greek word for "choice." Shaw compared Joan, the "heretic," to Socrates and Galileo, geniuses also persecuted for exercising intellectual independence in defiance of the prevailing orthodoxy.

The impulse to judge, persecute and coerce conformity is as old as human society. Persecutions and pogroms preceded the Inquisition and witch-hunts followed, witch-hunts which have reached into our own century in subtle forms of political and cultural repression. The "right belief" promoted by the Holy Office bears more than a superficial resemblance to the concept of "political correctness."

Shaw was fascinated by the bold nonconformism of a 17 year old who followed her own will, not without moments of uncertainty, an in spite of the blackest condemnation of the Church. If the prosecutorial zeal of the Inquisition that condemned Joan strikes us as excessive today, we should remember that the institution evolved over centuries by learned people attempting to order the universe around them. That it grew, changed and dissolved testifies to the evolutionary nature of justice. It is a marker of humanity that no judgment is a Last Judgment, but an opinion subject to the test of time and the review of conscience." – Jennie Knapp.

"Joan's was a faith and trust in God so pure and clear and strong that it melted all distractions into thin air, and rendered a singularity of purpose of awesome proportions. She is a potent reminder of the potential in the human spirit to persist and prevail against remarkable odds, and she possesses that heroic ability to achieve extraordinary feats— to change the world through the sheer force of will power. To borrow Shaw's words, she was a saint and a genius, "who, seeing farther and probing deeper than other people, has a different set of ethical valuations from theirs, and has energy to give to this extra vision.

We cannot escape from Joan, and we mustn't. But we cannot pin her down either: Saint, Patriot, Prophet, Witch, Heretic, Virgin, Whore, Knight, Amazon, Lunatic, Genius...; her essence is ever-changing with the latest version of her story and with the changing needs and desires of those who tell her story. Multitudinous histories have sought to clarify her life, to sift fact from fiction, to comprehend her power, envision her voices, and explain her extraordinary success in raising the siege of Orléans and effecting the coronation of the French king. *Saint Joan* is Shaw's effort to bring the 'real' Joan to the stage. His Joan is de-romanticized and humanized, irritating, obstinate, remarkably independent, and filled to the brim with certainty. But ultimately a core of mystery remains." – Karen Robinson.

"All the attempts to show that Joan was a hypersuggestible lunatic in the hands of priests and intriguers are mere Anti-Feminist methods of dodging the glaring truth that her success was a genuine success of ability of the kind supposed to be exclusively masculine." – Bernard Shaw.

"Shaw was not original in believing that those members of the human race that were unfit for society should be eliminated, this had been the practice during the Inquisition and the Star Chamber, and Shaw ironically defends the imprisonment of dissenters in the preface to *St. Joan.* Shaw's defense is ironic and, when read in the same spirit as Swift's "Modest Proposal," becomes an indictment of the

congenital intolerance of societies past and present. However, the only coherent position that emerges out of the welter of Shaw's writings is that the limits of toleration are extremely variable and that in times of mass hysteria they are nearly negligible." – Thomas. E. Hart.

"Throughout, Shaw is bent on demystifying the figure of Joan. She is to be seen as plain-speaking, buoyant, unabashed and irreverent. Eric Bentley claims that Shaw's intention was "not only to show Joan as a credible human being, but to make her *greatness* credible." In the opening scenes of the play, Shaw goes far towards establishing Joan as an anti-romantic Shavian superwoman. Yet he does not altogether deny to the audience the Maid of romance with her voices and miracles. The trial scene shows the implacability of Joan's enemies, but earlier Shaw has shown what is even more isolating, the lack of assistance by her friends. Shaw creates out of individual rejecting voices a formal chorus of renunciation of all Joan stood for. Later, in the Epilogue, one by one in a pattern of denial to match the previous paean of denial, everyone refuses to accept the idea of Joan's return."- Nicholas Greene.

13. 6. Sample Questions:

1. Consider Saint Joan as a record of what mankind does to its geniuses and Saints.
2. Saint Joan is a play about the leadership of a peasant Girl.
3. Saint Joan is a play that centralizes truth and conscience – Examine
4. How far shaw has succeeded in creating a medieval atmosphere in Saint Joan?

13. 7. Suggested Readings:

G.K. Chesterton : George Bernard Shaw. 1972

A.M. Gibbs : The Art and Mind of Shaw

Charles A. Berst : Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama. 1973

Julian Kaye : Bernard Shaw and the 19th C. Tradition

Margery Morgan : The Shavian playground: An exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw.

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Lesson – 14

The Cocktail Party.

- T.S. Eliot.

Contents :

14.1 Biography.

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in Missouri on September 26, 1888. He lived in St. Louis during the first eighteen years of his life and earned his Masters degree from Harvard University. He contributed several poems to the *Harvard Advocate.* In 1910, he left the United States for the Sorbonne. After a year in Paris, he returned to Harvard to pursue a doctorate in philosophy .He went back to Europe and settled in England in 1914. The following year, he married Vivienne Haigh-Wood and began working in London, first as a teacher, and later for Lloyd's bank. Eliot was championed by Ezra Pound, who introduced him to literary circles, commented on his drafts, and helped him with his finances. Pound who recognized Eliot's poetic genius influenced his style and assisted in the publication of his work in a number of magazines, most notably "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in *Poetry* in 1915. His first book of poems, Prufrock and Other Observations, was published in 1917. *The Waste Land,* now considered as one of the most influential poetic works of the twentieth century was published in 1922. Eliot's reputation grew steadily and for several years he was the most dominant figure in poetry in the English-speaking world. As a critic Eliot had an enormous impact on contemporary literary taste. His major later poems include *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Four Quartets* (1943); his books of literary and social criticism include *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *After Strange Gods* (1934), and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1940). Eliot was also an important playwright, whose verse dramas include *Murder in the Cathedral,* (1935) *The Family Reunion,* (1939) and *The Cocktail Party* (1950). Eliot obtained British citizenship in 1927. He separated from his first wife in 1933, and was remarried, to Valerie Fletcher, in 1956. T. S. Eliot received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948, and died in London in 1965.

14. 2. Introduction

In his essay "The Possibility of Poetic Drama," Eliot explains why he thinks the modern theatre needs and is ripe for verse to reenter the realm of drama. Among other reasons, he says that poets feel the need for expressing themselves by writing plays and that the audiences seem able to appreciate a new poetic drama. In *Poetry and Drama*, he goes on to add, "What we have to do is to bring poetry into the world in which the audience lives and to which it returns when it leaves the theatre; not to transport the audience into some imaginary world totally unlike their own, an unreal world in which poetry can be spoken. What I should hope might achieved, by a generation of dramatists having the benefit of our experience, is that the audience should find, at the moment of awareness that it is hearing poetry, that it is saying to itself: "I could talk in poetry too!" Then we should not be transported into an artificial world; on the contrary, out own sordid, dreary, daily world would be suddenly illuminated and transfigured". His optimism seems to have been justified given the reception of *The Cocktail Party* which was both Eliot's most conventional and commercially successful play. *The Cocktail Party* has been described as a "morality play presented as a comedy of manners", that is, on the surface, *The Cocktail Party* appears to be a sophisticated comedy, but it is really a deeply religious and mystical work. According to Eliot, the play had a basis in Euripides' *Alcestis.* In the Greek tragedy, Alcestis sacrifices her life for her husband, but is rescued from Hades by Hercules. In Eliot's version, the heroine Lavinia, is brought back from her voluntary exile pending marital discord by a mysterious Unidentified Guest at a cocktail party, who turns out to be a psychiatrist whom Lavinia and her husband both consult.

The central characters of *The Cocktail Party* are Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne. The first and last acts of the play feature cocktail parties held at their home where their marital problems are aggravated by the pressure of having to keep up social appearances. The play is partly a comical satire on drawing room comedy, but it is also a philosophical drama about relationships, freewill versus fate and choices with severe religious underpinnings.

Edward, Lavinia, and Celia are led to an understanding that as life is "fallen," in the Christian view, one is faced with the choice of living an everyday life, or turning to a heroic celibacy in God's service. Realizing they are not heroic types, the Chamberlaynes choose the former but with an increased awareness and commitment. Celia chooses the saint's life, and the news of her martyrdom causes the Chamberlaynes to identify with her as redeemer. They now hope to conduct the concluding cocktail party as a quasi religious ceremony rather than a society farce like the earlier one.

