SYLLABUS

M.A. ENGLISH

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

Total Marks: 20 for M.A. (CBCS)

15 for M.A. (OS)

SEMESTER-III

Note: 1. Students enrolled in MA English (New Syllabus) will attempt any four of the following questions in each course.

2. Students enrolled in M.A. English (Old Syllabus) will attempt any three of the following questions in each course.

3. Each question is to be answered in about 250 words and carries five marks

4. Only handwritten answers will be evaluated

5. Assignment questions are given for only those courses that are offered by us in each semester

6. Course XII is for old syllabus, Course XII-1 is for M.A. English (CBCS)

Course IX: Literary Criticism

1. Explain Aristotle's concept of an ideal tragic hero.
2. Discuss Dryden's comparison of the English and French drama in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy"
3. Explain the concept of 'meter' and 'diction in "Biographia Literaria" by Coleridge
4. Discuss main ideas in Arnold's "The Function of Criticism in the Present Time".
5. Elaborate T.S. Eliot's views on Historical Sense in "Tradition and Individual Talent".

Course X: Modern British and American Poetry

1. Narrate how the storm outside is reflected in the poet's mind in the poem "A Prayer for my Daughter" by Yeats.
2. Discuss main ideas in Eliot's "The Waste Land".
3. Give the significance of the title of the poem "The Unknown Citizen".
4. Write a critical analysis of the poem " Passage to India" by Walt Whitman.
5. Discuss various themes in the poem "Mending Wall" by Robert Frost.

Course XI: Modern British Drama

1. Discuss the significance of the title of the play *Arms and the Man* by GB Shaw
2. How is the idea of capitalism expressed in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*

3. Discuss the theme of martyrdom in the Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*
4. What are the various themes in *Sergeant Musgraves's Dance* by John Arden
5. Discuss the role of chorus in TS Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

Course XII/XII-i: World Fiction

1. Write a character-sketch of Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*
2. Discuss main ideas in Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*
3. Describe the narrator's search for her identity in Atwood's *Surfacing*
4. Discuss the post-colonial concerns in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*
5. Elaborate the significance of the Hanuman House in VS Naipaul's *House for Mr Biswas.*

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Block 1

Unit 1

MODERN BRITISH AND AMERICAN POETRY

As America transitioned from the late 19th century into the 20th century, its ideals, social norms, and core beliefs shifted. Buildings began to take newer, taller shapes, particularly in the city centres. Women found a sense of freedom, self-expression, and sexual empowerment. Artists were exploring new ways to depict life and new mediums, and the American music scene was evolving to be more inclusive and reflect influences from around the world.

In a spectacular display of art imitating life, American literature, and particularly American poetry, also took on new shapes. Modern American poetry, poetry from the 20th century, reflects the time it was born in. It has form while rejecting formal structure and explores complicated emotions in simplistic ways. Keep on reading to learn more about the characteristics of Modern American Poetry and its poets.

Characteristics of Modern American Poetry

Diverse Themes

Modern American poets began exploring the fundamentals of death, the meaning and meaninglessness of life, and free will. They also started taking liberties and explored controversial subjects not broached before in poetry. They began tackling the idea of national identity, racism, sexism, discrimination, and the loss of innocence.

Alienation becomes a new typical theme that evolved in the aftermath of World War I. People got disillusioned and felt alone while trying to navigate life in pursuit of the ever-elusive American Dream. With a society still suffering through segregation, discrimination, and gender inequality, modern American poets portrayed an American psyche that was sometimes fragmented. Poets like Langston Hughes grappled with what it meant to be both black and American, while T. S. Eliot attempted to find meaning through loss.

Themes ranged from humanities' purpose on earth, family relationships, and national identity to freedom, opportunity, and the damages of things like segregation and discrimination.

Focus on a New Language

Modern American poetry was so new that many struggled to recognize it as poetry. The writing didn't sound like traditional poetry, with structured rhyme schemes and strict meter. The pieces were more fluid and flowed from structured to unstructured, from perfect rhyme to slant rhyme. There were no strong sentiments praising God, celebrating nature, or romanticizing life. The use of everyday language in poetry was a new frontier and unwelcomed by many who clutched onto traditional modes of poetic expression.

A Reimagined Form

Early 20th-century poets aimed to define and understand the present by creating a "usable past." This meant modern American poets had to make use of the readings that

influenced and informed their own craft while creating something new. Using the past as inspiration to grow and develop, modern American poetry became accessible to a wider audience. The poets rejected Victorian and Romantic traditions while using them to reinvent their own forms. E. E. Cummings famously experimented with words with multiple meanings, punctuation (or a lack thereof), and capitalization. Marianne Moore used broken syllabic verse, and John Ashbery toyed with multiple meanings of words.

Much to the chagrin of critics, modern American poets toyed with traditional forms, reinventing form and style. Poets left the **sonnet** form incomplete, broke pentameter, used imperfect rhyme, or favored **alliteration** over structured rhyme schemes. Poets played with meaning, left abstract notions, and invited the reader to question existence, society, life, and the self.

Realism

Modern American poets rejected an idealized portrayal of life in favor of more vivid and realistic descriptions. Wanting to appeal to the general public and separate themselves from the restricting forms and topics in earlier poetry, modern American poets described experiences, events, emotions, and concepts in relatable terms. Life and relationships in modern American poetry are not romanticized and are portrayed from a real and sometimes matter-of-fact perspective. Often offering close and honest observations of the outer world, poetry during this period celebrated the reality of how things are.

A Focus on Nature

Modern American poetry focused on nature and humankind's relationship to it. Many modern American poets used nature as a source of inspiration and a means to express their ideas. For 20th-century American poets, nature was not mystical and separate from humankind. Rather, nature, and being in nature, was seen as a fundamental part of life.

Many poets, such as Robert Frost, preferred to be secluded and away from the modernized society when writing. Nature was not a spiritual awakening but brought joy. Birds, trees, lakes, and the outdoors are often used to represent more abstract ideas, as in Frost's "The Road Not Taken" (1916), where a forked pathway in the woods represents choices in life.

Focus on the Individual

Modernist writers were extremely concerned with consciousness. Many focused on their speaker's internal thoughts, almost becoming inner monologues. For some, like Langston Hughes, the speaker is nearly the same entity as the poet. However, even when there are similarities, the poem's speaker is a mere projection, a portion of the poet. Modern American poets used details and experiences to show a connection between the individual and the world.

Establishing an interconnected relationship between the individual and society, many modern American poets emphasized the importance of individual acts and expressed the influence one person can have on an entire society. In John Ashbery's "Some Trees" (1956), readers see an intimate account of how the speaker views humankind's connection with nature and with each other. The details are sparse, but the vague language and double meanings help give value and add nuance.

Change and National Identity

Another important theme in modern American poetry was change and national identity. American society was in a period of flux. The poetry and art of the time attempted to define a national identity that would be more inclusive than other societies. Poets often used images of daily life, natural surroundings, and stream-of-consciousness writing to portray American life, deal with change, and learn through loss. The modern American poet was looking for ways to differentiate the American landscape and values from those of their European roots.

Modern American Poets

Many poets writing during the early 20th century in the United States contributed to the list of exceptional modern American poems. However, several poets made an indelible mark during this literary movement. The leading figures of this era were T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. While Eliot's epic poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), deals with loss, his social commentary and allusions to World War I make Eliot an important figure. Ezra Pound took liberty within his writing and implemented **free verse** with **allusions**. The experimental methods helped pave the way for some of the other modern American poets listed below.

- Langston Hughes (1901-1967)
- Robert Frost (1874-1963)
- T. S. Eliot (1888 -1965)
- William Carlos Williams (1883 - 1963)
- Carls Sandburg (1878-1967)
- Dorothy Parker (1893 - 1967)
- Gertrude Stein (1874 - 1946)
- E. E. Cummings (1894-1962)
- Mina Loy (1882 - 1966)
- Vachel Lindsay (1879 - 1931)
- Edgar Lee Masters (1868 - 1950)
- Countee Porter Cullen (1903 - 1946)
- Amy Lowell (1874 - 1925)
- James Wendell Johnson (1871 - 1938)

Modern American Poetry - Key takeaways

- Modern American poetry is part of the early 20th-century Modernist movement.
- Key traits of modern American poetry include a return to the simplicity of language, a rejection of traditional forms, and experimentation with new topics and styles.
- Common themes in modern American poetry include a focus on nature, a realistic portrayal of things, places, and people, and a focus on individual identity.

- Contemporary American poetry dates from World War II to the present. Influential modern American poets include T. S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, E. E. Cummings, and Ezra Pound.
- Walt Whitman is often credited with ushering in the age of modern American poetry with his focus on daily domestic life as something to be celebrated.

Sources:

- Untermeyer, Louis. “The Spirit of Modern American Poetry.” *The English Journal.* February 1924.
- Spoo, Robert. E. “The Making of Modern American Poetry: Four Aspects.” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle.* Spring 1994.

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Unit 2

MODERNIST ENGLISH POETRY

Modernist poetry in English started in the early years of the 20th century with the appearance of the Imagists. In common with many other modernists, these poets wrote in reaction to the perceived excesses of Victorian poetry, with its emphasis on traditional formalism and ornate diction. In many respects, their criticism echoes what William Wordsworth wrote in *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* to instigate the Romantic movement in British poetry over a century earlier, criticising the gauche and pompous school which then pervaded, and seeking to bring poetry to the layman.

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

Much of early modernist poetry took the form of short, compact lyrics. As it developed, however, longer poems came to the foreground. These represent the modernist movement to the 20th-century English poetic canon.

English-Language Poetic Modernism

The roots of English-language poetic modernism can be traced back to the works of a number of earlier writers, including Walt Whitman, whose long lines approached a type of free verse, the prose poetry of Oscar Wilde, Robert Browning's subversion of the poetic self, Emily Dickinson's compression and the writings of the early English Symbolists, especially Arthur Symons. However, these poets essentially remained true to the basic tenets of the Romantic movement and the appearance of the Imagists marked the first emergence of a distinctly modernist poetic in the language. One anomalous figure of the early period of modernism also deserves mention: Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote in a radically experimental prosody about radically conservative ideals (not unlike a later Ezra Pound), and he believed that sound could drive poetry. Specifically, poetic sonic effects (selected for verbal and aural felicity, not just images selected for their visual evocativeness) would also, therefore, become an influential poetic device of modernism.

Imagism: Modernist poetry

- In traditional poetry, poets describe images in great detail, and then link the images to a philosophical idea or theme.
- In Imagist poetry, the writer does not talk about the themes behind the image; they let the image itself be the focus of the poem.

Ezra Pound, one of the founders of Imagism, set out three guidelines:

1. Direct treatment of the subject. The poem should deal directly with what's being talked about, without fancy words and phrases to talk about it.
2. Use no word that does not contribute to the presentation. Use as few words as possible.

3. Compose in the rhythm of the musical phrase, not in the rhythm of the metronome. In other words, create new rhythms.

British poetry is the field of British literature encompassing poetry from anywhere in the British world (whether of the British Isles, the British Empire, or the United Kingdom). Types of poetry which might be considered British poetry include:

- English poetry
- Irish poetry from Northern Ireland
- Scottish poetry
- Welsh poetry
- Jèrriais poetry
- Guernésiais poetry
- Manx poetry
- Cornish poetry

Characteristics of Modern Poetry:

1. Modern poetry is written in simple language, the language of every day speech and even sometimes in dialect or jargon like some poems of Rudyard Kipling (in the jargon of soldiers).
2. Modern poetry is mostly sophisticated as a result of the sophistication of the modern age, e. g. T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land".
3. Alienation. The poet is alienated from the reader as a result of the alienation of the modern man.
4. Fragmentation: the modern poem is sometimes fragmented like a series of broken images, and a gain like "The Waste Land".
5. Modern poetry is highly intellectual; it is written from the mind of the poet and it addresses the mind of the reader, like the poems of T. S. Eliot.
6. It is interested in the ugly side of life and in taboo subjects like drug addiction, crime, prostitution and some other subjects.
7. Modern poetry is pessimistic as a result of the bad condition of man in many parts of the world, such as most of the poems of Thomas Hardy.
8. Modern poetry is suggestive; the poem may suggest different meanings to different readers.
9. Modern poetry is cosmopolitan. It appeals to man everywhere and at every time because it deals with the problems of man or humanity.
10. Experimentation is one of the important characteristic feature of modern poetry. Poets try to break new grounds, i. e. to find new forms, new language and new methods of expression.
11. It is irregular, written without metre and rhyme scheme and sometimes written in prose like the prose poem.

12. Interest in politics and the political problems of the age.
13. Interest in the psychology and in the subconscious.
14. Irregularity of form. Modern poetry is mostly written in free verse and prose (the prose poem).
15. Ambiguity: Most of the modern poetry is ambiguous for many reasons.
16. Interest in myth and especially Greek myth.
17. Interest in the problems of the average man and the lower classes of society.