14. 3. Synopsis

The play centers around the marital problems of Edward Chamberlayne. When the play opens he is hosting his wife Lavinia's cocktail party alone as she has discovered his love affair, and left him. We are introduced to Alex, Peter and Julia who will later play important roles. Edward has the embarrassing job of trying to explain away his wife's absence and is worried about how ridiculous he would appear if the separation became public. Edward talks to a character known as the Unidentified Guest, who seems very knowledgeable about Edward's situation and even offers to bring his wife back to

him. Later we see Edward with Celia Copplestone, his mistress, and we learn that they had planned to be together if his marriage broke up. Yet Edward now seems uncertain about his course of action. Surprisingly, the Unidentified Guest indeed brings Lavinia home the next day. Edward becomes convinced that his indecision is a mental illness, and he seeks psychiatrist treatment. His psychologist, Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly turns out to be the Unidentified Guest. Lavinia joins their session, and reveals that she too had had an affair with Peter. Reilly convinces the Chamberlaynes to go on with their marriage. Then Celia comes in to see Reilly, and though maybe not as a direct result of her session, she takes the surprising decision to become a foreign missionary. We realize that Alex and Julia are in a way responsible for bringing Edward and Lavinia to Reilly and the three of them act as some kind of "guardians" over the couple. In the final act, set two years later, the Chamberlaynes are shown as having a more tranquil marriage. We learn that Celia was killed violently in the course of her missionary work. Edward is shocked on hearing the news, but the general attitude is to accept it as both natural and noble. Reilly tells Edward that Celia had made her choice and neither he nor Edward were responsible for it. This notion of "choice" is very important in the play. According to Julia "Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another./ And then must take the consequences. Celia chose / A way of which the consequence was crucifixion". Edward is pictured groping through the darkness of his own soul. He agonizes:

"There was a door
And I could not open it.
I could not touch the handle.
Why could I not walk out of my prison?
It was only yesterday that damnation took place,
And now I must live with it...
Day after day, month after month".

14. 4. Analysis

A big question in *The Cocktail Party* is concerned with the role and nature of understanding in relationships. Edward and Lavinia do not understand each other at all initially. They have used both negative and positive images of each other, interchangeable as per the occasion and have not realized that both were equally stereotypical. Let alone understanding each other, neither the Chamberlayne's nor Celia have much understanding even of themselves. Edward seeks psychiatric help because, as he explains, "I have ceased to believe in my own personality." Reilly answers this with the observation that it is a "very common malady. Very prevalent indeed." Reilly, the psychiatrist, reveals something unknown about each character to themselves and to each other. This new knowledge plays a big part in their lives from that point on, as it technically sends Celia to her death, and brings the Chamberlaynes together.

Reilly on several occasions adopts the mantle of moral teacher/philosopher rather than of professional psychiatrist. When Celia talks to him, instead of discussing the situation directly he asks her to make a decision, to choose between a quite easy life and a harder way, where she needs despair and courage. It is her choice of the latter that leads to her eventual martyrdom. With Edward and

Lavinia also, Reilly's advisable is rarely decipherable at a simplistic level, there are always undertones of meaning, often of a religious slant.

This leads credence to the interpretation of Reilly as not just a psychiatrist, but a symbolic presence suggesting a moral overseer. Indeed, Reilly, along with Julia and Alex are "guardians" in the play. The three of them even perform an esoteric chant at the end of Act Two: "Watch over her in the labyrinth / … Protect her from the Voices / Protect her from the Visions", which indicate that these characters' major function is to represent an idea symbolically. Reilly is to some extent, Hercules from the Alcestis myth. He "rescues" Lavinia and "redeems" both the Chamberlaynes and Celia. However in a further twist, Celia herself, through self sought, unwarranted martyrdom assumes the mantle of general redeemer and rises to the stature of a Christ figure by the end of the play.

The play gives out very mixed messages regarding free will and fate. On the one hand, there are several assertions that each individual has to abide by their own choices and that ultimately no one is responsible for anyone else. When Edward feels guilty over what happened to Celia, Reilly clearly tells him, "If we were all judged according to the consequences of all our words and deeds, beyond the intention and beyond our limited understanding of ourselves and others, we should all be condemned". No one except Celia herself is ultimately guilty of her death or responsible for her martyrdom which is presented as a triumph. At the same time, the idea that our actions are predetermined is continuously repeated. The Guardians act as the forces of Fate and Reilly does also tell Edward that he will "choose" to get back with Lavinia, but he doesn't have a real choice. Indeed, the combination of Lavinia's walk-out, and the Reilly's unexpected arrival and interference minimize Edward's role as a free agent.

The deadening of the senses, of both understanding and perception dulled by custom is a recurrent theme in the play. There are constant accusations of "not listening". Blindness is a central metaphor, with both spectacles and the cinema functioning as symbols of distorted vision. The gramophone, as Celia points out is used by Edward to avoid actually listening in his "conversations. Reilly tries to repair these faulty perceptions, as it were. To a large extent, he succeeds, for when we meet Edward and Lavinia at the end of the play they have actually started "noticing" each other. In the beginning, Edward was saying ""I no longer remember what my wife is like. / I am not quite sure that I could describe her / If I had to ask the police to search for her. / I'm sure I don't know what she was wearing / When I saw her last.... And what is the use of all your analysis / If I am to remain always lost in the dark?". At the end, he even compliments Lavinia on her dress. Clearly, this increased perception of small details is meant to indicate a greater understanding on emotional levels also.

Suffering is an important theme in the play, especially the idea of redemption through suffering. "You and I don't know the process by which the human is/ Transhumanized: what do we know/ Of the kind of suffering they must undergo/ On the way of illumination"? This question indicates the strong Christian morality basis of the play. The harder the choice and suffering, the more glorious the redemption as seen in Celia's case.

Existentialism as a philosophy underlies much of the dilemma of the characters in *The Cocktail Party.* Sartre's existentialism emphasized man's freedom from the moral certainties of religion,

but insisted that this freedom, while man's glory, was also a terrible burden, one that few of us had the strength the bear. *The Cocktail Party* seems informed by a similar spirit. Edward echoes Sartre's formula when he says: "What is hell? Hell is oneself,/ Hell is alone, the other figures in it / Merely projections".

The role of Psychology as a discipline is also crucial to understanding this play. It is a well-known twentieth century development that psychologists such as Reilly have taken over the role of father-confessors from priests. Eliot's own comments on psychiatry in other contexts are worth noting: "The aim of Western psychiatry is to help the troubled individual to adjust himself to the society of less troubled individuals — individuals who are observed to be well adjusted to one another and the local institutions, but about those whose adjustment to the fundamental Order of Things no enquiry is made? But is there another kind of normality — a normality of perfect functioning? Even a man who is perfectly adjusted to a deranged society can prepare himself, if he so desires, to become adjusted to the Nature of Things. Psychology has very great utility in two ways. It can revive and has already to some extent revived, truths long since known to Christianity, but mostly forgotten and ignored, and it can put them in a form and a language understandable by modern people to whom the language of Christianity is not only dead but undecipherable. It seems to me for the most part to ignore the more intense, profound and satisfying emotions of religion. It must ignore their value because its function is merely to describe and not to express preference. But if this is true, it can never take the place of religion, though it can be an important accessory." Christian doctrine and psychiatric tenets are clearly closed linked in Eliot's schema, giving a figure like Reilly a parahuman symbolic significance.

Both Edward and Lavinia are characterized as "self -deceivers." They have to come out of their respective shells of illusion and face up to reality before they can move forward. Celia too has to overcome this allure of the familiar when she finally realizes that it is her own image of Edward that she was in love with. The consequence of facing naked truths can be as simple as putting a marriage back on track or it can be as terrible as martyrdom. But it is shown as the necessary starting point for all progress. The only other alternative is stagnating stasis.

14. 5. Criticism.

"The questions — why there is no poetic drama to-day, how the stage has lost all hold on literary art, why so many poetic plays are written which can only be read, and read, if at all, without pleasure — have become insipid, almost academic. The reasons for raising the question again are first that the majority, perhaps, certainly a large number, of poets hanker for the stage; and second, that a not negligible public appears to want verse plays. Surely here is some legitimate craving, not restricted to a few persons, which only the verse play can satisfy. Permanent literature is always a presentation: either a presentation of thought, or a presentation of feeling by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world. In earlier literature — to avoid the word "classic" — we find both kinds, and sometimes, as in some of the dialogues of Plato, exquisite combinations of both. Aristotle presents thought, stripped to the essential structure, and he is a great writer. The *Agamemnon*, or *Macbeth* is equally a statement, but of events. They are as much works of the "intellect" as the writings of Aristotle. There are more recent works of art which have the same quality of intellect in

common with those of Aeschylus and Shakespeare and Aristotle: *Education Sentimentale* is one of them. Compare it with such a book as *Vanity Fair* and you will see that the labor of the intellect consisted largely in a purification, in keeping out a great deal that Thackeray allowed to remain in; in refraining from reflection, putting into the statement enough to make reflection unnecessary. The undigested "idea" or philosophy, the idea-emotion, is to be found also in poetic dramas which are conscientious attempts to adapt a true structure, Athenian or Elizabethan, to contemporary feeling. It appears sometimes as the attempt to supply the defect of structure by an internal emotional structure. The essential is not, of course, that drama should be written in verse, or that we should be able to extenuate our appreciation of broad farce by occasionally attending a performance of a play of Euripides where Professor Murray's translation is sold at the door. The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world; a world which the author's mind has subjected to a process of simplification." – T.S. Eliot.