Sources:

https://englishsummary.com/

https://cedw.tu.edu.iq/

https://literaryquotation.net/

https://www.bisd303.org/

https://en.wikipedia.org/

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Block 2

Unit-1

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939)

Structure

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Life and Irish Background

1.4 Poetic Output: Early, Middle and Later Poetry

A. Self-Assessment Question

1.4.1 Early Period

1.4.2 Middle Period

1.4.3 Later Poetry

B. Self-Assessment Question

1.5 His Poetic Technique

1.5.1 Style

1.5.2 Symbols

1.5.2.1the Gyre

1.5.2.2 The Swan

1.5.2.3 The Great Beast

1.5.3 Mysticism and the Occult

1.5.4 Irish Myth and Folklore

C. Self-Assessment Question

1.6 Summing Up

1.7 Glossary

D. Self-Assessment Questions' Answers

1.8 Questions

1.9 Suggested Readings

1.1 Learning Objectives

These lessons have been prepared specifically for the Post Graduate students of ICDEOL, H.P. University, Shimla, who are pursuing their Masters in English Literature. The thrust of the discussions contained in this and subsequent lessons should provide reasonably detailed information on the life, works and various literary achievements of William Butler Yeats. These lessons also analyze the following five poems for your benefit.

The Second Coming
A Prayer for My Daughter
Leda and the Swan
Sailing to Byzantium
Among School Children

These five poems are a part of your syllabus.

1.2 Introduction

William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin in 1865 to a chaotic, artistic family. His father, a portrait painter, moved the family to London when Yeats was two, and William spent much of his childhood moving between the cold urban landscape of the metropolis and the congenial countryside of County Sligo, Ireland, where his mother's parents lived. An aesthete even as a boy, Yeats began writing verse early, and published his first work in 1885. In 1889, Yeats met the Irish patriot, revolutionary, and beauty Maud Gonne. He fell immediately in love with her, and remained so for the rest of his life; virtually every reference to a beloved in Yeats' poetry can be understood as a reference to Maud Gonne. Tragically, Gonne did not return his love and though they remained closely associated (she portrayed the lead role in several of his plays), they were never romantically involved. Many years later, Yeats proposed to her daughter-and was rejected again.

Yeats lived during a tumultuous time in Ireland, during the political rise and fall of Charles Stuart Parnell, the Irish Revival, and the civil war. Partly because of his love for the politically active Maud Gonne, Yeats devoted himself during the early part of his career to the Literary Revival and to Irish patriotism, seeking to develop a new religious iconography based on Irish mythology. (Though he was of Protestant parentage, Yeats played little part in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants that tore Ireland apart during his lifetime.) He quickly rose to literary prominence, and helped to found what the Abbey Theatre became; one of the most important cultural institutions in Ireland, at which he worked with such luminaries as Augusta Gregory and the playwright John Synge. In 1923, Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

One of the most remarkable facts about Yeats' career as a poet is that he only reached his full powers late in life, between the ages of 50 and 75. Indeed, after reaching his height, he sustained it up until the very end, writing magnificent poems up until two weeks before his death The normal expectation is that a poet's powers will fade after forty or fifty: Yeats defied that expectation and trumped it entirely, writing most of his greatest poems-from the crushing power of The Tower to the eerie mysticism of the Last Poems-in the years after he won the Nobel Prize, a testament to the force and commitment with which he devoted himself to transforming his inner life into poetry.

Since his work straddles the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Yeats is stylistically quite a unique poet; his early work seems curiously modern for the nineteenth century, and his late work often seems curiously un-modern for the 1930s. But Yeats wrote great poems in every decade of his life, and his influence has towered over the past six decades; today, he is generally regarded as the greatest poet of the twentieth century.

Nobel Prize winning Irish dramatist, author arid poet, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

1.3 Life and Irish Background

William Butler Yeats was born on 13 June 1865 in the seaside village of Sandymount in County Dublin, Ireland. His mother, Susan Mary (Pollexfen) (1841-1900) was the daughter of a wealthy family from County Sligo. Susan's father's political loyalties, that Ireland should remain under the British crown, were in direct opposition to her husband's John Butler Yeats (1839-1922) who was sympathetic to the Nationalists, and Home Rulers. When they married, he was studying to become a lawyer, but soon gave that up to follow his dreams of becoming an artist, of which he became a well-known portrait painter. In 1907 he moved to New York City where he died in 1922.

Year's mother Susan was the first to introduce him and his two sisters Susan Mary (Lily) (1866-1949) and Elizabeth Corbet (Lolly) (1868-1940) to the Irish folktales he would grow to love so much. His younger brother Jack Butler Yeats (1871-1957) like his father would also become an accomplished artist. At the age of two young William's father decided to move the family to London, England to study art. There William attended the Godolphin School in Hammersmith before the family moved back to Dublin. There William attended Erasmus Smith High School and spent much time at his father's nearby art studio. Pursuing his own interestsin the arts, in 1884 he enrolled in the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin for two years, during which some of his first poems were printed in the Dublin University Review. Yeats' verse play "Mosada", a Dramatic poem was published privately in 1886.

It is important to know a little about three women in Yeats' life: Maud Gonne, a beautiful but strong-minded girl with whom he fell in love and remained in love for many years. She appears often in his poetry, even in later years when he is offended by her intellectual and political arrogance, which the poet saw as unwomanly. It was John O'Leary who had introduced Maud Gonne to the young poet in 1888. She was a country girl of an aristocratic family combining beauty with nationalistic fervour. At this time Yeats too was taking keen interest in the Irish Nationalistic movements and this passion changed the course of his life as well as his poetry.

However, Maud Gonne could not win Yeats towards her political ambitions and she felt that this poet was not the right person who could make her life happy. She therefore married Major John McBride who also had strong political leanings. This came as a severe shock to the cultivated and idealistic Yeats. It was to attract Maud Gonne that he had become a fiery revolutionary and was deeply involved in a political movement. He even joined a secret extremist revolutionary Irish Republican Brotherhood for some time, all to impress Maud Gonne. Things however turned off differently. The two parted ways in 1893. Maud Gonne went away to France in a frenzied fit. Yeats retired to Sligo suffering physically and mentally.

Later when he came back to London, an aristocratic patron of arts, Lady Gregory gave him maternal care and sent him to America. This visit so rejuvenated Yeats that he

returned a changed person. Lady Gregory collaborated with Yeats on the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and other projects, Yeats was fascinated by folktales, and, under the tutelage of George Russell and Thomas Hyde, he published Fairy and Folktales of the Irish Peasantry in 1888. In 1897, Yeats met Lady Gregory, another member of what was termed the Gaelic Revival, and she convinced him to start writing drama with Irish subject matter. Together with George Moore and Edward Martyn, the two set up The Abbey Theatre, Ireland's national theater, in Dublin in 1904. Yeats' Cathleen ni Houlihan, a nationalist play personifying Ireland as a woman, was performed on the opening night.

The third and most important woman in the life of Yeats was Georgie Hyde-Lees. Like him, she too was a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn. That September, Yeats proposed to 25-year-old Georgie-Hyde-Lees (1892-1968), whom he had met through Olivia Shakespear. Despite warning from her friends-"Georgie,... you can't. He must be dead"-Hyde- Lees accepted, and the two were married on 20 October, 1917. Their marriage was a success, in spite of the age difference, and in spite of Yeats' feelings of remorse and regret during their honeymoon. The couple went on to have two children, Anne and Michael. Although in later years he had romantic relationships with other women and possibly affairs, Georgie herselfwrote to her husband "When you are dead, people will talk about your love affairs, but I shall say nothing, for will remember how proud you were."

During the first years of his marriage, he and Georgie experimented with automatic writing, and Georgie contacted a variety of spirits and guides they called "Instructors." The spirits communicated a complex and esoteric system of characters and history, which the couple developed during experiments with the circumstances of trance and the exposition of phases, cones, and gyres. The spirits notified Georgie that they were ready to communicate by filling the Yeats' house with the scent of mint leaves. Yeats devoted much time to preparing this material for publication as *A Vision* (1925).

Ireland and the Irish tradition had a deep and lasting influence on the poetry of W. B. Yeats. As he had had spent much of his formative years in England as well, we find his poetry deeply rooted in English and Irish traditions. He wrote in the English language, and was influenced by a number of English poets like Shelley, Swinburne, Spencer and Rossetti. By his birth, temperament and upbringing he was the poet of Ireland, rather the National poet of Ireland. The poetry of Yeats can be better appreciated when we know some details of his Irish background.

In its very essence, Ireland is quite different from England. Apart from its tradition and ways of thought there is something different in the very essence of the country. Every hill and valley, river and tree in Ireland is the haunt of some spirit or ghost. Every ruined tower or building is rich in local associations. It is a land haunted by shadows, spirits and memories - a land on which civilization has made but little impression. It was this spirit world which enabled Yeats to burst on Europe with a new imagery, a new mythology and new legends. His heroes, kings and fairies, people are of the very soil of Ireland.

There is no doubt that Ireland is a peasant country, but it is also famous for its love of Catholicism. While most of the leading families in the time of Yeats were Protestants, the people, the masses were, and still are mainly Catholics. The typical Irish landlord of Yeats' time had an inherited contempt for Catholicism, half social and half religious in origin. He was, in general, loyal to the British government, though it was from this very Protestant aristocracy that most of the leaders of the Irish revolution were drawn. He was self-conscious, proud of his and family, and so kept a little apart from the common catholic people.

Yeats himself came from a Protestant family and this might account for his temperamental aloofness. The education was unscientific, the Catholic masses believed in angels, devils and ghosts; their Protestant landlords, in their dislike for such superstitions and idolatry, broke away completely from the common culture. Thus, the Irish scene was a divided one and this duality might explain the conflict of opposites in the personality of Yeats. He was so to say, "caught between two worlds."

At this time, politics was a powerful force in the life of the people. England ruled the country, and the rulers were often unsympathetic and harsh. The war of independence was on, the spirit of nationalism was on the rise and people's thoughts were full of it. Stories of English savagery were told to the children and they believed these quite naturally. Irish leaders like O'Donnell: Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett were glorified and exalted very high. Their heroic deeds became a source of inspiration to the people. Many uprisings and revolutions took place against England. There was much bloodshed and people suffered a lot.

Everything took on a political coloring, and even poets like Yeats could not ignore it. Yeats frequently uses all this background in his poems. During the second and the third phase of his poetry, he takes up the contemporary scene in his poetry. In the first phase, it was the legendary past of Ireland that had become the inspiration along with the symbols and images. Irish nationalism also enjoys a prominent place in his plays and poems.

Throughout his literary career, Yeats incorporated distinctly Irish themes and issues: into his work. He used his writing as a tool to comment on Irish politics and the home rule movement and to educate and inform people about Irish history and culture. Yeats also used the backdrop of the Irish countryside to retell stories and legends from Irish folklore. As he became increasingly involved in nationalist politics, his poems took on a patriotic tone. Yeats addressed Irish politics in a variety of ways sometimes his statements are explicit political commentary, as in "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death," in which he addresses the hypocrisy of the British use of Irish soldiers in World War I.

Such poems as "Easter 1916" and "In Memory of Eva Gore Booth and Con Markiewicz" address individuals and events connected to Irish nationalist politics, while "The Second Coming" and "Leda and the Swan" subtly include the idea of Irish nationalism. In these poems, a sense of cultural crisis and conflict seeps through, even though the poems are not explicitly about Ireland. By using images of chaos, disorder, and war, Yeats engaged in an understated commentary on the political situations in Ireland and abroad. Yeats' active participation in Irish politics informed his poetry, and he used his work to further comment on the nationalist issues of his day.

1.4 Poetic Output - Early, Middle and Later Poetry

Yeats' period of active literary production spans over fifty years. During such a long period Yeats' genius grew in various directions - these may be referred as the various phases of his poetry. In fact, as a poet, Yeats always went on growing and developing. His later poetry is a growth from, and an evolution of his early creations. This represents the consummation of a long and fruitful career'.

Although a poet's achievement can never be divided into watertight compartments, but for the sake of convenience in study, these various phases can be termed:

The Early Poetry-Beginning (1885-1899)

Middle Period or The Transitional Period (1900-1915)

Later Poetry - Third Phase (1919-1933)

The Last Phase (1935-1939)

The earliest period of Yeats' poetry is also called "The Celtic Twilight period'. This period covers the following poetical works:

The Juvenilia (1885)

The Crossways (1889)

The Rose (1893)

The Wind among the Reeds (1899)

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Maud Gonne shared Yeats' interest in occultism and spiritualism. True/False

1.4.1 Early Period

The early poetry of Yeats reflects the style of Pater and the pale romantics of the nineties. The dreaminess of Rossetti is later infused with Irish mythology, magic and occultism. It is poetry of escape into the land of wishful desire, with a haunting incantatory rhythm, a strange symbolism that is designed to produce a haunting effect. In the concluding poem of The Rose, Yeats presented his work as if it were taking shape in the pale lamplight of eternity:

For round about my table go,

The magical powers to and fro,

In flood and fire and clay and wind,

They huddle from man's pondering mind.