"Edward and Lavinia's first meeting in the play is full of mis-sensings. Edward and Lavinia's opening spat concerns their conflicting images of each other, mis-hearings and mis-seeings. However, Celia best represents Eliot's ideas of human blindness. Even by Act I, Scene 2, we see her vision clarify, when she sees Edward as a desiccated mummy, hears him as a lonely droning insect. Reilly warns Celia that those who are "cured" back into innocent obliviousness "may remember the vision they have had" but is "vision" here an apparition or a way of seeing? Do those who retreat from Celia's discovery abandon a dream, or an entire sense? Reilly claims that for retreat to normal life: "I could describe in familiar terms / Because you have seen it, as we all have seen it", but, if Celia presses on, "the destination cannot be described.... You will journey blind" — our normal senses fail us, for we need some higher perception. An illusion or mirage is a failure of vision, so what of vision itself and mortal existence, whose illusion Celia has pierced? Such higher senses, perhaps, belong to the Guardians of Eliot's half-hidden mythos. True sight may be granted only through travel "on the way of illumination". – J. Grist.

"*The Cocktail Party* is a twentieth century morality play, one that argues that people must accept their burdensome roles as decision makers. Unlike medieval morality plays, which upbraided audiences to choose good deeds and shun evil, *The Cocktail Party* simply places its characters in the crucible of choice, and diagnoses their indecision as a malaise. Eliot means to demonstrate that it is the burden of the human race to make tough choices, and live with the consequences. Despite Eliot's own well-known Christianity, *The Cocktail Party* doesn't argue specifically for Christian solutions to the human condition. Celia, endowed by Eliot with such character traits as having been a poet and a nurse, is something of a martyr for Christian ideals, as is made clear by her death at least twice being characterized as a crucifixion. But this is seen as but one of several paths; holding cocktail parties may be an equally valid path. No, *The Cocktail Party* is simply an idea play, dramatizing the condition of Man as a moral agent, a chooser.

Julia, Alex, and Reilly form a bizarre conspiracy, whose entire existence seems devoted to making people see that they must live with their choices. Surely few of us have encountered such philanthropy as theirs. Julia sends nearly all the characters mysterious telegrams to meet at the Chamberlayne's, where she has planted a *de facto* spy in Reilly. Reilly as psychologist freely discusses his patients' problems with his Julia and Alex, his co-conspirators. Because these three seem to

lean on recognizable human motives, these characters exist as cogs in the machinery of the play, only to show the other characters their fates. I also am still not sure what to think of Reilly. The fact that he enters the play shrouded in mystery, runs a strange psychological practice, and apparently doesn't shy from sending ordinary people to a sanitarium, makes Reilly to seem a sinister character for much of the time. Things are not improved by Reilly's chanting "Protect her from the Voices," or his admonishment to his patients to "Work out your salvation with diligence." Even though he turns out to have a beneficent influence on the Edward and Lavinia, he remains a shadowy figure at the play's end.

One senses that Eliot has a whole philosophy of choice and selfhood lurking under here somewhere, one which he may have been better off writing as a philosophical treatise rather than as a drama. But Eliot was determined to philosophize in a literary mode. There are religious overtones in *The Cocktail Party*, suggestions that at least for some religion is the right path. Celia, the play's martyr, describes her plight to Reilly as having a "sense of sin," and believing that something is wrong with the world itself, and that she must "atone" for it.

Perhaps Eliot's distilled eloquence about Mankind's Plight is best offered in poetry, where the reader is expected to caress every word in search of meaning. As a drama, the characters in *The Cocktail Party* feel like props for Eliot's ideas, like Celia the martyr. Edward is Eliot's stand-in, existentialist man. Reilly the Freudian father-confessor. Julia the busybody, who seems to have no life of her own other than to help the Chamberlayne's (and perhaps countless others) seek out their "salvation" through Reilly. And Alex the world-traveler with mysterious global connections, always speaking with a knowing air. Peter exists to square off the Edward/Lavinia/Celia love triangle. The characters all speak with intelligence; they just sound too much like Eliot." – Dan Geddes.

"Eliot's play would not be worth considering if the dialogue were not so profound and intelligent. Part of a poetic drama is that, like Shakespeare, the playwright should be able to sum into a few lines what it would take a philosopher a few volumes. Poetry gives the playwright a license to make such statements because, as in a musical, we accept that human speech is not being realistically mimicked; therefore, the language does not seem false. Another comparison we might draw is that the poetic dramatists, like Eliot and the Bard, mingle the comic and tragic without overriding either. In other words, we can have Reilly's lighter moments in *The Cocktail Party* just as we can have Mercutio's speeches in *Romeo and Juliet* without sacrificing the ability to show the human condition. Unfortunately, the play is just words. I could not imagine trying to stage this play because none of the dialogue lends itself to movement." - John Blackstock.

"In a world of appearances, a new species of peace-makers has been invented. The priest of old has disappeared. The psychiatrist has replaced him. He is there to listen to secrets, to sort out situations and to propose solutions to human problems. The very few that are worth it can become the saints of today, going to foreign desolate countries and helping people out of their difficulties, fighting poverty and diseases, bringing the Christian faith to pagan people, living in suffering and dire hardship. The others are helped to adapt to our society, to be successful in this society without feeling the remorse or the fear that come along with it. They just become adaptable, supple enough to fit in a deeply dehumanized society. The psychiatrist is the go-between for such people. The play is surrealistic and yet perfectly descriptive of reality. It is full of a new type of poetry, his poetry of love and

hate, of a new type of drama, the drama of conflict-solving. T. S. Eliot manages to shift from the most superficial bourgeois drama to the deepest and serenest tragedy turned comedy. The path of these people is tragic in a way, but it ends in beauty or at least in harmony. Yet I think T.S. Eliot would have been better inspired if he had gotten away from this bourgeois aristocratic society that is nothing but vain cocktail parties and superfluous appearances. The great poet he is could have been a better playwright." - Dr Jacques Coulardeau.

"Central to the tale are Edward and Lavinia Chamberlayne, a couple suffering from the midlife, upper-class, upper-middlebrow blues. Lavinia thinks she can solve the problem by leaving — with disastrous timing, since she has invited Everyone to the eponymous party. But she returns, and it is now Edward's chance to leave. He does so, but he doesn't have enough shirts ... the only way out of his quandary is for the two of them to get back together, helped by the mysterious Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, a (presumed) doctor on Harley Street with a taste for gin! Adding mystery to this tale are three secret guardians: Sir Henry, Julia Shuttlethwaite (an older busybody) and Alexander MacColgie Gibbs, (an effete man-about-town who knows just everyone, here and abroad). Julia and Alex shepherd neurotics to Sir Henry's office, where he helps them decide major life crises with a mixture of commonsense, esoteric philosophy, and secular mumbo-jumbo." – John Chatterton.

"Although this play of 1950 was Eliot's first full-length comedy, he had made an earlier stab at the genre in the 1920s: "Sweeney Agonistes," a first-rate work that unfortunately remained unfinished and is now included in collections of Eliot's poetry. "Sweeney" was a jazzy, dark comedy with originality and verve; by comparison, "The Cocktail Party" is tepid indeed. Even judged on its own merits, however, this play falls short. The first half is enjoyable enough: an unusually well-written English drawing-room comedy with serious overtones. The play begins to fall apart with the bizarre sessions of pseudo-psychotherapy in Act 2, and degenerates into overt Christian flag-waving by the final scene". – Carl Tait.

"Although readers of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* have long noted its connection to his 1940 tract *The Idea of Christian Society*, none have fully or critically explored the play's social agenda. Like Eliot's earlier treatise, *The Cocktail Party* presents a hierarchical world view that is alarming in its implications for both class and gender. The guardians, who join in a "Christian conspiracy" are also clearly an elite group." _ David Jones.