-The Ireland in the Coming Times.

Yeats emerges as a great myth-maker. His early poetry depicts a dream world of fantasy that refers to the Irish countryside, peasant beliefs, folklore and tradition. The poet escapes from the world of concrete reality into an insubstantial fairy world of Irish mythology. He is seen escaping to an imaginary island, say, of Innisfree, to a perfect world of fret and fever, of injustice and cruelty. In "The Stolen Child", the poet suggests a wistful longing for a utopia:

Come away, O human child!

To the water and the wild

With a fairy, hand in hand,

For the world's more full of weeping than you understand.

He then began writing on Irish themes and captured the Celtic spirit. An eminent critic Prof. A.G. Stock has written that Yeats succeeded in expressing the very spirit of folk songs in his poems, "the spirit which makes it wander round the world without any questioning." Human beings are few and they belong to ancient times. They are Druids and heroes from legends. There is a plethora of supernatural beings, fairies, angelic entities, flaming multitudes with their "long wings and flash of white feet;" There are various dimensions to the poetry of Yeats.

On the one hand it reflects the poet's wish for an idyllic, utopian, dreamy fairy world, on the other it gives an idea that one cannot escape from reality, and that the mortal beings cut off from the real world cannot be happy and content. Hence Prof. A.G. Stock points out, "the prevailing mood of these escape-poems is one of irresponsible delight, but there is a faint undertone of foreboding; as if a child gives his hand to the elemental spirits, innocently in love with their wildness, and another present is silently aware that this gift to their devotees is an agony of loneliness."

His imagery at this period is designed merely to decorate without any operative significance of its own. His images come in a stream. In one of his observations, Prof. Stock explains that "Yeats' rhythms at this stage of his work are half entranced, like a man walking alone lost in a train of visionary thoughts, or incantatory as if he thought of poetry as a priestly vocation.

As Yeats began concentrating his poetry on Irish subjects, he was compelled toaccompany his family in moving to London at the end of 1886. There he continued to devotehimself to Irish subjects, writing poems, plays, novels, and short stories-all with Irish charactersand scenes. In addition, he produced book reviews, usually on Irish topics.

The most important event in Yeats' life during these London years, however, was his acquaintance with Maud Gonne, a tall, beautiful, prominent young woman passionately devoted to Irish nationalism. Yeats soon fell in love with Gonne, and for nearly three decades he courted her, although he eventually learned that she had already bome two children from a long affair, with Gonne's encouragement Yeats redoubled his dedication to Irish nationalism and produced such nationalistic plays as *The Countess Kathleen* (1892), which he dedicated to her, and Cathleen ni Houlihan (1902), which featured her as the personification of Ireland in the title role,

Gonne also shared Yeats' interest in occultism and spiritualism. Yeats had been a theosophist, but in 1890 he turned from its sweeping mystical insights and joined the Golden Dawn, a secret society that practiced ritual magic. The society offered instruction and initiation in a series of ten levels, the three highest of which were unattainable except by magi (who were thought to possess the secrets of supernatural wisdom and enjoy magically extended lives).

Yeats was fascinated by the possibility of becoming a magus, and he became convinced that the mind was capable of perceiving past the limits of materialistic rationalism. Yeats remained an active member of the Golden Dawn for thirty-two years, becoming involved in its direction at the turn of the century and achieving the coveted sixth grade of membership in 1914, the same year that his future wife, Georgiana Hyde-Lees, also joined the society.

Although Yeats' occult ambitions were a powerful force in his private thoughts, the Golden Dawn's emphasis on the supernatural clashed with his own need-as a poet-for interaction in the physical world, and thus in his public role he preferred to follow the example of John Keats, a romantic poet who remained, in comparison with Romantics William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley, relatively close to the materials of life. Yeats avoided what he considered the obscurity of Blake, whose poetic images came from mystical visions rather than from the familiar physical world. Even so, Yeats' visionary and idealist interests were more closely aligned with those of Blake-and Shelley-than with those of Keats, and in the 1899 collection The Wind among the Reeds he featured several poems employing occult symbolism.

Most of Yeats' poetry, however, used symbols from ordinary life and from familiar traditions, and much of his poetry in the 1890s continued to reflect his interest in Irish subjects. During this decade he also became increasingly interested in poetic techniques. He befriended English decadent poet Lionel Johnson, and in 1890 they helped found the Rhymers' Club, a group of London posts who met to read and discuss their poems. The Rhymers placed a very high value on subjectivity and craftsmanship and preferred sophisticated aestheticism to nationalism. The club's influence is reflected in the lush density of Yeats' poetry of the times, culminating in The Wind among the Reeds (1899). Although Yeats was soon to abandon that lush density, he remained permanently committed to the Rhymers' insistence that a poet should labor "at rhythm and cadence, at form and style"-as he reportedly told a Dublin audience in 1893.

1.4.2 Middle Period

The turn of the century marked Yeats' increased interest in theatre, an interest influenced by his father, a famed artist and orator whose love of highly dramatic moments in literature certainly contributed to Yeats' lifelong interest in drama. In the summer of 1897, the author enjoyed his first stay at Coole Park, the County Galway estate of Lady Augusta Gregory. There he devised, with Lady Gregory and her neighbor Edward Martyn, plans for promoting an innovative, native Irish drama. In 1899 they staged the first of three annual productions in Dublin, including Yeats' The Countess Kathleen, "and in 1902 they supported a company of amateur Irish actors in staging both George Russell's Irish legend "Deirdre" and Yeats' "Cathleen ni Houlihan."

The success of these productions led to the founding of the Irish National Theatre Society with Yeats as president. With a wealthy sponsor volunteering to pay for the renovation of Dublin's Abbey Theatre as a permanent home for the company, the theatre opened on December 27, 1904, and included plays by the company's three directors: Lady Gregory, John M. Synge (whose 1907 production "The Playboy of the Western World" would spark

controversy with its savage comic depiction of Irish rural life), and Yeats, who was represented that night with “On Baile’s Strand, “the first of his several plays featuring heroic ancient Irish warrior Cuchulain.

During the entire first decade of the twentieth century Yeats was extremely active the management of the Abbey Theatre company, choosing plays, hiring and firing actors and managers, and arranging tours for the company. At this time, he also wrote ten plays, and the simple, direct style of dialogue required for the stage became an important consideration in his poems as well. He abandoned the heavily elaborated style of The Wind among the Reeds in favor of conversational rhythms and radically simpler diction.

This transformation in his poetic style can be traced in his first three collections of the twentieth century. In the *Seven Woods* (1903), *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), and *Responsibilities* (1914). Several poems in those collections use style as their subject. For example, in “A Coat, “written in 1912, Yeats derided his 1890s poetic style, saying that he had once adorned his poems with a coat “covered with embroideries/Out of Old Mythologies.” The poem concludes with a brash announcement: “There’s more enterprise: In walking naked.” This departure from a conventional nineteenth-century manner disappointed his contemporary readers, who preferred the pleasant musicality of such familiar poems as The Lake Isle of Innisfree, “which he wrote in 1890.

Simplification was only the first of several major stylistic changes. In “Yeats as an Example?” an essay in Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978, the prominent Irish poet Seamus Heaney commended Yeats for continually altering and refining his poetic craftsmanship. “He is, indeed, the ideal example for a poet approaching middle age,” Heaney declared. “He reminds you that revision and slog-work are what you may have to undergo if you seek the satisfaction of finish; he bothers you with the suggestion that if you have managed to do one kind of poem in your own way, you should cast off that way and face into another area of your experience until you have learned a new voice to say that area properly”

1.4.3 Later Poetry

The same year that the Easter Rising occurred, of which some of his friends had participated and which prompted his poem “Easter” (Sept. 1916)” the first volume of Yeats’ autobiography *Reveries over Childhood and Youth* (1916) was published, the second following in 1922 titled The Trembling of the Veil. In 1917 Yeats bought the Norman tower “ThoorBallylee’ near Coole Park in Galway for his summer home; “The Wild Swans at Coole” waspublished in 1919. The same year civil war broke out in Ireland; Yeats received an honorary degree from Trinity College, Dublin (1922). He was elected to the Irish senate the same year, where he served for six years before resigning to due to failing health. In December of 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and continued to work on his essays, poetry and the poetry anthology Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935 (1936). In 1933, Yeats participated in his first of many BBC radio broadcasts. He was also living in his home ‘Riversdale’ at Rathfarnham, near Dublin when not spending winters in warmer climes.

This phase of Yeats' poetry covers the years from 1919 to 1933. This is the phase ofmaturity and complexity. Under this period the following works can be included:

1. The Wild Swans at Coole (1919)
2. Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921)
3. The Tower (1928)
4. The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933)

The poetry of this stage is an improvement in style and technique; there is greater Intensity and complexity of designs depicted with greater simplicity of style and manner. It is the compositions of this later stage which have placed Yeats into the rank of the greatest of English poets. His most memorable and important poetry was written after the age of fifty. In these years he was reading widely the works of philosophers like Plato, Plotinus, Hegel, Croce and Whitehead.

George Berkeley's idealism interested Yeats particularly. After 1920, Yeats was working out a curious and elaborate system of occult thought which he expounded in the prose work, A Vision (1925). Herein he wrote that he had an essentially religious mind; his mind was also orderly and logical. So, like William Blake he constructed a system of belief out of his own private experiences. This is the system depicted in the Vision, a doctrine of reincarnation according to which all types of humanity are arranged in a cycle or 'Great Wheel' consisting of twenty phases corresponding to the phases of the moon. Every soul has to pass through these twenty-eight phases and history is simply a cyclic repetition of the phases of the Great Wheel. He elaborates on his theories but for our purpose at the moment, we should dwell upon the poet's own oft quoted saying of Goethe that 'a poet cannot have too much philosophy: but he ought to keep it out of his poetry'.

So, we find that Yeats' later period is rich, complex, intricate, mature and rather intellectualized. Hence his style reached maturity at the same time as his personal life. His poetry is deep and thoughtful; it is marked with a sense of bitterness and pessimism that is an expression of a realization of the crudities and realities of life. It incorporates Blake's doctrine of contraries. Such opposites as youth and age, spirit and flesh, knowledge and power, the past and the present, creation and destruction are not only rendered but also reconciled.

Yeats' poetry of this later period is also remarkable for the austerity of diction. His language has lost the Pre-Raphaelite decorativeness of the early phase. It has become more trenchant and adaptable to divergent kind of ideas and experiences. The diction is rather cold bare, hard, clear-cut and oblique. So, this poetry is rather weighty and deep.

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Yeats is a symbolist poet. True/False

1.5 His Poetic Technique

1.5.1 Style

Unlike other modernists who experimented with free verse, Yeats was a master of the traditional forms. The impact of modernism on his work can be seen in the increasing

abandonment of the more conventionally poetic diction of his early work in favor of the more austere language and more direct approach to his themes that increasingly characterizes the poetry and plays of his middle period, comprising the volumes In the Seven Woods, Responsibilities and The Green Helmet. His later poetry and plays are written in a more personal vein, and the works written in the last twenty years of his life include mention of his son and daughter, as well as meditations on the experience of growing old. In his poem, "The Circus Animals' Desertion", he describes the inspiration for these late works:

Now that my ladder's gone

I must lie down where all the ladders start

In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart

During 1929, he stayed at ThoorBallylee near Gort in County Galway (where Yeats had his summer home since 1919) for the last time. Much of the remainder of his life was lived outside of Ireland, although, he did lease Riversdale house in the Dublin suburb of Rathfarnham in 1932. He wrote prolifically through his final years, and published poetry, plays, and prose. In 1938, he attended the Abbey for the final time to see the premier of his play Purgatory. His Autobiographies of William Butler Yeats was published that same year.

While Yeats' early poetry drew heavily on Irish myth and folklore, his later work was engaged with more contemporary issues, and his style underwent a dramatic transformation. His work can be divided into three general periods. The early poems are lushly pre-Raphaelite in tone, self-consciously ornate, and, at times, according to unsympathetic critics, stilted. Yeats began by writing epic poems such as "The Isle of Statues" and "The Wanderings of Oisin". Hisother early poems are lyrics on the themes of love or mystical and esoteric subjects. Yeats' middle period saw him abandon the pre-Raphaelite character of his early work and attempt to turn himself into a Landor-style social ironist.

Critics who admire his middle work might characterize it as supple and muscular in its rhythms and sometimes harshly modernist, while others find these poems barren and weak in imaginative power. Yeats' later work found new imaginative inspiration in the mystical system he began to work out for himself under the influence of spiritualism. In many ways, this poetry is a return to the vision of his earlier work. The opposition between the worldly-minded man of the sword and the spiritually-minded man of God, the theme of "The Wanderings of Oisin", is reproduced in "A Dialogue between Self and Soul".