"Eliot's script brims with remarkable insight, existential angst, humor and richly painted characters. The play revolves around the relationships between a rowing married couple, Lavinia and Edward. The pair is eventually reunited after a series of events introducing us to, amongst others, TS Eliot's "Saint" Celia. When the play was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival in 1949, it was heavily criticized for use of a surreal triumvirate of advisory 'guardians', who guide the other characters in their lives. While it is certainly true that modern audiences are not obsessive about realism in plays, there is still something quite sloppy about Eliot's use of these characters, who are given no real introduction or explanation." – Patrick Hayes.

"The dialogue is a kind of tidal wave of T. S. Eliot's fake-profound psychobabble theology. And at the end there's this covert racism (lots of utterly unironic references to "savages" and "heathens" and eating Christians and monkeys)" – Russ Hunt.

"Certainly *A Cocktail Party*, a three-acter with a circular plot, can have more of the look and sound of a slick social comedy than a religious drama in verse. But in basing the play on Euripides' *Alcestis*, Eliot's intention was to make the social surface a subject of satire, evidence of a spiritual desert. These are people in need of salvation." -R.M Dietrich.

"Eliot's subject matter is nothing less than the essence of the human condition. Surely a timeless theme, it nonetheless seems dated. This is due largely to the playwright's use of the character of the unidentified guest, who turns out to be a psychiatrist named Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly.

Reilly, functioning as Eliot's alter ego, is virtually omniscient and omnipresent. Cryptic and clinical, he seems to be everywhere and know everything, a throwback to an earlier, less questioning perception of the medical profession generally and psychiatry in particular." – Michael Bracken.

"Eliot's script crackles with high-tension inferences. You're not quite sure what's reality or unreality; truth or lies. It's not until the end of the second act that the pieces begin to fit. But even then, Eliot leaves the audience with a lot of questions to ponder about the human condition. The contemporary drama is loosely based on Eliot's rocky personal life, especially his first marriage. The characters are modeled after his friends, including those he calls "guardians," who offered him a sense of emotional stability during the difficult times. Eliot used the play, like his poems, to work out issues that troubled him, including spirituality, loneliness and alienation. A running theme is that we see people the way we want to see them to suit our own needs, not as they really are. In essence, we are all strangers to each other. But in the midst of emotional turmoil Eliot offers the message that hope can be attained through self-knowledge, forgiveness, faith, the courage to take risks, and a commitment to love. Although it imparts profound insights, "The Cocktail Party" is sprinkled with playful humor." – Johanna Crosby.

"The poem "The Love Song of St. Sebastian" and the plays *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Cocktail Party* all deal with martyrs, but Eliot treats these characters differently in each work, struggling to achieve both balance and emotional distance in his portrayals. The presentation reveals that, while he initially struggles with his close relationship with Christian martyrs, Eliot slowly distances himself from them, allowing multiple characters and situations to question the significance and role of the martyr in modern times. Thus, Eliot's execution of his critical views in creative works produces texts containing greater depth and variety of human emotion. The martyr figure proves a particularly useful point of reference because Eliot uses it over a long period of time and in different genres." – Gregory Wheeler.

" The central characters in *Murder in the Cathedral*" and *The Cocktail Party*, in which the characters are instruments in conveying Eliot's recurring theme of man's need— a return of faith in God to combat the desolate state of society. Most people are born, marry, grow old, and die without ever achieving a consciousness of life as anything greater than the flow of time. Thomas Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral* and Celia in *The Cocktail Party* are two characters who tragically attempt to transcend worldly restraints of emptiness; they are the noble ones amidst societies of intolerant chaos and shallow meaninglessness. A stark contrast to Thomas and Celia are the people surrounding them, those who live within the superficial realm of everyday life." –McCormick.

"Celia Copplestone in *The Cocktail Party* is a much more fully realized saint. She comes into this high estate through the ministry of a psychiatrist of nearly divine powers, Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly. Celia is a virginal soul who comes to see that the well-tempered life of English upper-class Christian gentility is not for her. This is not because one cannot really be a Christian in that way. God demands one thing of this person and another one of that person, and he has something special in mind for Celia. She gives up resisting her vocation and goes out to Africa to preach Christianity. There she meets a terrible but blessed death as a martyr and becomes a sanctifying presence: although in heaven now abiding she will ever be a verdant blessing here below.

Celia is a poignant gesture towards a lost world. She is an evocation of love spiritualized to the highest degree, but she is also an exercise in nostalgia. Celia fails for other reasons, too, but these may cast a sorrier light upon the world than upon her. A world able to see only footless idealism wedded to mental illness in the ultimate of self-sacrifice somehow seems not worth the blood of martyred saints. Perhaps they, who seem unalterably intent upon leading lives relatively decent, largely dull, rarely lucid, and habitually joyless except for "kicks" artificially induced, deserve such a world. The trouble is, when the saint fades out, the sinner loses intelligibility and shortly becomes a stale cliché; and the world is left to those who lack the courage to be a saint and the vividness of appetite to be a sinner." – Julian N. Hart.

14. 6. Sample Questions:

1. Cocktail Party is based on certain catholic conceptions – examine
2. Cocktail Party seeks a way out from individual's in ability to experience the sick society – examine
3. Cocktail Party is a depressing play which centralizes the martyrdom of Celia copestone – examine
4. Cocktail Party documents the failure of the beginning – examine.

14. 7. Suggested Readings

1. D.E. Jones : The Plays of T.S.Eliot
2. A.G. George : J.S. Eliot : His Mind and Art.
3. F.O. Mathhiessen : The Achievement of J.S. Eliot
4. Caroc H. Smith : T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice.

Lesson Writer

Prof. Sindu Meenan

Lesson - 15

WALTER PATER'S STYLE

Contents:

15. 1. Objectives :

The Objectives of this lesson includes the analytical perspectives of Walter Pater's criticism of Literature . Particularly, his essay on STYLE is thoroughly examined and analysed from different perspectives. The lesson excludes the biographical details and gives priority to the other works of Pater while introducing the atmosphere of Victorian literary criticism which has provided required stimulus to Pater's critical perspectives.

15. 2. THE LITERARY BACKGROUND

Walter Pater is a Romantic Impressionistic critic. In the period of Victorian criticism Pater represented the group that stood for the principle of Art for the sake of Art. Pater along with Oscar Wilde reasserted the right of art to pursue its pleasurability, untrammeled by any ethical or social considerations. They stood in opposition to Carlyle and Ruskin's neo classical doctrine of Art for the sake of society. The Best of Pater's criticism is contained in Appreciations. His works Studies in the History of Renaissance, Marius the Epicurean, Plato and Platonism, and Essays on Literature are of best critical standards. The Garden also carried out the criticism to the extremity. His History of Renaissance defines his attitude towards literature. Speaking about the search for in Life he opined that experience is the end but not the fruit of life. In his analytical perspective of literature as a delightful experience, Pater draws the distinction between imaginative and unimaginative literature. Unimaginative Literature consists of science, history and other branches of knowledge, where the task of the writer is to go beyond the mere description and establish the fact. This process is best

followed by the writer who conceals his own self. This kind of literature represses the tendencies of imagination. Imaginative literature does not reproduce the facts. It is the product of writers imagination. The impressions of the writer are expressed accurately. The 'bare facts' are transformed into 'soul facts' and go according to the conceivement of the soul. The external is interiorised and the internal is exteriorized. The writers aim at the art of transcribing the facts. As the literature of imagination refashions the sense of fact its object becomes the seeking of pleasure. Literature of the Fact does nothing more than reproduce life or nature. But more than transforming the sense of fact it needs to produce the fine art and good art. The condition of the goodness of literature is based on the truthful perception to the sense of fact. From this perspective the STYLE of the good artist becomes an essential factor. This made Pater to advocate art for art's sake contrary to the proposition of art for life's sake. In this aspect Pater's ultimate source remains Longinus who upheld the principle of 'Grandeur of thought' as an essential condition to the submility in literature.

15. 3. ON STYLE

The subject of STYLE is of great concern to Pater. The content of the argument is marred by his obscure prose. Pater echoes Longinus in his definition of Style. Considering the sense of fact as the subject of refined art, he examines different methods of presenting it to the reader. He is of the opinion that writer presents the subject by following three methods: diction, design, and personality. As for the diction is concerned the writer chooses the vocabulary which remains loyal to his own spirit. He calculates the sense of fact in a precise way that was understood by him. To implement this, the writer does not use obsolete or worn out words. He uses the current words in the sense they convey the meaning and avoids constant misuse. Discovering 'the willing intelligence of his reader' the writer exercises a skilful economy. He has to shun the ornamentation and uncommon words and phrases. As the words remain longer than the thought in memory, they are intended to substitute their alien pleasure for the thought. The writer provides 'a pleasurable stimulus' to the reader by paying attention to his medium. The literary artist is out of necessity a scholar writing for the scholarly pursuits. Substantiating this Ruskin is of the opinion that in the production of scholarly pursuits, Nature exercises the same self restraint and this has to be searched by those whose pick axes are in good order.