Some critics claim that Yeats spanned the transition from the nineteenth century into twentieth-century modernism in poetry much as Pablo Picasso did in painting while others question whether late Yeats really has much in common with modernists of the Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot variety.

Modernists read the well-known poem 'The Second Coming' as a dirge for the decline of European civilization in the mode of Eliot, but later critics have pointed out that this poem is an expression of Yeats' apocalyptic mystical theories, and thus the expression of a mind shaped by the 1890s. His most important collections of poetry started with *The Green Helmet* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914). In imagery, Yeats' poetry became sparer, more

powerful as he grew older. *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair* (1929), and *New Poems* (1938) contained some of the most potent images in twentieth-century poetry. Yeats' mystical inclinations, informed by Hindu Theosophical beliefs and the occult, provided much of the basis of his late poetry, which some critics have judged as lacking in intellectual credibility. The metaphysics of Yeats' late works must be read in relation to his system of esoteric fundamentals in *A Vision* (1925)

1.5.2 Symbols

Yeats is generally considered one of the twentieth century's key English language poets. He was a Symbolist poet, in that he used allusive imagery and symbolic structures throughout his career. Yeats chose words and assembled them so that, in addition to a particular meaning, they suggest other abstract thoughts that may seem more significant and resonant. His use of symbols is usually something physical that is both itself and a suggestion of other, perhaps immaterial, timeless qualities.

Generally, 'symbolism' may be defined as "the representation of a reality on one level of reference by a corresponding reality on another." In literature, the symbolic use of a word is distinguished from the emotive use of a word and is tantamount to intending the dictionary ofthe word. But a symbol may also be a sign. According to Kenneth Burke, "A symbol is the verbal parallel to a pattern of experience." As such, it is marked by power of complexity.

According to Edmund Wilson, symbolism is a complicated association of ideasrepresented by a medley of metaphors, to communicate unequal personal feeling. Because ofthis complexity and depth and power of the symbol, C.M. Bowra regards symbolic poetry as akind of mystic poetry, a poetry in which the poet tries to convey his sense of the mystery of life.

According to Yeats, art gains its power through the use of symbols. Symbols are more than just images or characters that stand for an abstract idea or principle. Instead, they are an emotional and "spiritual" language the poet uses to communicate truths that cannot be stated in a propositional form. Yeats was concerned with making a myth to live by. Here are some of Yeats' main ideas:

1) Symbols have energy due to "preordained or long associations" (e.g., the cross, the dove, the hawk, blood). In other words, people tend to associate certain meaning and emotions with objects that have been meaningful to people over long periods of time. In particular, Yeats is borrowing from the C. G. Jung's notion of a collective unconscious, which Yeats in "The Second Coming" refers to as the Spiritus Mundi, the "World Soul," a kind of collective, psychic vat of humanity's memory out of which symbols rise and return.
2) The emotions of a text exist only in formal expression. Individual emotions aretoo fleeting to be clearly expressed in a text. They are, instead, experienced bybeing associated with certain symbols. In other words, the emotions weexperience when we read a literary work are the result of associations.
3) Symbols, therefore, are both intellectual and emotional.

4) Such symbols exceed our attempts at ethics or science. They cannot be reducedto certain propositional statements. Symbols contain a deeper, intuited meaning.

1.5.2.1 The Gyre

The gyre, a circular or conical shape, appears frequently in Yeats' poems and was developed as part of the philosophical system outlined in his book *A Vision.* At first, Yeats used the phases of the moon to articulate his belief that history was structured in terms of ages, but he later settled upon the gyre as a more useful model.

He chose the image of interlocking gyres-visually represented as two intersecting conical spirals-to symbolize his philosophical belief that all things could be described in terms of cycles and patterns. The soul (or the civilization, the age, and so on) would move from the smallest point of the spiral to the largest before moving along to the other gyre. Although this is difficult concept to grasp abstractly, the image makes sense when applied to the waxing andwaning of a particular historical age or the evolution of a human life from youth to adulthood to old age.

The symbol of the interlocking gyres reveals Yeats' belief in fate and historical determinism as well as his spiritual attitudes toward the development of the soul, since creatures and events must evolve according to the conical shape. With the image of the gyre, Yeats created a shorthand reference in his poetry that stood for his entire philosophy of history and spirituality.

1.5.2.2 The Swan

Swans are a common symbol in poetry, often used to depict idealized nature. Yeats employs this convention in "The Wild Swans at Coole" (1919), in which the regal birds represent an unchanging, flawless ideal. In "Leda and the Swan," Yeats rewrites the Greek myth of Zeus and Leda to comment on fate and historical inevitability: Zeus disguises himself as a swan to rape the unsuspecting Leda. In this poem, the bird is fearsome and destructive, and it possesses a divine power that violates Leda and initiates the dire consequences of war and devastation depicted in the final lines. Even though Yeats clearly states that the swan is the god Zeus, he also emphasizes the physicality of the swan: the beating wings, the dark webbed feet, the long neck and beak. Through this description of its physical characteristics, the swan becomes a violent divine force. By rendering a well-known poetic symbol as violent and terrifying rather than idealized and beautiful, Yeats manipulates poetic conventions, an act of literary modernism, and adds to the power of the poem.

1.5.2.3 The Great Beast

Yeats employs the figure of a great beast-a horrific, violent animal-to embody difficult abstract concepts. The great beast as a symbol comes from Christian iconography, in which it represents evil and darkness. In "The Second Coming," the great beast emerges from the Spiritus Mundi, or soul of the universe, to function as the primary image of destruction in the poem. Yeats describes the onset of apocalyptic events in which the "blood-dimmed tide is loosed" and the "ceremony of innocence is drowned" as the world enters a new age and falls

apart as a result of the widening of the historical gyres. The speaker predicts the arrival of the Second Coming, and this prediction summons a “vast image” of a frightening monster pulled from the collective consciousness of the world. Yeats modifies the well-known image of the sphinx to embody the poem’s vision of the climactic coming. By rendering the terrifying prospect of disruption and change into an easily imagined horrifying monster, Yeats makes an abstract fear become tangible and real. The great beast slouches toward Bethlehem to be born, where it will evolve into a second Christ (or anti-Christ) figure for the dark new age. In this way, Yeats uses distinct, concrete imagery to symbolize complex ideas about the state of the modern world.

1.5.3 Mysticism and the Occult

Yeats had a deep fascination with mysticism and the occult, and his poetry is infused with a sense of the otherworldly, the spiritual, and the unknown. His. interest in the occult began with his study of Theosophy as a young man and expanded and developed through his participation in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a mystical secret society. Mysticism figures prominently in Yeats’ discussion of the reincarnation of the soul, as well as in his philosophical model of the conical gyres used to explain the journey of the soul, the passage of time, and the guiding hand of fate. Mysticism and the occult occur again and again in Yeats’ poetry, most explicitly in “The Second Coming” but also in poems such as “Sailing to Byzantium” and “The Magi” (1916). The rejection of Christian principles in favor of a more supernatural approach to spirituality creates a unique flavor in Yeats’ poetry that impacts his discussion of history, politics, and love.

1.5.4 Irish-Myth and Folklore

Yeats’ participation in the Irish political system had origins in his interest in Irish myth and folklore. Irish myth and folklore had been suppressed by church doctrine and British control of the school system. Yeats used his poetry as a tool for re-educating the Irish population about their heritage and as a strategy for developing Irish nationalism. He retold entire folktales in epic poems and plays, such as The Wanderings of Oisin (1889) and The Death of Cuchulain (1939), and used fragments of stories in shorter poems, such as “The Stolen Child” (1886), which retells a parable of fairies luring a child away from his home, and “Cuchulain’s Fight with the Sea” (1925), which recounts part of an epic where the Irish folk hero Cuchulain battles his long-lost son by at the edge of the sea. Other poems deal with subjects, images, and themes culled from folklore. In “Who Goes with Fergus?” (1893) Yeats imagines a meeting with the exiled wandering king of Irish legend, while “The Song of Wandering Aengus” (1899) captures the experiences of the lovelorn god Aengus as he searches for the beautiful maiden seen in his dreams. Most important, Yeats infused his poetry with a rich sense of Irish culture. Even poems that do not deal explicitly with subjects from myth retain powerful tinges of indigenous Irish culture. Yeats often borrowed word selection, verse form, and patterns of imagery directly from traditional Irish myth and folklore.

The folklore, myth, and legends of ancient Celtic traditions gave Yeats a rich well of Inspiration to draw from. By not falling into the trap of overly romanticizing his work, as many other authors of the time would do, Yeats was able to help begin a tradition of another sort,

the Irish literary tradition. By placing importance on the Irish culture in his work, Yeats fulfilled his own sense of national pride to the delight of his readers and audiences and to the chagrin of many of his English contemporaries who felt that nothing of value or worthy of study could come out of Ireland.

C. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What are the main symbols in his poetry?

1.6 SUMMING-UP

William Butler Yeats has left deep imprints on the British as well as international literature. His different style and way of expression won global acclaim. Also, he had a significant influence on poets and critics. T.S. Eliot also classified him among those who are the part of an age which cannot be remembered without them. In fact, his uniqueness lies in amalgamating the past with the present and myths with the folks. He successfully presented his ideas in his writings that even today; writers try to imitate his unique style, considering him a beacon for writing plays and poetry.

1.7 GLOSSARY

Myth:

a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

Mysticism:

1. belief that union with or absorption into the Deity or the absolute, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender
2. vague or ill-defined religious or spiritual belief, especially as associated with a belief in the occult.

Mystical:

1. relating to mystics or religious mysticism.
2. inspiring a sense of spiritual mystery, awe, and fascination.

Nationalism:

1. identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.
2. advocacy of or support for the political independence of a particular nation or people.

Celtic:

Relating to the Celts or their languages, which constitute a branch of the Indo-European family and include Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, Manx, Cornish, and several extinct pre-Roman languages such as Gaulish.

Theosophy:

1. Teaching about God and the world based on mystical insight
2. Often capitalized the teachings of a modern movement originating in the U.S. in 1875 and following chiefly Buddhist and Brahmanictheories especially of pantheistic evolution and reincarnation

Occult:

mystical, supernatural, or magical powers, practices, or phenomena.

Gyre:

whirl or gyrate.

a spiral or vortex

Diction:

the choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing.

Symbolism:

an artistic and poetic movement or style using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind. It originated in late 19th-century France and Belgium, with important figures including Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Redon

Folklore:

the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth.

Apocalyptic:

describing or prophesying the complete destruction of the world.

Sphinx:

a winged monster having a woman's head and a lion's body. It propounded a riddle about the three ages of man, killing those who failed to solve it, until Oedipus was successful, whereupon the Sphinx committed suicide

1.8 QUESTIONS

1. Describe the earlier stages of development in the poetic career of Yeats.
2. Explain the importance of gyres in his poetry.
3. When and where was W.B. Yeats born?
4. Who were the three women who influenced the life of the poet?
5. What are the main themes of his works?

   (Answers are in the section - Life and Irish Background)
6. What are the four phases in the poetry of W.B. Yeats?
7. What are some of the features of his later poetry?

   (Answers are in the section - Poetic output)

8. Write a note on the poetic style of W.B. Yeats.
9. What are symbols? Discuss some of the major symbols used in his poetry.
10. Describe the earlier stages of development in the poetic career of W.B. Yeats.
11. Discuss the influence of Maud Gonne on his poetry.
12. Explain the significance of the gyres.

D. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

A. true

B. true

C. The Gyre, The Swan, The Great Beast

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Holdeman, David. *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*. Cambridge University Press, 2006
2. Bloom, Harold. *Yeats*. Oxford University Press, 1972
3. Jeffares, A. Norman. *W. B. Yeats, Man and Poet*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1996.

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Unit 2
THE SECOND COMING

Structure

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 The Second Coming: Structure
2.3.1 Text: The Second Coming
2.3.1.1 Substance
2.3.1.2 Interpretation
2.3.1.3 Supernatural Element
2.4 Glossary
A. Self-Assessment Question
2.5 Summing-Up
2.6 Questions
B. Self-Assessment Questions' Answer
2.7 Suggested Readings

2.1 Learning Objectives

Dear students,this lesson is in two parts. The present lesson examines the poem, "The Second Coming', while the latter part will take up a detailed study of the poem, 'A Prayer for my Daughter'.

Isincerely hope that this lesson will help you prepare better for your examination.

2.2 Introduction

"The Second Coming" is easily, one of the most famous and frequently quoted poems in allwestern literature. Several famous prose writers have used lines from W B. Yeats' poems as titles to their books, and "The Second Coming" is no exception. Yeats' poem was first published in 1920, a year after the end of World War I, "the Great War," in which millions of European died. While many people at the time just wanted to get on with their lives, Yeats thought that European society had pretty much broken down, and the poem is a terrifying prediction of future violence.

Unfortunately, the rise of Hitler and fascism in the 1930s proved him largely correct, and many find the poem disturbingly prophetic in light of the later wars of the twentieth century. However, we shouldn't somehow think that Yeats was a depressive based on this single work, his bleakest. Many of his other poems engage with more uplifting subjects, like love and Irish folklore. Nor should we think that Yeats was defeatist. After all, he was a very active figure in Irish politics throughout his life, which was in the process of gaining its independence from England. By the time this poem was published, he had already been famous for many years, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923.

2.3 The Second Coming: Structure

"The Second Coming" is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as "man" and "sun."

The poem is in two stanzas: the first one describes the world in chaos, and the second describes what the speaker thinks is the reason. In the first stanza, things are not what they ought to be. For example, "things fall apart," and "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." No one is innocent anymore, because "the ceremony of innocence is drowned."

Line 2 hints at technology progressing beyond mankind's ability to control it. The problem was evident to Yeats 80 years ago, and the problem has worsened since then. Yeats shows his concern that technology has advanced to the point where mankind can do a great deal of harm with relative ease. The world had never seen destruction of the likes of World War I, and most people were shocked at the extensive loss of human life during the war.

In the time that Yeats speaks of, the rulers of the world were caught up in imperialism and expanding circles of power to the point where they would do almost anything to accomplish their goals. The ruthless power mongers were outspoken and numerous, and there seemed to be few who dared to speak out against them in the name of peace.

In the second stanza, the speaker believes something is revealed to the world, and it must be the second coming of Christ, or Judgment Day. The speaker sees a sight "out of Spiritus Mundi," or out of the Christian beliefs. He sees a sphinx, the "shape with lion body and head of a man" awake from 2000 years of "stony sleep" while the human race lived with their wars and technology and evolution. Yeats uses imagery to show the sphinx slowly coming to bring the end of the world, while "desert birds" or people who try to stop the sphinx fail. The first line, "Turning and turning in the widening gyre" tells of Yeats' belief that the world is set in a circular pattern of ways, and the gyre widening means it is time for the next phase: the coming of Christ. The very last line, "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?" leaves readers with the image of the sphinx heading towards the birthplace of Jesus, and the fear of the end of the world.

Although the poem is very powerful in its literal meaning of the world coming to an end after a 2000-year cycle, it can also be read to depict the progression of human life. Chaos may still be in the world's future, but the reason could be because of the first stanza's metaphorical meaning of technology evolving faster than human life. "The falcon cannot hear the falconer, things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" may mean that humans can no longer control what they created.

In the second stanza, the speaker tells of the second coming, perhaps to warn humans to prepare themselves, but he is troubled by the sight of the end of the world, and at the end of the poem, he does not believe there is any help for the human race to save themselves.

2.3.1 Text

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer,
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Me e anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight; somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

2.3.1.1 Substance

Yeats was a master of the visual symbol. In the poem, “The Second Coming”, by the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, the emotional element and the symbols that drive this emotional element are critical to consider upon first reading it.

The first image with which we are presented in the poem is an image of disaster; a falcon cannot hear the call of safety, and begins to spiral wider and wider, more out of control. “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”. What is the centre of the spiral? Yeats could be referring to a society out of control. “Mere anarchy” could mean a couple of things; perhaps nothing more than confusion, or a confusion that was once held back by civilization, but is now free, and ironically binding at the same time. When some commit anarchy, others are bound by the consequences of the anarchist’s actions and are paradoxically not free to be anarchic themselves.

Other images include seas full of blood and drowning. Those who are “the best” of this society are apathetic, and those who are “the worst” are in your face with “passionateIntensity”. Yeats is picturing in this poem a society turned upside-down and headed toward self-destruction and chaos.

In the midst of such conditions, it is man’s nature to look for change. Yeats is living in anticipation of a great change in the poem, which he encapsulated in the Christian concept of “the second coming”. The phrase, “the second coming”, stands as a symbol of its own, gathered from the history and consciousness of humankind back to the beginning of recorded time, referred to in the poem as “Spiritus Mundi”

However, Yeats’ own feelings of such a change are ambivalent, to say the least. Even if change is good, it is uncomfortable. Yeats himself points to an image of a fearsome creature, part man and part animal, that moves inexorably slowly towards its destination, and will not die for the “indignant desert birds”.

The lion with the head of the man is an interesting image in his poem, almost seeming to come straight out of the *Book of Revelation* in *the Bible*, where such images abound. The lion has the predatory power, with royal strength and authority, and the head (meaning the intellect) is that of a man, but a man with “a gaze blank and pitiless as the sun”. There is no love, no personification that we can be drawn to or admire. We feel somehow repelled from this Inhuman thing that moves closer and closer, like death. There will be a death when it arrives to its destination; the death of old ideas, and the destiny of man shot in another direction, from which it may then spiral again in yet another “widening gyre” Nature cannot stop this change. Time cannot stop it. Nothing can stop what’s “slouching towards Bethlehem to be born”. Would Yeats prefer the unconsciousness of “stony sleep” to the “nightmare” created by the “rocking cradle”, which perhaps represents a newness that will cause the vexation of the old ways? At least he is familiar with “stony sleep”, or the way things have always been.

Yeats’ use of rich and vivid symbols in this poem creates a feeling of disaster, turning to dread at the thought of facing a change, even when such change could be an improvement.

2.3.1.2 Interpretation

W.B. Yeats’ poem “The Second Coming” was written in 1919, just one year after World War I ended. The beginning of this poem reflects on how evil has taken over the minds of good Christians, and the world has turned into chaos. It is apparent that Yeats believes that a Second Coming is at hand, and he spends the last half of the poem discussing what thatSecond Coming could look like.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre (line 1)

Yeats imagines the world in a cyclical sphere known a gyre (shape of a cone). In Yeats’ note on the text, he states that “the end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to that of its greatest contraction” (2036). Yeats believesthat the two thousand years of Christianity will be coming to an end, and after

a violent reversal a new age will take its place. The widening part of the gyre is supposed to connote anarchy, evil, and the loss of innocence.

The falcon cannot hear the falconer, (2)

The falconer in this analogy is most likely God (or Jesus), and the falcon is the follower (or devotee). Humanity can no longer hear the word of God, because it is drowned out by all of chaos of the widening gyre. A wild falcon can symbolize an unconverted Gentile;someone who has sinful thoughts, and does sinful things. A tame falcon (one who listens tothe word of God) is a Christian convert. In the Egyptian culture, the falcon is used to representsky deities (or in Christian terms, God).

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, (3-4)

Everything will fall into chaos if there is not a guiding morality such as God. The world cannot stay at the center of the gyre, because it would mean complete destruction. There has to be a reversal so that things can once again come into balance. The world has to start at thetip of the cone again, which means there has to be a violent reversal in order to make this happen.

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned; (5-6)

The “blood-dimmed tide” could be referring to when Moses parted the Red Sea. The Pharaoh agreed to let Moses and his people leave Egypt, but then changed his mind. The Pharaoh and his men chased after them. Moses used his staff to part the Red Sea and lead his people to safety, and the Pharaoh and his army were drowned behind them. The word “ceremony” connotes something that is not real, is just a habit, or a façade. Innocence no longer exists in the world; it is all just a show put on by humanity. The Pharaoh ceremoniously let Moses and his people go, but after they left, he went after them with the intention of either killing them or re-enslaving them.

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity (7-8).

Humanity is already evil, but the ones who seem to be the least evil don’t have any convictions or beliefs. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the most evil let their intense emotions rule them. Now is a good time to remember that this poem was written in the aftermath of WWI and the Russian Revolution, and just before the tensions came to a head in the Anglo-Irish War. The Anglo-Irish War is about the Irish wanting to separate themselvesfrom English rule; this was a very intense time In Irish history, and Yeats being of Irish decent would have felt these tensions.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand (9-10).

Yeats is saying here that there has to be some reason why all the blood-shed fromWorld War I happened; there has to be a rational reason why there is so much evil in the world. In

the first book of John, it states “little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (*Holy Bible*, 1 John. 2.18). The second coming is to be preceded by an Antichrist and absolute chaos.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with a lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds (11-17).

This section of the poem is Yeats’ version of the Second Coming. Spiritus Mundi is “a collective unconscious or memory, in which the human race preserves its past memories. Spiritus Mundi translated from Latin means spirit of the universe.

The image is very large and hard for a person to take in all at once. The desert is either the Judean desert or Egypt. In this context, I tend to lean more towards Egypt, but in the larger context of the poem the Judean desert is also plausible. The figure of the human head with a lion’s body is called a sphinx. Sphinx are said to be temple guardians; they guard royal tombs and religious temples. If the sphinx is guarding a royal tomb, then the head on the sphinx is usually the head of the pharaoh buried within the tomb. The most widely known sphinx is the Great Sphinx of Giza. The head of that sphinx is said to be that of Pharaoh Khafra. The gaze of the sphinx has no mercy for humanity much like the desert sun as no mercy for those beneath its rays. It is moving “its slow thighs” toward Jerusalem to be born again. Desert birds are hawks or falcons, which symbolize sky deities or God. They are indignant because they are extremely upset with what the world has become, and as the representations of the Egyptian deities they are guiding the sphinx to Jerusalem bring order to the world again.

The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? (18-22)

It’s highly unlikely that Yeats was referring to a literal sphinx going towards Jerusalem, but rather a figurative sphinx; something so huge that it will block out the sun forcing the world into a metaphorical darkness that will inevitably cleanse humanity. It has been two thousand years (or twenty centuries) since Jesus died for the world’s sins, and the metaphorical sphinx has been lying in waiting for its time to unleash its evils upon the world.

The rocking cradle is the image of Christ and his mother. It can also be used torepresent the anti-Christ being rocked by his mother. The rough beast is the anti-Christ that willbring destruction and pain to the world. This unholy creature will be born in the holy birth placeof Christ.

Some believe that the “rough beast” that Yeats foresaw is Hitler, and the atrocities that he inflicted upon the Jews were what was needed to reunite humanity and bring about peace.

‘The Second Coming’ was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats’ poems, Richard J. Finnegan quotes Yeats’ own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the nextage, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of theother to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take itscharacter from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world’s trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre-which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the science and democracy of the outer gyre. The “rough beast” slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age; the speaker’s vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

2.3.1.3 Supernatural Element

William Butler Yeats wrote ‘The Second Coming’ in 1919 right after World War I. Thetitle has religious implications and considering the historical context, it causes the reader toimmediately think of the second coming of Christ and the restoration that He will bring. As Joan S. Carberg says in her article “*A Vision* by William Butler Yeats,” Yeats saw our time as one in which fragmentation would proceed to the point of complete dissolution and his poems are haunting to us partly because of this sense of dread.

Thus, Yeats can describe the second coming with exhilaration not unlike the excitement and sense of pending rebirth which has accompanied our horror at the events which have destroyed American complacency in the last few years. I agree with her Interpretation of the poem because 1 saw a glimpse of hope despite the previous four years. In contrast to the previous poems, Yeats is not disregarding the role of the supernatural but accepts the idea that it will bring healing and restoration to the world. The description of the horror of war, “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned;/ the best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity,” implies the differences from Christ’s reign on earth (Yeats, ‘The Second Coming’, lines 5-8). He does

not describe this event, which think is unique, because most people have already imagined what this day might represent. This image captures each event, the horror of war and the glory and majesty of Christ's reign.

The spiritual element dominates this poem and I think it represents that someday there will be no war and Christ will be victorious. The earthly battle is characterized by skeletons, blood, and fire. The blood and fire are interesting because of the war that has just ended and Yeats also mentions the "blood-dimmed tide (1. 5)." The immense amount of death matches with the images of skeletons and men falling from their battle wounds. The placement of the heavenly kingdom above the battle in this image matches the idea that Christ will prevail and His authority will overcome evil. Even though the previous poems have challenged the authority of the supernatural, Yeats supports it and uses it to provide hope to a world shaken by the devastations of war.

2.4 Glossary

Gyre-a circular or spiral motion.

Falcon - bird of prey. Here symbol of soul or the emotional part of man's make-up.

Anarchy-disorder, chaos, lawlessness.

Ceremony of Innocence traditional and aristocratic way of life which fosters purity and innocence.

Revelation-disclosure of sacred truth.

Spiritus Mundi in Yeats' philosophy means the common inheritance of men, a collection of images which recur endlessly in myth and legend.

Slouch-move awkwardly.

Bethlehem- birthplace of Jesus Christ.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What kind of shapes does the word "gyre" refer to?

a. Square b. circle c. diamonds

2.5 Summing-up

Several historical events directly influenced Yeats and inspired him to write ''The Second Coming.'' By far the most significant of these was the First World War from 1914 to 1918. The war was one of unprecedented violence and bloodshed that profoundly and psychologically impacted many people in Europe; This is evident in the artwork and literature of the time, where people grappled with finding meaning in a chaotic world. Yeats used ''The Second Coming'' to explore his fears and experiences of the war through an extended religious metaphor. Other historical events that likely influenced Yeats to a lesser extent include the Russian Revolution, which began in 1917, and British rule in Ireland. ''The Second Coming'' was first published in 1920.