Another requirement of the STYLE is the Unified Combination of Words. It is not the architectural design of the sentences but their togetherness for the common purpose : 'which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does, but with undiminished vigour, unfold and justify the first'. The condition of the literary art becomes a priority. Pater calls this 'the necessity of mind in STYLE'. It is the mind that tries for the combination of words, phrases, sentences till they become one whole and one with subject. The design of composition echoes Longinus 'dignity of composition'. It naturally draws us to that of Artistotelean plot with beginning, middle and end.

The third factor personality or 'soul in style' is the very breath of writer in his work. It enkindles words to the extent that no literary artifice can. People say: where words become so catchy 'the altar fire has touched those lips'. They are not constrained by any law as they naturally rise from soul that is inspired. The literary artist reaches us overwhelmingly by soul bringing sagacity to Longinus

phrase 'with an irresistible might'. It effects unity of tone or atmosphere. It is his very self in his work-the man in Style. The more personal Style becomes more impersonal 'in a real sense'. It has something universal or the soul of humanity, as it appeals to everyman. It is not the writer but every man who speaks.

15. 4. WRITERS SENSE OF FACT

Walter Pater's notion of the writer's Sense of Fact is indebted to Coleridge. His view on Style is easily traced back to Longius. Judging the things by the impression rather than by the rule is not at all a new critical method. Even the mode of distinction between characteristic and uncharacteristic in an author is anticipated by Arnold, who choose the Wordsworthian and Byronian ends in view. But Pater has offered the lengthier aspects of Coleridge and Arnold in a precise manner. His definition Style is in a scientific way. As for the quality of literature, he has not spared even great literature. He has defined great subject as the quality of great literature. His emphasis on sense of fact is balanced by the addition of a noble end to the conditions of highest art. His earlier assertion that the pleasure as an end of art also seems to have been altered at the dedication to the service of God and Man.

15. 5. FUNCTION OF A CRITIC

With the influence of Style as its true presentation, the function of the Critic for Pater is nothing more than a discourse. Pater systematically lays down the function of the critic's experience. The virtue of the poet lies in disengaging the critic's experience and set it forth. The virtue of the poet is none other than the sense of fact. This particular sense of fact is mixed both in the content and style of his work. 'The commoner elements of Nature' try to disengage the poets virtue. According to Pater the critic who disengages is a true critic. No preconceived theory will influence a true critic.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN POETRY AND PROSE

Pater says 'The Progress of Mind' consists in differentiation. One should not loose the sense of achieved distinction between poetry and prose. Those who have dwelt emphatically on the distiction have been tempted to limit the function of prose. While prose has been perceived by Bacon, Lily, Carlyle, Cicero, Newman, Plato, Michelet, Sir Thomas Brown etc. Poetry has been exalted by Milton, Wordsworth, Browning etc. The essential beauty in the literary style is to consider the beauty of poetry and prose. As it was the characteristic instinct of his age, Dryden emphasized the distinction between poetry and prose. Dryden's prosaic excellence affected the verse. After Dryden the range of poetic force was effectively enlarged by Wordsworth. He considered the distinction as technical or metrical restraint. After graphing out the distinction Pater proposes to point out the qualities of literature, applying it to the imaginative sense of fact. The writers sense of fact in literature transcribes the factuality, whereas all other complex subjects lie on the borders of science. Many of the classical writers transformed the sense of fact into transcription: "Livy, Tacitus, Michelet, moving full of poignant sensibility amid the records of the past, each after his own sense, modifies who can tell where and to what Degree? And becomes something else than a transcriber, each as he modifies, passing into the domain of art proper"(114). According to Pater, in the process of transcription, literature should present Truth to acquire artistic quality. So literature like all other arts is considered reproductive of facts. Such representation of fact is concerned with the soul of specific personality.

15. 6. CHARACTERISTICS OF A SCHOLAR

The literary artist is of necessity a scholar. Pater sees a scholarly conscience as male conscience under the available system of education. In the scholarly pursuit the scholar traverses female conscience amiably. The scholar works in the surroundings which do not belong to him. Defining the art of the scholar Pater says: " In a somewhat changed sense, we might say that the art of the scholar is summed up in the observance of those rejections demanded by the nature of his medium". A scholar should be alive to the value of the circumstances.He should resist the tendency of the majority to efface the distinctions of language. His appeal is to the great scholar and should dislike hackeyned expression. He should hold a sense of self-restraint and renunciation. While scrupulously representing the matter he must make himself available to the worth of the reader. His science instrument is freedom, the freedom of the master. The manner of the true master becomes essential to his art. Chained by the restraints he vindicates his liberty. Any writer worth translating is conscious of his words. He does that in search of an instrument for adequate expression. A scholar should realize the necessity of changing the language along with living thoughts of people. Indicating the significance of the changing language Pater says: " Ninety years ago, for instance, great mental force certainly was needed by Wordsworth to break through the consecrated poetic associations of a century and speak the language that was his, that was to become in a measure the language of the next generation. " (118). Carrying the historical sense, the scholar will have to use the finer edge of words in use. His responsibility lies in ascertaining, communicating and discovering words. Ornamentation of language: 'one beauty' of all literary style is of its essence and Independence. A lover of words will be obviously alert for mixed metaphor of words opposing the degradation of language; he will not treat coloured glass and will be fully aware of figurative texture.

15. 7. THE NECESSITY OF MIND:

All the loss of good writing aim at similar unity or identity of the mind. When the composition demands STYLE in the right way it tends towards the dependency of wholeness and identity. Logical coherence is evidenced in the choice of words. Literary architecture displays development or growth of design in the process of execution. With the strong and leading sense of the word, he gives the reader the sense of security. This is the function of Mind in Style. It is heard to ascertain the role mind and soul. They seem to be in conflict with each other. William Blake brought the certainity of soul. Soul is seen as an enexplicable inspiration. By soul he established a kind of immediate contact. "Mind we cannot choose but oppose where we recongnise it; soul may repel us, not because we misunderstand it". Theological interests in literature are an indication of this. Religious history presents us remarkable instances.

15. 8. MARTYR OF LITERARY STYLE

Pater considers Gustave Flaubert as the martyr of literary style. Some of the letters written by Flaubert in his 25th year records the sense of disillusion. Flauber displays 'taking thought' as the love for literature and pledge of the emotion in his correspondence to 'Madam X. ' In his love letters he communicated his pains and pleasures of art. Madam X as a literary artist, could not be seen as a rival to experience that passing of Flaubert. Flaubert theory of one work for one thing, 'one thought' in the

midst of multitude of words, is expressed philosophically. But Flaubert's search is seen form the perspective of the words adjustment to its meaning . For Flaubert the discovery of the word is seen as an intuitive condition of the mind.

For Pater the indispensable beauty of the highest and lowest literature is Truth. Truth is perceived as a personal sense of Fact, as accuracy and as a finest and intimate form of expression.

According to well known saying 'The Style is the Man'. His sense of the world STYLE in all its varieties finds its 'justification in the good taste of Cicero as truly the man himself. The relegation of the Style to subjectivity, to individual must transform into mannerism. If Style be the man it will be in the real sense impersonal. The distinction between good art and great art lies not on its form but on the matter. It is on the quality of the matter STYLE informs and controls the greatness of literary art . Great art has something of soul of humaity in the great structure of human life.

15. 9. SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Consider Walter Pater's Style as an important piece of Victorian criticism

Walter Pater's Style centralizes on the distinction between Prose and Poetry and the function of criticism?

Pater's STYLE echoes the definition of Longinus's definition of Style.

15. 10. SUGGESTED READINGS:

Sethuraman ed. The English Critical tradition. Vol. Ii.

B. Prasad. An Introduction to English Criticism, Macmillan. 1997.

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16. DYLAN THOMAS : THE HUNCH BACK IN THE PARK

Contents:

16. 1. Objectives:

The objectives of this lesson are to explicate the meaning of the poem from various perspectives. Besides exploring the literary placement and significance Dylan Thomas in the modern period, the comparison is also drawn out in the light of the existing poetic conceptualizations.