2.6 Questions

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWER

b. Circle

2.7 Suggested Readings

1. Deane, Seamus (1998). "Boredom and Apocalypse". *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790*. Clarendon lectures in English literature. Clarendon Press.
2. Albright, Daniel (1997), Quantum Poetics: Yeats' figures as reflections in Water. Cambridge University Press.

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Unit 3
A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

Structure

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.2.1 Structure And Style

3.2.2 Text

3.2.2.1 Substance

3.2.2.2 Interpretation

3.2.2.3 Symbols

3.3 Glossary

A. Self-Assessment Question

3.4 Summing-Up

3.5 Questions

3.6 Self-Assessment Questions' Answer

3.7 Suggested Readings

1.1 Learning Objectives

In this lesson we will study "A Prayer for my Daughter" which is a rich, complex reflection on the joys and struggles of parenthood, Irish politics, and Yeats' own past.

3.2 Introduction

"A Prayer for my Daughter" is a poem by William Butler Yeats written in 1919 and published in 1921 as part of Yeats' collection Michael Robartes and the Dancer. It is written to Anne, the of Yeats and Georgie Hyde Lees, whom Yeats married after his last marriage to Maud Gonne, was rejected in 1916. Yeats wrote the poem while staying in a tower at ThoorBallylee during the Anglo-Irish War, two days after Anne's birth on February 26, 1919. The poem is an intense expression of how Yeats felt after his daughter Anne was born, although the ideas conveyed go far beyond the personal. It is a prayer-like poem which reflects how he wants his daughter's future should be.

3.2.1 Structure and Style

The poem itself contains ten stanzas of eight lines each: two rhymed couplets followed by a quatrain of enclosed rhyme. Many of the rhyme pairs use slant rhyme. The stanza may be seen as a variation on ottava rima, an eight-lined stanza used in other Yeats poems such as "Among School Children" and "Sailing to Byzantium".

Metrical analysis of the poem, according to Robert Einarsson, proves difficult because he believes Yeats adheres to "rhythmical motifs" rather than traditional use of syllables in his meter. In stanza two, Einarsson points out instances where the meter of the poem contains

examples of amphibrach, pyrrhicretic, and spondaic feet, and he argues that the complexity of Yeats' verse follows patterns of its "metremes", or rhymical motifs, rather than common metrical devices.

The poem also may be read to consist of straightforward iambic verse that relies on common metrical devices such as elision, acephalous lines, promotion, and metrical inversion. Lines 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8 of each stanza are iambic pentameter; lines 4, 6, and 7 are iambic tetrameter. For instance, using traditional principles of scansion, stanza two may be scanned as shown below, where syllables in all caps represent metrical beats, lower-case syllables represent metrical off-beats, the vertical bar represents the termination of a metrical foot, and apostrophes represent elisions

Yeats is generally considered one of the twentieth century's key English language poets. He was a symbolist poet, in that he used allusive imagery and symbolic structures throughout his career. Yeats chose words and assembled them so that, in addition to a particular meaning, they suggest other abstract thoughts that may seem more significant and resonant. His use of symbols is usually something physical that is both itself and a suggestion of other, perhaps immaterial, timeless qualities.

Unlike other modernists who experimented with free verse, Yeats was a master of the traditional forms. The impact of modemism on his work can be seen in the increasing abandonment of the more conventionally poetic diction of his early work in favour of the more austere language and more direct approach to his themes that increasingly characterizes the poetry and plays of his middle period, comprising the volumes In the 'Seven Woods, Responsibilities and The Green Helmet. His later poetry and plays are written in a more personal vein, and the works written in the last twenty years of his life include mention of his son and daughter, as well as meditations on the experience of growing old.

3.2.2 Text

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack-and roof-leveling wind.
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.
I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And-under the arches of the bridge, and scream
in the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie

Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

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

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

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

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the finnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,

Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

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

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

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

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.

How but in custom and in ceremony

Are innocence and beauty born?

Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,

And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

3.2.2.1 Substance

"A Prayer for My Daughter" by William Butler Yeats opens with an image of the new born child sleeping in a cradle. A storm is raging with great fury outside his residence. A great gloom is on Yeats mind and is consumed with anxiety as to how to protect his child from the tide of hard times ahead. The poet keeps walking and praying for the young child and as he does so he is in a state of reverie. He feels a kind of gloom and worry about the future of his daughter.

He says "As I walk and pray for my younger daughter I imagine in a state of excitement and reverie" that the future years (years of violence and bloodshed and frenzy) have already come and that they seem to come dancing to the accompaniment of a drum which is beating frantically. These future years are seen by Yeats' imagination as emerging out of the murderous (treacherous) innocence of the sea. In other words, the sea seems to be innocent but is capable of giving birth to those howling storms which are capable of leveling everything.

Yeats wants his daughter to possess some qualities so that she can face the future! years independently and with confidence. Yeats says: Let her be given beauty but a more Important thing is that her beauty should not be of a kind which may either make her proud of her beauty or distract a stranger's mind and eyes. Those whose beauty is capable of making them proud consider beauty an end in itself.

The result is that pride leads to their losing natural kindness in some cases of that heart revealing intimacy which helps them to make the right choice in life. Being able to make the right choices in life is a very important thing but those who have excessive beauty are unable to do so and never find a good fried in the true sense of the world. The great thing about the poem is that it has a specific as well as general applicability. At the same time the poem makes an indirect reference to Maud Gonne also whom Yeats loved so much and yet could not win her hand.

The poet looks within himself and finds that there is hatred inside. He thinks that hatred kills innocence and wishes that his daughter should not harbor hatred. It was because of this unwholesome bent of the mind that Maud Gonne married a fool. The poet wished that her daughter should not cultivate a frantic intellect; he thinks that her daughter can remain innocent if she is free form hatred and intellectual fanaticism. The innocence is self-delighting, self-appeasing and self-affrighting. The poet's last wish is that his daughter should marry a person of aristocratic family who may take her to a home where tradition and ceremony fill the atmosphere.

A prayer for his daughter can be interpreted for the restoration of order and grace in a battered civilization. In "The Second Coming", Yeats had described his vision of the future world torn by anarchy. Yeats believed, as he has expressed in "The Second Coming" that

the Christian civilization had reached in its zenith and was disintegrating now. The prayer for his daughter's survival becomes also a prayer for an improvement in the world. The term "ceremony" is a keyword in Yeats' thought, and it involves not just formal ritual or courtesy but also order, grace and reverence. Yeats uses the word "ceremony" by associating it with the horn of plenty, bestowed of all kind of virtue.

It is facile to argue that the poem is not really a "prayer" or that Yeats is not praying for his "Christian virtues" for his daughter. Yeats wishes for organic innocence and freedom form hatred the basis on which other virtues will inevitably grow. The images in the poem that serve to express the poet's wishes for the future flourishing tree, songbirds, sweet music, green laurel tree, the horn of plenty-all emphasize the need for order, aim, grace and joy in a battered civilization.

In the end, the poem is a prayer for order and grace in a battered civilization. Behindthe prayer, of course, are Yeats' bitter memories of Maud Gonne who had come to stand forthe tragedy of how beauty and grace can be distorted by politics, intellectual hatred andarrogance.

3.2.2.2 Interpretation

In the beginning, Yeats talks about the storm having commenced brewing in the seas. Between his newly born daughter and the sea, there stand a bare hill and Gregory's woods which might not thwart the storm from reaching the helpless infant. The father is naturallyworried as he senses the gale striking the tower and the undersides of the bridges. To hismind, the storm presages the future of her daughter having arrived with a rage, mounting fromthe seeming innocence of the sea. As a father, the poet wishes beauty for her daughter but notsuch voluptuousness that would engross others to distraction or make her vain.

He does not want her daughter to be bereft of kindness nor does he want her to fail in choosing the persons with whom she will be friendly. The father shudders at the thought of her daughter's turning to be another Helen of Troy, who couldn't help being unfaithful as she was so beautiful. Some lovely women like the queen who had not had her father imposing useful restraints upon her, chose an ordinary smith with warped legs, instead of marrying a handsome yet virtuous man matching her handsome looks and social standing. It is strange how exquisitely beautiful women often choose 'a crazy salad' (an undeserving husband) to go with their meat' (rich food or their great beauty).

His daughter should realize that she should be deserving of winning human hearts. She should not be like those crafty women who employ their charms to use people to their advantage. It is true that men fall head over heels for stunning females but it is really the compassion of the women which they get enamored by in the end. The father in the poet is keen that her daughter should be like a tree giving succour and shade to people when she grows up and her feelings should be like the sweet song of the linnet that spreads joy for the sake of doing so. It is very likely that she will sometime desire something intensely in a wrong spirit or engage in some strife at times but let them be transient and not very serious.

Let her be like an evergreen tree; let her send her roots into the depth of her good convictions standing at the same place. The poet is rueful that his running after the people he liked or the kind of gorgeousness that he was infatuated with, could not satiate him as he wanted and that he is weary of all the barrenness that has enveloped him now. He seems to get momentarily confused as to what could be the right sort of beauty. He has however no hatred toward anyone as he is absolutely sure that it is the worst kind of malevolence that could poison his life. He wants her daughter also to learn this truth before she allows her to be ruled by the negative force of hatred because such a mindset will save her from inviting harsh criticism or abuses being showered upon her. The poet would not like her daughter to be self-opinionated as that could lead her to practicing intellectual loathing which the poet considers to be the worst kind of malady in a human being.

He recollects coming in close contact with a beautiful and accomplished woman who had to give away everything by being strongly biased. The truth rings clearly in the poet's mind that by removing all hatred from one's mind, the soul not only regains its innocence but also embers on the journey of delighting in itself. Since the spirit of the soul is the will of God, he fervently prays that his daughter should be able to discover her soul and be happy in the face of any storm or disapproval. And finally, as a father, he hopes that she will be betrothed to a man who has forever steered away from detestation and arrogance which is so common everywhere.

The post wishes that his daughter may grow up and get married in an aristocratic family which observes traditional manners and courtesies. The conclusion of the poem throws light on Yeats' ideal marital life for his daughter and his preference for 'aristocratic values', a preference for which he has been often and wrongfully maligned. Custom and Ceremony celebrated here as the source of personal as well as social stability are seen not as artificial structures imposed natural impulse and inhibiting it, but as natural gifts in themselves, being the enduring forms men give to their finest natural instinct: kindness, joy, the impulse to create and preserve life.

Yeats attaches great importance to individual and social values, refined and passed on from generation to generation. The focal point of his thinking is the aristocratic ideal personified by Lady Gregory. The resolution of the poem is possible because the poet's meditation has led him to re-assess and reconfirm those values upon which he feels life should be founded. The prayer is a means by which he returns to his own roots and declares them.

Yeasts was often a post of the abyss, a poet of horror. He himself recognized thereality of the growing murderousness of the world" (from his The Trembling of the Veil), and insuch poems as "The Second Coming" he gives a grim sense of the imminent apocalypse:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer,

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

More anarchy la loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned.

This powerful poem of despair and anxiety was composed and published during the same year as “A Prayer for my Daughter”, and the very things in “Prayer that support the world are precisely the things in “Second Coming” that are threatened: “the ceremony ofInnocence” But Yeats balances his apocalyptic vision with a vision of survival, a survival that is prompted by a father’s most powerful emotion: concern for his child. In his prayer-and I believe it is truly more prayer than poem-Yeats utters his plea not just for his daughter, but for all those who seek to shelter innocence in a world of destruction.

3.2.2.3 Symbols

1.The Flourishing Tree

The poet wishes that his daughter be like a flourishing tree far from the public eye. Yeats hopes that her thoughts will be like the linnet, and that her songs radiate magnanimity. Her thoughts shall not instigate fights and create conflicts. He expects her not to get involved in quarrels except for the sake of jest. Like a green laurel tree, she would remain rooted in one place, but her goodness would branch out all around. The color ‘green’ emblematizes the quality of being evergreen and fruitful.

The poet also refers to stability in a relationship here through the idea of constancy. Yeats taunts at Maud Gonne who had with Lucien Millevoye —two illegitimate children, and later went on to marry John McBride. The speaker wants Anne to be constant to one man, unlike Maud Gonne.

2.Courtesy

Yeats implies much more than good manners. He means a fine delicacy andsensitivity to others of which good manners are the external expression.

3.Horn of Plenty

He associates with courtesy, aristocracy, and ceremony; and the hidden laurel tree which, ‘rooted in one dear perpetual place,’ can provide through custom a ‘radical’ (rooted) innocence for the soul” (John Untrecker: *A Reader’s Guide*, 167). Indeed, these twin images, of plentitude housed within a place of safety and repose, suggest the response to the powerful anxiety that opens the poem, an anxiety about how to house the innocents of the world from the storm raging outside.

3.3 Glossary

Gregory’s Wood - the wood surrounding Lady Gregory’s house at Coole Park in County Galway, where the poet W.B. Yeats had spent a lot of time.

Lady Gregory-friend and patroness of the poet.

That great queen-Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love identified by the Romans with Venus.

Horn of Plenty-the bestower of gifts. In Greek mythology it symbolized plenty and prosperity.Ceremony - stands for a way of life based on spiritual values which are noble and higher than the common ones. Such a way of life breeds innocence and happiness.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Poet's daughter is sleeping in

a. Her bedroom

b. Her window

c. Her hood

d. Her cradle

3.4 Summing up

To conclude the poem's major conflict is between the speaker, and the future he envisions for his daughter, and the various, unpredictable elements that might disrupt this future (both those rooted in the daughter's own decisions and those with external sources).

3.5 Questions

1. In Year's "A Prayer for My Daughter, what lessons does the poet learn from his own life's experiences and how does that influence the writing of this poem"?
2. In what ways does Yeats show aspects of modernist writing in his poem "A Prayer for My Daughter"?
3. What is the background and main theme of the poem "A Prayer for my Daughter" by W.B. Yeats?
4. What message does the poet want to convey through the poem, "A Prayer for MyDaughter"?

3.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

d. cradle

3.7 Suggested Readings

1. Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, London: Macmillan, 1954.
2. Harold Bloom, *Yeats*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
3. T.W. Henn, *The Lonely Tower*, London: Methuen, 1950.
4. A.N. Jeffares, *W.B. Yeats: Man and the Poet*, London: Routledge and KeganPaul, 1951.
5. F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats and Tradition*, London: Gollancz, 1958.
6. AN/Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, London: Macmillan, 1968.

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Unit -4
LEDA AND THE SWAN

Structure

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Structure: Leda and the Swan

4.3.1 Text: Leda and the Swan

4.3.2 Substance

4.3.3 Interpretation

4.3.4 Symbols

A. Self-Assessment Question

4.4 Glossary

4.5 Summing -Up

4.6 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers

4.7 Questions

4.8 Suggested Readings

4.1 Learning Objectives

Dear students,

In the previous lessons, you must have read something about the background of the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, his life and some of the political and social influences that affected his literary output.

In this lesson, you will learn about "Leda and the Swan".

4.2 Introduction

William Butler Yeats' daring sonnet describing the details of a story from Greek mythology-the rape of Leda by the god Zeus in the form of a swan-was written at the height of the poet's career, the same year he received the Nobel Prize for literature. "Leda and the Swan" is a violent, sexually explicit poem that has all of the lyricism and complexity of Yeats' later work, with its plain diction, rhythmic vigor, and allusions to mystical ideas about the universe, the relationship of human and divine, and the cycles of history. It can be seen as a poem about the way a single event is to be understood as part of a larger scheme; the result of the god's assault on Leda is the birth of Helen of Troy, the subsequent destruction of early Greek civilization, and the beginning of the modern era.

"Leda and the Swan" was written in 1924 and published in Yeats' 1928 collection The Tower-one of the most celebrated and important literary works of the 20th century. The Tower other great poems like "Among Schoolchildren" and "Sailing to Byzantium."

4.3 Structure

"Leda and the Swan" has been considered one of the most technically masterful poems ever written in English. In the work, Yeats uses the fourteen lines of the traditional form in a radical, modernist style. He calls up a series of unforgettable, bizarre images of an immediate physical event using abstract descriptions in terse language, while at the same time offering a distanced view of that occurrence in the sweep of time. Yeats himself considered the poem one of his major accomplishments, and in addition to praising itseconomy of language and skillful use of rhythm, critics have seen it as a fine example of how ideas that were central to the poet's life found expression in his poetry. This has been masterfully portrayed in this Petrarchan sonnet.

The Petrarchan sonnet is named after Petrarch, a 14th century Italian poet who madethe form popular throughout Europe. Like all sonnets, the Petrarchan sonnet has 14 lines.Unlike all sonnets, it also has a major thematic shift after the eighth line. At this point, the poemintroduces a new subject or shifts its perspective in some way.

The first eight lines of "Leda and the Swan" describe the act of rape from Leda's perspective. The ninth line, appropriately enough, ends the description of sex. There is nowhere else for the poem to go at this point, so Yeats has to develop a new theme. The last six lines of the poem, then, narrate the consequences of the act, both for humanity (the Trojan War) and for Leda personally (the possibility of "putting on" Zeus's knowledge).

You might have noticed that "Leda and the Swan" looks a little different than other sonnets. It has three stanzas, and line 11 appears to be broken off into two lines. As for the three stanzas, that's a perfectly common way of illustrating the internal divisions in the poem. And we think Yeats divides line 11 in order to heighten the drama of Agamemnon being dead and to show how the poem shifts back to Leda's perspective after leaping forward into the future.

The poem's meter is a very rough iambic pentameter. In this meter, the most commonIn English, each line has ten beats, with an unstressed beat followed by a stressed one: "Heholds her helpless breast upon his breast." But only a few lines in the poem conform to thisrhythm. For example, the last line has eleven beats. Yeats didn't want to be boxed in by oneparticular rhythm if he thought something else sounded better. As an exercise, you might trycounting the beats and stresses in the rhythmically tight first stanza.

Yeats also plays somewhat loose with the rhyme scheme. The general pattern is ABAB CDCD EFGEFG. But some of the rhymes are only slant rhymes, like "push" and "rush," or "up" and "drop."

4.3.1 Text

Leda and the Swan

A sudden blow, the great wings beating still

Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed

By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,

He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.
Being so caught up.
So mastered by the brute blood of the air.
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

4.3.2 Substance

William Butler Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" retells the story from Greek mythology of the rape of a girl named Loda by Zeus, the most powerful of the Greek gods. The "twist of the story is that Zeus is disguised as a swan. Yeats presents this tale in a relatively graphic way, so modern readers may find the language disturbing. Stories about sex with animals were fairly common in classical societies like Ancient Greece, and the myth of Leda and the swan was once well known.

"Leda and the Swan" was published in Yeats' 1928 collection The Tower-one of themost celebrated and important literary works of the 20th century. The Tower includes othergreat poems like "Among Schoolchildren" and "Sailing to Byzantium."

The Tower was published five years after Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. Yeats saved his best for last; he was in his 60s when he wrote this masterpiece. He was also serving in the Irish Senate at the time. If you're into bold statements of opinion, at least one major critic has called "Leda and the Swan" the greatest poem of the 20th century.

Yeats' poem was inspired by a Greek myth in which Zeus rapes Leda, the daughter of a king named Thestius. In many versions of the story, Zeus merely seduces Leda. This is definitely not the case in Yeats' graphic version. After the rape, Leda gets pregnant and gives birth to Helen of Troy. According to the story, Helen was hatched from an egg.

We need some background on Helen of Troy and the Trojan War before we get to "Leda and the Swan." Helen was the most beautiful woman in the world, and her abduction by a young man named Paris led to the Battle of Troy, the centerpiece of Homer's had. Yeats' poem makes dramatic reference to the destruction of Troy. Yeats would also have been familiar with the many artistic depictions of the story of Leda and the swan by sculptors and painters like Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci.

Yeats is one of Ireland's most well-known and important poets. Some critics have interpreted "Leda and the Swan" as an allegory for the "rape" of Ireland by its colonial masters, the British. Other critics have found its depiction of rape to be tantalizing to the point of offensiveness. However, you feel about it, there's no denying the beauty of Yeats' words, even if the actions they describe are horrible.

4.3.3 Interpretation

The poem Leda and the Swan by William Butler Yeats shows how Leda was being raped by Zeus in the form of a wild swan and how this copulation led to the destruction of the city of the Troy. Zeus who is known to be a very wise god, one day infatuated by her beauty after seeing naked body while she was bathing in the river Furatos raped her.

Leda couldn't understand what it was, which came over her body and overpoweredher. She staggered to make herself free but all was in vain. The bird caught her nape in hisbeak and forced her to lie down. He caressed the thighs of Leda. He rubbed her breasts withhis own body. This union of the human (Leda) with the- superhuman (Zeus) led to the birth ofthe heroes and heroines who created the Athenian civilization. The outcome of the act of thiscopulation is Helen, who is responsible not only for the Trojan War but also for the death ofAgamemnon, who was killed by his wife.

The poet wonders that for a woman like Leda, it was impossible to make herself free form that "feathered glory". She felt weak against that massive force of Zeus, She started feeling that the bird had already overpowered her and the rape was almost complete. The final question that arises out of the whole episode is whether any positive gains also came out of this sexual act. In another term when Leda was caught up like this, when she was being mastered in this way by the brute blood of the air was she able to take on to herself part of the divine knowledge and power of Zeus before he became indifferent to her? The question "Did she put on his knowledge with his power?" is rhetorical.

The poet ends the poem by suggesting that Leda didn't gain the divine knowledge of the god but his violence. From the questions of the second and the last stanzas of the poem, we also see that not only human beings but also gods themselves are a part of a universal (or cosmic) pattern of events, and that they must play their roles as history unfolds. Yeats believed that the divine power come to the human world once in every tow thousand years. Once itcomes in the form of a violent animal that forcefully rapes some important woman to give birth to children who will bring about the end of the existing culture and civilization. According to Yeats, the birth of Christ was caused by such an indirect spiritual contact of the divine power with Mary in Jerusalem. Similarly, the birth of the most beautiful woman Helen and her sister Clytemnestra in Greece was caused by a violent rape of the Greek queen Leda by the god Zeus in the form of a swan. The sexual intercourse between Leda and Swan not only resulted in the birth of Helen and Clytemnestra but also the new era of physical violence and destruction of the old Greek culture.

The poem can be seen as a criticism of beauty too. Helen is criticized for lack of wisdom. She left her legitimate husband and eloped with Paris, which was so much devastating

that it created havoc all around. Similarly, beautiful Clytemnestra killed her own husband. It is an act which cold never be forgiven. Both women had beauty but no knowledge at all. Yeats criticizes a beauty where there is lack of wisdom. Beauty without knowledge can be devastating and the above poem serves the same example.

This sonnet is a powerful description of the union between the human and divine. It is a perfect blend of mythological story and Yeats' imaginations about the history. The poem is beautiful in its descriptive narrative of sexual union also.

4.3.4 Symbol Analysis

The Swan

The swan in this poem came down to earth from Mount Olympus with a mission. It isreally the Greek god Zeus in disguise. As the poem progresses, we catch only glimpses of thebird's swan-like features. He simply moves too fast and has a single-minded focus.Accordingly, the poem contains lots of synecdoche, where a part of the bird is used torepresent the whole. Also, despite being a god, Yeats chooses to highlight the swan's instinctand animal nature.

Historical Significance

Yeats likes to capture important moments in history. In fact, he had a whole complicated theory of history, symbolized by the image of the gyre, a kind of spiral that looks like a vortex or tomado.

According to Yeats, history is always in the process of shifting between two different phases or cycles. The two phases are governed by opposed principles, like anarchy and order. The cycles are represented as gyres, and as one grows wider (the top of the tornado), the other grows skinnier (the bottom of tornado), until the process begins again in the opposite direction.

"Leda and the Swan" is set in one of these pivotal moments in history, between the ancient world preceding the Trojan War and the modern world that succeeded it. Many of Yeats' other poems, like "The Second Coming" and "Easter 1916, also describe such turning points in history.

When Yeats wrote this poem in 1928, most of his readers would have been familiarwith the story of Leda and the Swan. Nowadays, it helps to have a good online encyclopedia tohelp out with references to Greek mythology.

Without going too far into Greek mythology, all you need to know is that Leda was a girl from Ancient Greece who was raped (some versions of the story say seduced) by the Zeus, the head of the Greek gods, disguised as a graceful swan. As a result of the encounter, Leda gave birth to Helen of Troy, who would have won People magazine's "Most Beautiful Person of All Time" award, if they had People back in the day. Leda also gave birth to the twin warriors Castor and Pollex; And these kiddies were hatched from eggs (or at least some of them were, depending of which version of the story you're reading).

The Trojan War was fought over Helen, who was lawfully married to a Greek king before being abducted (perhaps willingly) by a Trojan prince. Helen's husband said, "This means warl" and so it was. The Trojan War was the major topic of Homer's lied.

The title also raises a whole host of associations from the history of western art. The story of Leda and the Swan was too tantalizing for many artists to resist, and it has beenrepresented in countless sculptures and paintings. The challenge for these artists was to comeup with a new and original perspective on the story, and that was Yeats' challenge, too. Inparticular, the story has not been told as frequently in words as in images.

What we notice most about the sound of this poem is how varied it is. Yeats' ear is so fine-tuned that we wouldn't be surprised if he could hear a mouse coming from a mile away. Through the sonnet's 14 lines, he uses a number of different techniques and sentences structures to create a rich tapestry of sounds.