16. 2. Biography of the Poet:

Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea on 27th October 1914. His father was an English teacher. He had his formal education in Swansea grammar school and spent nearly three years in his first efforts of writing. After publishing his first book Eighteen Poems (1934) he went to London for the British Broadcasting Corporation writing scripts and short stories. IN 1937 he married Caitlin Macnamara in London. He made a number of prolonged tours in the United states after the war. The two interesting autobiographical books Portrait of the artist as a Young Dog (1940) and Adventures in the Skin trade were published posthumously in 1955. He completed the well known radio script Under the Milk wood before his death. His acute alcoholism precipitated his early death.

16. 3. SIGNIFICANT POEMS

Thomas's poems carry an element self hypnotization by their obsession with the rush of death. The

poem " The Force that through the Green fuse drives the Flower" centralised the idea of the life force as exploding organism at one level and destructive element at another level. Another poem the war time elegy "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London" rejected the discontinuity between life and death. This poem is known for the celebration of organic oneness. Another poem "Fern Hill" despite its children's fairy tale becomes song of irreversible doom. "In my Craft or Sullen Art" published in 1945 related the poet's driven labour with impersonal force. Another poem "Do not go Gentle into that good Night" written at the death bed of Thomas's father is known for poet's simplest expression. All the poems of Dylan Thomas stand for the high emotional intensity.

16. 4. CRITICAL COMPARISON

More than any other notable modern poet, Dylan Thomas lived at the focal point of controversy. One feels impelled to approach Dylan Thomas's poetry through the avenue of controversy, setting aside 'critical reception'. When Thomas began to write, the prevailing mode of poetry was firmly social. Most of the young poets who emerged in England after 1930 were certainly influenced by the events that effected the whole world like the rearmament of Europe, economic depression and political unrest. No young poet dared to write in straight disregard of literary climate around him. When the encouragement came from the conscious marxizing strain in poetry, there was counter tradition through other forms like Dadaism & surrealism. Against this background Dylan Thomas is seen striking his own determined direction. Dylan Thomas chose not to be influenced by the ideological fervour. He chose the inner landscape of political and social struggle. The reason is to be sought inside his own nature and not outside. The indepth analysis of Dylan Thomas's poetry detected the traces of traditional welsh poetic craft. In the early days of his fame from 1935 to 1940s Welsh cultural elements have surged in his poetry but they have been overlooked entirely. It would be relevant to trace out the influence of Background over his poetic output. Both, Thomas parents came from rural, welsh speaking homes. This has moulded the poetic personality and Thomas wrote poetry in the light of Welsh influence in the initial stages of his career.

16. 5 SELF AND THE WORLD

With unusual insistence, Dylan Thomas presents the relationship of iner and outer worlds. Thomas's concern is more that of a poet and personal. He is deeply involved in shaping the processes of his own. Poetic language is the medium for creating the experience in simultaneity. Thomas's most famous poem The force that through the green fuse drives the Flower is an excellent illustration of the way the imagination effects that felt identity. The power of encounter in the external world of nature is generated by this poem. Most of his poems are an advance to man's identification with nature and with God. The claim of the self are inflated to cosmic dimensions. The character and the personality of a person are never co-existensive with the poetical self embodied in his poetry. For Thomas the truth of poetry is altogether a different order and the poetic language does not work to promote meanings. Poetic self transcends personal or social identity. It is the search for the language which will impersonalise & universalize the poetry. So the true self of the poet is identified in the embodiment of an imaginative vision of a more than personal sanction and valitdity.

In Thomas's earlier poetry the striking feature is the creation of an imaginative world where the distinction between self and external reality are confounded. In " I see the boys of Summer" Thomas gains a measure of impersonality while allowing complete range of all aspects of the self. The poem is considered as 'two sides of an unresolved argument', It embodied poets unusal reliance on the perception of the body as the center of the world. This sense of identification between body and world, between inner and outer provoked charges of egocentricity or solipsism. The sense of desolation is extreme in the poem " Light breaks where no sun shines". In this poem the profound sadness of total isolation is felt as cosmic alienation.

16. 6 THE OBSCURITY IN HIS POETRY

Dylan Thomas is considered an obscure poet inspite of his efforts to be simple. Obscurity was the best way of expressing what he had to say. The best commentators on Thomas like Ralph Maud opined that the natural tendency underplays an element of obscurity. William York Tindall's Reader's Guide to Dylan Thomas offers a rough idea of what happens in any poem of Thomas. Elder Olson argued that obscurity was a means by which Thomas controlled readers response to the poem. William T.Maynillam opines that Thomas's obscurity enabled him to sustain different states of emotion. J. Hillis Miller in Poets of Reality considers 'configuring themes' responsible for unification of Thomas's work. Miller ascribes to Thomas's work a sophisticated philosophical position. Thomas is understood to have shown concern with the web of ideas than with the experience of reading them.

16. 7. The Concept of Mind

Consciousness is a major fact of human existence. Mind circumscribes all aspects of consciousness. Mind is defined by materialists and spiritualits according to their convenience. Dylan Thomas was deeply concerned with the mind-body relationship at the formative stages of his career. The obscurity of Thomas's poetry is seen in the attempts to resolve the duality of mind and body. Gradually Thomas had shifted his attention from this subject matter to the experience of individual cases in Deaths and Entrances a collection of 18 poems. He followed the same pattern in his deliberate fiction In country Heaven. This is seen as an attempt to introduce stronger narrative line into the poetry. The attempt is in conflict with underlying premises of poetry. Thomas's concern is seen no with the individuals but with the mysterious world of spirit that underlies beneath the individuality. Thomas's experiences are achieved at comfortability in the 'the war casuality' poems in Deaths and Entrances which includes impressiveness of its achieved form A Refusal to Mourn.

The images that Thomas employed are Biblical and religious. He is also considered as the poet of the Body. The concerns of religion and Body are effectively blended in his poetry. In addition to this proscription, Herbert Reed described the poetry of Thomas as the poetry of elemental physical experience.

16. 8. THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The poem "Hunch Back in the Park" goes back to 1932. The poem is published in the collection of poems Deaths and Entrances. The emergence of the poem is from the personal experience of the poet.

Thomas used to be regular visitor to Cwim donking park. In the Park he used to watch the hunchback regularly. Just as the mister propps between trees and water, hunch back is seen moving around the trees and the place of water flow. The hunch back and mister are seen as liberated beings where their freedom of mobility is not restrained. It is only the 'Sunday gloomy bells' that calls for the end of freedom. Hunch back is seen assimilated with the elements of nature. Like solitary mister he traces water flow and the sunbday somber bell. As the hunchback is disliked deserted being by the society, it is only the nature that provides him solace and enslaves him into its fold. The hunch back enjoys and experiences unlimited freedom.

The Hunch back in the Park

A solitary mister

Propped between tree and water

From the opening of the garden lock

That lets the trees and water enter

Untill the Sunday somber bell at dark.

The hunch back is used to eat bread from a thrown out 'newspaper', drink water from the 'chained cup', which is used by the children to fufill the mixture of the course sand 'gravel'. The children are found floating the chained cup in the fountain basin like a ship. The Hunchback used to rest himself in the shelter of dog but nobody imprisoned him with chains. Thomas describes the unlimited freedom experienced by the Hunch back. The Hunch back leads his life according to his own terms and surprisingly the used out and thrown out material are of great help to him. He is nourished by a newspaper, chained cup, fountain basin, Kernel:

Eating bread from a newspaper

Drinking water from the chained cup

That the children filled with gravel

In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship

Slept at night in a dog Kernnel

But nobody Chained him up.

Thomas displays the mocking attitude of children towards 'hunch back'. He is compared to the early bird who comes early. He is like a placid water that settles down. The children mockingly used to address him 'Mister': a derogatory term that stands for a man without a little nobility. The truant boys from the town used to chase him with derogatory address and disappear when the Hunch back hears

them clearly. The mental serenity of the Hunch Back is met with the innocence of truant boys. The attitude of the boys leaves the signs of mockery by the society.

Like the park birds he came early

Like the water he sat down

And Mister they called Hey Mister

The truant boys from the town

Running when he had

heard them clearly on out of sound.

Thomas displays the element of mockery. He evinces that the mocking attitudes are reflected by nature. The sound of the 'willowgroove' that haunted the park keeper is reverberated in the stick that picked up the leaves. The constant mocking perpetrated on The Hunch back created a sense of doubting the natural surroundings as if they are also part of the game of parody. This has created a psychic exile and insecurity in the mind of the Hunch back. Thomas renders this situation with rapt attention:

Past lake and rockery

Laughing when she shook his paper

Hunch backed in mockery

Through the loud zoo of the willow groves

Dodging the park keeper

With his stick that picked up leaves

The Hunch back is seen in the company of swans and animals. He is found all the time in slumber and the poet addresses him 'old dog sleeper'. His state of drowsiness makes him immune to the joyful activities of the boys in the willows. The roaring sound of the rockery stones and the grooves that were flooded with the sailors fails to create an impact on mind of the Hunch back. Thomas aptly portrays this . He says:

And the Old dog sleeper

Alone between nurses and swans

While the boys among willows

Made the tigers jump out of their eyes

To roar on the rockery stones

And the groves were blue with sailors.

A woman kept observing all the day until darkness, the attitude of the Hunch back. She spent the whole day like an elm tree standing in the night after the locks and chains. Hunch back is compared to a woman figure that stood straight all the day. When the darkness sets in all the railings, shrubberies, birds, the grass, the trees, the lake and wild boys followed the Hunch Back to his Kernnel. Thomas presents this as the reversal of the roles and the situation. During the day the Hunch back is seen wandering and following the nature, birds, willows, grooves and the surroundings. When it gets dark it is the nature that follows the Hunch Back:

All night in the unmade Park
After the railings and shrubberies
The birds the grass the trees the lake
And the wild boys innocent as strawberries
Had followed the Hunch Back
To his Kennel in the dark

The poem is seen in the context of the treatment bestowed by the society on physically deformed people. As the society shuns the presence of the people, the nature becomes the lapse. Thomas depicts a picture where the surroundings, birds, lakes, the innocent children provide company to the Hunch Back. The nature and the children are conscious of the presence of the Hunch Back. They even tried to imbibe the philosophy of solitary confinement and follow him to kernel to learn the greater philosophical truths of life.

16. 9. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Discuss Dylan Thomas's philosophical truth of life in the Hunch Back in the Park?

The Poem The Hunch Back in the Park has emerged from the personal experience of Dylan Thomas- examine.

The poem the Hunch Back in the Park is the interaction of the Poet's self with the World—examine.

16. 10 SUGGESTED READINGS.

Walford Davies. Ed. Dylan Thomas : New Critical Essays. London. 1972.

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Lesson - 17

W.B. YEATS SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

Contents

17. 1. Objectives :

The Objectives of this lesson are to observe the poem in an analytical perspective by giving the required details of the biography of W.B.Yeats which includes the formative influences of W.B. Yeats poetry. It also concentrates in discussing the patterns of reference and the brief analysis of the collected poems. W.B. Yeats role in the formation of Abbey theatre and its influence in moulding the symbolism of his poetry.

17. 2. BIOGRAPHY

W.B.Yeats was born in Dublin in 1865. His father John Butler Yeats was a painter and an agnostic. His mother Susan Pollexfen came from an Anglo-Irish family. She is religious woman of deep intuitive feelings. In 1874 Yeats family moved to London and J.B.Yeats had the opportunity of acquainting himself with the leading Pre-Raphaelites. In 1883 Yeats decided to become an artist. By 1885, he published his poems in the Dublin University review. He came under the influence of Irish National leader John O' Leary, one of the guiding spirits of Irish renaissance. With the association of George Russel, he founded the Dublin Hermetic society. He joined Madam Blavatsky's theosophical society in 1888. In 1889 with the publication of his first book The wandering of Osin, Yeats turned permanently to London. In 1891 with the friends of his own age Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dawson he founded Rhymer's club. His poet friend Arthur symons wrote The Symbolist movement in Literature. In 1889 Yeats met beautiful actress and Nationalist Maud gone. He devoted much of his poetry in praising her . His marriage in 1903 with Major John Marbride turned his poetry to Bitter style and

stripped away the Imagery. He wrote harder and epigrammatic poems with politics and metaphysics. He met another women Olivia Shakespeare in 1894 and this relationship effected his writing style to the greater extent and he turned more and more to drama.

17. 3. THE ABBEY THEATRE

In 1899 Yeats with George Moore, Edward Martyn and his patroness Lady Augusta Gregory founded Irish theatrical society, which became Abbey Theatre. This organization has staged plays of Lady Gregory, John Synge, Sean O'casey, and Yeats. Yeats plays The Countess Cathleen and Cathleen ni Houliham infused Irish Nationalist fervour. The Abbey experiment helped to counterbalance Yeats mysticism and dreaminess. After the years of lonely bachelorhood, he married Miss Georgie Hyde Lees. The experience of family life has changed his subject of poetry. He developed a system of his own and published A Vision, which was considered an epistemological break through in the theory of poetry. Many critics considered that the knowledge of A Vision is essential to understand the essence of Yeats poetry.

BY 1992, Yeats achieved success with his two great books The Tower, (1928), and the Winding Stair. In 1933 he was appointed a senator of the newly established Irish Free state. In 1924 he was awarded Noble Prize. He was moved by this honour. In order to praise the nobility he wrote a little book The Bounty of Sweden. In the last years of his life Yeats suffered from heart and lung conditions. Five months before his death, in 1939 he wrote one of his greatest poems Under Ben Bulben.

17. 4 THE PATTERN OF REFERENCE IN YEATS POETRY

The readers of English poetry are accustomed to the structure of reference derived from Myth or from religion or from the exterior world of man and society. Many poets have provided comfortably accustomed frame works or reference. Yeats was a great student of Blake. Like his predecessor, he experimented with the frame of references unfamiliar to most of the readers. Yeats presents three different novel frame works:Mythological with particular reference to Irish myths and legends. Theological or philosophical with ideas gained not from formal religion but from his involvement in mysticism, theosophy and clairvoyance. Environment becomes a framework for his later poems. Most obvious is his use of Irish mythology. The 18th century pastiches of Irish and Scottish ballads were fraudulently presented as literal translations of the poem Oisin. A good example of Yeats's use of Irish myth is the moving narrative poem of 1903 "the Old Age of Queen Maeve". Yeats was completely aware of traditional use of myth. He identified Maud Gonne with Helen of Troy.

17. 5 ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED POEMS

Yeats major work Collected Poems is a single work, an intricate epic of the poets mind that reflected all the modes of reality as it presented to him. His first important poem The Wanderings of Oisin built around Irish mythological subjects and personages. The poem deals with the theme of old age verses perpetual youth, morality versus immorality and change versus changelessness. The poem is in the form of a dialogue between Fenian hero Oisin (the most famous Irish hero) and St. Patrick. Crossways another book of the poems represented the pre-raphaelite kind of picture with almost

pastoral songs. The most famous poem in the crossways is the Stolen child. Poems of 1983 appeared in the section The Rose. The Occult and the Irish material remained central. He drew the symbol of rose from the mystical Rosicrucian lit. that was produced in such abundance at that time. Another section of poems published in 1899 the Wind among the Reeds dealt with represented by humanity and the faeries, the past and the future of Ireland. Another collection of poems In the Seven woods refers to the seven woods of Lady Gregory's estate where Yeats wrote many of the lyrics. Another collection of poems The Green Helmet continued the mood and the manner of the Seven woods. The green helmet is also the title of the play Yeats wrote in which the helmet belongs to a famous warrior The Red man, whose challenge Cuchulain heroically accepts. Yeats supreme achievement is The Wild Swans at Coole. All the poems are clear lyrics with beautiful simplicity. The Tower published in 1928 is Yeats most important single volume. This contains many of his famous poems widely read. Major works like Sailing to Byzantium, Leda and the Swan and Among School children. Each poem is succeeded by one as great or greater.

17. 6. ANALYSIS OF SAILING TO BYZANTIUM:

The most famous single poem superbly expressed in careful compositions of age and youth, art and reality is Sailing to Byzantium. It's main concern is Yeats oldest theme of aging, passing time and man's mortality. The poem is purely imaginative and mythical and forms a group of meditations on age and its implications. The poem is quiet a short consisting of four stanzas put together all in iambiac pentameter.

In the first stanza the poet describes the natural world of young species-birds, fish, people. These are found busy loving, reproducing and 'commending ' the flesh. The element of 'dying' is not noticed from the moment of their 'birth' by the 'generations'. 'Caught' in the web of intricacies of life they fail to recognise the importance of aging wisdom. Sensual music of life makes them neglect 'monuments of unchanging intellect'. The works of art, religion or philosophy are the productions of man's intellectual contribution. They are the products of man's non-physical imagination. The poet questions the placement of an old wise man in the midst of young sensualists. The old man whose senses begun to fail him and faltering flesh that reels under the negligence fails to bring him the required recognition.

That is no country of 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.

Second stanza brings in the clinical observation of the predicament of the old man. 'An aged man' is a 'paltry thing'. He is no more than a 'scarecrow'. He is considered to be 'a tattered coat upon a stick'. He has to reject the importance of flesh. He should renounce the sensual quality of the body and concentrate on improving the pious density of his soul, sending it to school to learn to sing. If the first stanza has evoked a 'sensual music' of nature, the corresponding 'spiritual music' which the soul can study is centralized in this stanza. Observing the music of art, poetry, magnificence of the soul, Yeats tells us that he has sailed the seas to reach Byzantium. Byzantium is the ancient name of the capitol of Eastern Roman Empire, later called Constantinople and then Istambul. Yeats identifies this as the emblematic of the realm of pure spirit and aesthetic transformation. The place is considered to be the remote from the predicaments of old age and the physical life.

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.

Many critics have commented on the Byzantium poems. Critics have concentrated in analysing the significance of the holy city of Byzantium to the poet. Signifying the symbolic value Yeats himself wrote in A Vision: " I think that in Byzantium, may be never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers spoke to the multitude and the few alike". According to T. R. Henn ' Byzantium has a multiple symbolic value. Because it is in the past contains in itself… the mysteries of the dead". R.P Blackmur has proposed that Byzantium is the heaven of man's mind for Yeats. As the mind or soul dwells in eternal or miraculous forms, all things are known to the soul. T.R. Henn remarks that Yeats tries to correspond between Ireland and Byzantium. Byzantium symbolizes New Ireland for Yeats which tries to break away from its masters to develop its philosophical, religious and artistic destiny.

In the third stanza Yeats addresses the spirits of Byzantium. He appeals the sages who stand in God's holy fire to swoop down like a whirl wind or in a hawk like movemnt to make his soul sing in Joy. He begs them to comedown from the Holy fire, where he is sick with desire and fastened to a dying animal. He wants them to consume away his heart which is blinded with its fleshy mortal dream and teach him the lessons of immortality. He wants them to teach the secrets of the soul's art and the -artifices of eternity- art of preserving the soul in its eternity.

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.

In the fourth stanza Yeats centralises imagination of immortality. His imagination is away from the concept of traditional immortality. He resolves to keep his soul away from acquiring the bodily forms of natural things. In the heaven of art, where the artist himself becomes the artifact he wishes to acquire the form of hammered gold that Grecian Goldsmiths make. The form of the hammered gold is to keep the drowsy emperor awake. This form of hammered gold would be used to keep the drowsy soul from its deep slumber. Rejecting the nature's sensual music, he wishes to become a golden bird to chant the soul's music to the knowledge of all the ages and to the mythical lords and ladies of Byzantium.

Once Out of nature I Shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or to set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM 'BYZANTIUM'

The poem Byzantium was written in 1930 , included in the collections , included in the collections Words For Music Perhaps (1930). Since "Sailing to Byzantium" has let him down at the end as it speaks Goldsmiths bird as nature of man's body, Byzantium originated. The poem Byzantium is the result of the need of elaboration of the idea of Goldsmiths bird. The poem echoes the meaning of earlier poem Sailing to Byzantium and is considered a sequel. The importance of the poem lies in reiterating 'the artifice of eternity'. The poem brings certainity to the idea of death. It attempts to dream back the process of life after life. It is more truly and clearly a poem about art. With a view of the city of Byzantium it represents a symbol of eternity and imagination. Unlike 'Sailing to Byzantium' it draws much of imagery from a vision.

The unpurged images of day recede;

The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;

Night resonance recedes, night-walker's song

After great cathedral gong;

A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains

All that man is,

All mere complexities

The fury and the mire of human veins.

The opens when night descends on the city. 'The great Cathedral song' symbolizes both religion and mortal sensuality. It exhibits the phases of the moon. The dark of the moon or full moon is disdained by Humanity. Humanity finds it difficult to exist at either phase. The spirits of the dead are involved in the process or purification, as they begin to drift in from the sea carried by dolphins from paradise to earth and back again. "The fury and the mire of human veins" is engulfed by "Superhuman death in life and life in death". Each soul spins away "the mortal coil' and rises to a level of miracle. Every soul "Hades bobb in bound in mummy cloth". A reciprocity is found between the realm of unpurged living and the realm of the dead. The spirits of the dead must recede before the crowing of a 'terrestrial cock'. The stained spirits of the living must also recede before the crowing of 'the cocks of Hades'. Before the crying of golden artificial birds, in Byzantium, the earthly counterparts are miraculously dead.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,

More miracle than bird or handiwork,

Planted on the star-lit golden bough,

Can like the cocks of Hades crow,

Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud

In glory of changeless metal

Common bird or petal

And all complexities of mire or blood.

On the Emperor's pavement, 'the condition of fire' at midnight is in a state of purification and dominance. In this atmosphere blood begotten spirits come and all the complexities of fury cease. It dies into the form of Dance and agony of trance. It is agony of flame that 'cannot singe a sleeve'. The spiritual fire of 'life in death', flicker throughout the city . Spirit after spirit arrives from the sea and burns upon the marbles of dancing floor.

The poem does not conclude with the state of rest or of ultimate holiness. The platonic images of the forms of dead, beget fresh images. The process fla0mes on by the shores of gong-tormented sea . The sea of change which separates life and death is torn by dolphins because they are the ferries which bear spirits from Byzantium to paradise. The only earthly process that can break 'the flood' is the process of art, imagination, which is presented by 'the golden smithies of the Emperor'?

In Byzantium the miracle, bird or golden handiwork is as free as the dead from all complexities of mire or blood.

17. 7. THE CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

In the poem Byzantium, Yeats evokes number of connotations. Byzantium represents the 'artifice of eternity', the land of the imagination and the point of Full moon. It's symbolic significance to Ireland is clearly less significant that its function as the climax of a certain kind of Christian society. Its relationship to the city, devoted to the study of 'monuments of unaging intellect' and of the Holy Wisdom is sifnificant. In this poem Yeats contrasts the temporal world, the world of 'sensusal music' with the holy city of Byzantium 'the world of spirit'. What is begotten born and dies. If it wishes to acquire infinity, it has to transcend the cycle of dying generations by respecting the monuments of unaging intellect. For Yeats Art, Imagination and ternity are identical and are reflected in one another. Golden birds and mosaics may be lifeless artifacts but they are intensely ensolved then living flesh. The birds in the trees though they sing naturally and spontaneously in a profound spiritual sense they are less alive. The sages who live in the world of spirit are no more fastened to a dying animal. They live in god's 'holy fire' and are purified with the supernatural splendour to the greatness of the soul in attaining immortality and omniscience..

Many critics pointed out that in Essays Yeats writes of a 'fifth element', a supernatural one beyond and above the four natural and traditional elements. He considers this 'a bird born out fire'. The soul freed from flesh becomes such a bird. It becomes an artificial bird singing in the ecstatic flames of Byzantium 'the heaven of man's imagination'. Yeats says in A Vision when the drill is in the hands of Byzantium worker it undergoes a somnambulistic change to give to saint a look of great bird staring at miracle. In this poem Yeats asserts that soul rises from 'tattered coat upon a stick', when soul clap its hands and sing'. In this odyssey the soul becomes saint or Angel of the imagination.

17. 8. CRITICAL COMMENTARY

From the beginning of his poetic career, Yeats was recognised as one of the outstanding poets of his generation. Every one in Dublin convinced that he was genius. In 1908 Ezra Pound that Yeats was the best poet writing in English. Besides writing the best poetry, he won popularity through highly sentimental folk dramas and won the ultimate recognition Noble Prize in 1924. The recent study of Frank Kermode's Romantic Images (1957) placed Yeats with several other symbolist writers. The judgement and evaluation of Yeats by Arthur Symons, Sean O' Faolain, T.S. Eliot, R.P. Blackmur, W.H. Auden, Eichard Ellman, Stephen Spender, Robert Beuon etc., is fairly unanimous.

17. 9. Sample Questions :

Identify and discuss Yeats Major symbols and Images in the poem Sailing to Byzantium?

Trace out Yeats Stylistic development of the subject in Sailing to Byzantium. ?

Discuss Yeats life long preoccupations with symbolism in the light of Sailing to Byzantium?

17. 10. Suggested Readings

Beaum, R. The Poetic Art of W.B. Yeats, New York. 1968.

Henn, T.R. The Long Tower, New York. 1965.

Stallworthy J. Between the Lines: Yeats Poetry in the Making, New York, Oup. 1963.

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