The first stanza is characterized by percussive, almost violent, beats and pauses. The first three words mimic the surprise of the initial panic.

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The first stanza is characterized by percussive, almost violent, beats and pauses. The first three words mimic the surprise of the initial panic of the attack with the two heavy beats in "sudden blow," followed by a pause that is, in poetic terms, as wide as the Grand Canyon. Similarly, the word "staggering" in the second line has a harsh, sharp sound. Thetechnical word for all those pauses in the middle of the lines is a caesura. Yeats createsparallels between the girl and the swan that suggest the mating process: great wings/staggering girl, thighs/webs, nape/bill - finally lead to their convergence in breast/ breast.

The second stanza shifts to more evenly flowing lines as the speaker begins to reflect more philosophically on the event. The lines are structured by the question "how," and theadjectives begin to pile up: "terrified," "vague," "feathered," "loosening," "white," "strange."

The adjectives continue to accumulate as the poem builds to the solemn declaration, "And Agamemnon dead," which blindsides us with its simple, direct power. We don't even know that much about who Agamemnon was, but we want to cry, "Not Agamemnon too!" The rhythm comes to a screeching halt as line 11 is fractured over two lines.

Having reached this emotional height, Yeats returns to his adjectives and percussivebeats, throwing in some alliteration for good measure: "brute blood." Then the speaker asksanother rhetorical question but doesn't answer it. The reader is "dropped" at the end of thepoem, just like Leda is dropped to the ground by the swan.

The first eight lines of the poem are taken up with Leda's sensory impressions, like the whooshing sound of the swan's wings, her own "staggering" legs, the feeling of having the back of her neck held by the swan's bill, and the dark webs of its feet rubbing against her thighs.

The setting of the poem zooms into the future in the final six lines. From a distance,we recognize the “broken” walls of the city of Troy. The city has been sacked and burned, andit glows orange through the smoky darkness. Zooming even farther into the future, we seeAgamemnon lying dead on the floor of his home, having been murdered by his wifeClytemnestra and the lover she took during the war. The poem’s final lines return to thepresent setting of Leda and the swan, just in time to catch the swan dropping her from its beak.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Zeus appears to the Phoenician princess Europa disguised as a sweet-smelling:

a. Bull b. Swan c. Eagle d. Wolf

4.4 Glossary

Synecdoche - a word or phrase in which a part of something is used to represent a whole. e.g. India won the match - here India is used to represent the Indian team.

Caressed: fondled.

Web: the skin between the toes and fingers of water-birds and fowls, e.g. duck, swan, cock, hen, also camels - often called as the ship of the desert.

Nape: the back part of the neck.

White rush: the soft white feathers of the swan.

Engenders: sowing of the seed leading to Leda’s conception.

Leda: Leda was the daughter of Thestlus and the wife of Tyndarous. She has been known as the Queen of Sparta. Leda was seduced by Zeus when he came to her in the form of a swan. Leda gave birth to an egg. From It hatched the Dioscuri, the twins Castor and Pollux. With Zeus she also had Helen and with Tyndareus she had Clytemnestra.

Clytemnestra:Clytemnestra was the wife of Agamemnon, king of Mycenae. She was one of the tragic women in the Trojan War. While Agamemnon was away in the war, Clytemnestra took Aegisthus as her lover, and together they plotted to kill Agamemnon when he returned. One of her reasons was her husband’s sacrifice of their daughter. When Agamemnon returned Clytemnestra pretended to greet him. Later, while Agamemnon bathed, Clytemnestra murdered him. She, herself was killed by her son Orestes.

Helen: Helen of Troy was said to be the most beautiful woman in Greece and the major cause of the Trojan War. While still a young girl, Holen was carried off by an Athenian hero, Theseus. Before any harm could come to her the Dioscuri rescued her. Later, she was sought after by almost every prince In Greece, but she finally married Menelaus, king of Sparta, who was the richest of the suitors. Helen and Menelaus had one child. Her name was Hermione.

Helen and Menelaus' marriage was threatened when Paris, a Trojan prince, fell madly in love with Helen. Taking advantage of Menelaus' absence from the palace, Paris abducted Helen and then left for Troy. This was the cause, of the Trojan War. All of the other prices had promised Tyndareus, Helen's father that he would in case of need, come to the aid of the lucky man who became Helen's husband. Faithful to their oaths, all the princes of Greeco took power under the command of Agamemnon to avenge the outrage done to Menelaus.

For ten years the battle raged before the walls of Troy. Finally, the Greek warriors were able to enter the city by hiding in the hollow flanks of a large wooden horse (known as the Trojan horse) which the Trojans themselves had put in the city. Troy was conquered and set on fire. Helen was returned to Menelaus and they were reconciled. After Menelaus' death, Helen was put among the stars with Dioscuri.

4.5 Summing -up

The poem is one of Yeats' finest, and is worth the effort to analyze and understand his difficult imagery and symbolism. One of the great meditations on ageing and wisdom, 'Sailing to Byzantium' is elusive and even mystical.

4.6 Self-assessment questions' answer

a. bull

4.7 Questions

1. Discuss the theme of 'Leda and the Swan'
2. Examine Yeats' handling of history and myth in this poem.
3. Critically consider the structure and style of 'Leda and the Swan'.

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats*, London: Macmillan, 1954.
2. Harold Bloom, *Yeats*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
3. T.W. Henn, *The Lonely Tower*, London: Methuen, 1950.
4. A.N. Jeffares, *W.B. Yeats: Man and the Poet*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951.
5. F.A.C. Wilson, *Yeats and Tradition*, London: Gollancz, 1958.
6. AN/Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, London: Macmillan, 1968.

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Unit-5
SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

Structure

5.1 Learning Objectives
5.2 Introduction
5.3 Structure, Style And Technique
5.4 Text
5.5 Substance
5.6 Interpretation
5.7 Symbolism
5.8 Imagery
A. Self-Assessment Question
5.9 Glossary
5.10 Summing Up
5.11 Self-Assessment Questions' Answer
5.12 Questions
5.13 Suggested Readings

5.1 Learning objectives

In this lesson we will closely read"Sailing to Byzantium".

5.2 Introduction

"Sailing to Byzantium" is one of Yeats' most inspired works, and one of the greatest poems of the twentieth century. Written in 1928 and included in Yeats' greatest singlecollection, 1928's The Tower, "Sailing to Byzantium" is Yeats' definitive statement about the agony of old age and the imaginative and spiritual work required to remain a vital individual even when the heart is "fastened to a dying animal" (the body). Yeats' solution is to leave the country of the young and travel to Byzantium, where the sages in the city's famous gold mosaics (completed mainly during the sixth and seventh centuries) could become the "singing- masters" of his soul. He hopes the sages will appear in fire and take him away from his body into an existence outside time, where, like a great work of art, he could exist in "the artifice of eternity." In the astonishing final stanza of the poem, he declares that once he is out of his body he will never again appear in the form of a natural thing; rather, he will become a golden bird, sitting on a golden tree, singing of the past (what is past"), the present (that which is "passing"), and the future (that which is "to come").

A fascination with the artificial as superior to the natural is one of Yeats' most prevalent themes: In a much earlier poem, 1899's "The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart," the speaker expresses a longing to re-make the world "in a casket of gold" and thereby eliminate its ugliness and imperfection. Later, in 1914's "The Dolls," the speaker writes of a group of

dolls on a shelf, disgusted by the sight of a human baby. In each case, the artificial (the golden casket, the beautiful doll, the golden bird) is seen as perfect and unchanging, while the natural (the world, the human baby, the speaker's body) is prone to ugliness and decay. What is more, the speaker sees deep spiritual truth (rather than simply aesthetic escape) in his assumption of artificiality; he wishes his soul to learn to sing, and transforming into a golden bird is the way to make it capable of doing so.

"Sailing to Byzantium" is an endlessly interpretable poem, and suggests endlessly fascinating comparisons with other important poems-poems of travel, poems of age, poems of nature, featuring birds as symbols. (One of the most interesting is surely Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," to which this poem is in many ways a rebuttal: Keats writes of his nightingale, Thouwast not born for death, immortal Bird! / No hungry generations tread thee down"; Yeats, in the first stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium," refers to "birds in the trees" as "those dying generations.") It is important to note that the poem is not autobiographical; Yeats did not travel to Byzantium (which was renamed Constantinople in the fourth century A.D., and later renamed Istanbul), but he did argue that, in the sixth century, it offered the ideal environment for the artist. The poem is about an imaginative journey, not an actual one.

5.3 Structure, Style and Technique

Throughout his last years,Yeats' creative imagination remained very much his own, isolated to a remarkable degree from the successive fashions of modern poetry despite his extensive contacts with other poets. Literary modernism held no inherent attraction for him except perhaps in its general association with youthful vigor. He admired a wide range of traditional English poetry and drama, and he simply was unconcerned that, during the last twodecades of his life, his preference for using rhyme and strict stanza forms would set him apart from the vogue of modern poetry. Yeats' allegiance to poetic tradition did not extend, however, to what he considered an often obscure, overly learned use of literary and cultural traditions by T. S. Eliot and Pound.

Yeats deplored the tremendous enthusiasm among younger poets for Eliot's "The Waste Land", published in 1922. Disdaining Eliot's flat rhythms and cold, dry mood, Yeats wanted all art to be full of energy. He felt that the literary traditions furnishing Eliot with so many allusions and quotations should only be included in a poem if those traditions had so excited the individual poet's Imagination that they could become poetic ingredients of the sort Yeats described in "The Tower: "Poet's imaginings/And memories of love,/Memories of the words of women,/All those things whereof/Man makes a superhuman/Mirror-resembling dream."

Yeats wanted poetry to engage the full complexity of life, but only insofar as the individual poet's Imagination had direct access to experience or thought and only insofar as those materials were transformed by the energy of artistic articulation. He was, from first to last, a poet who tried to transform the local concerns of his own life by embodying them in the resonantly universal language of his poems. His brilliant rhetorical accomplishments, strengthened by his considerable powers of rhythm and poetic phrase, have earned wide

praise from readers and, especially, from fellow poets, including W. H. Auden (who praised Yeats as the savior of English lyric poetry),Stephen Spender, Theodore Roethke, and Philip Larkin. It is not likely that time will diminish his achievements.

Towards the later stages of his life and career, we see a corresponding maturing of art and technique. Yeats was at the height of his powers and had acquired full control over his material, moved with perfect ease from one dissimilar concept to another and thus enclosed vast immensities in a precise and compact space; We notice an astonishing richness and enduring quality of the poems of this period. The common idiom, the colloquial diction, the speech rhythms of the middle period are still used but in poems like 'Sailing to Byzantium' an effect of rare richness is produced by relating daily speech to an incantatory pattern.

The four eight-line stanzas of "Sailing to Byzantium" take a very old verse form: they are metered in iambic pentameter, and rhymed ABABABCC, two trios of alternating rhyme followed by a couplet. At every stage of his development, Yeats made profuse use of symbols that conveyed the mystery and richness of the past. The form of the poem is Ottava Rima, (a- b, a-b, a-b, c-c), which is a classical form, and is commonly used for heroic/ Romantic poems. The Romantic poets inspired Yeats by expressing how they lived their lives in solitude, with unreciprocated love- just the way Yeats has lived. They placed absolute value on emotions- believing that these (as opposed to reason) would yield answers. Yeats re-wrote the poem three times, and upon eventually having it typed, he then edited further. It is as though he 'issearching for his 'Byzantium', (idealized place), through this work of art, and will settle for nothing less than perfection.

5.4Text

Sailing to Byzantium

That is no country for old men. The young
in one another's arms, birds in the trees
Those dying generations - at their song.
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.
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.
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
Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enameling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

5.5 Substance

Byzantium was an ancient Greek city. It's now Istanbul, Turkey. Before it was known as Istanbul, it was Constantinople. Byzantium, however, existed from around 670 B.C. to 190 A.D., when it was captured by the Romans: That's when it became Constantinople.

For the purposes of this poem, however, it's actually not so important to know all thehistorical details of Turkish history or the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. For all that thepoem is set in Byzantium; we don't actually learn that much about Byzantium. There aren't anymarkets or streets or houses or temples etc. We do hear about the Emperor of Byzantium, buthe could be just about anybody. Perhaps, Yeats was referring to the times of EmperorJustinian; since it was during his reign that the Byzantine Empire flourished. We also know thatit's a holy place and so quite enticing from the poet's point of view.

"Sailing to Byzantium" is, a poem about spiritual (and bodily) regeneration, chances are that referring to Byzantium allowed Yeats to draw upon a certain set of cultural references. "Byzantium" becomes a shorthand way to say that the speaker's entered a mental space that allows him to think through the consequences of mortality. Sure, it helps that there are holy sages around to draw him out of his everyday routine...but that's not nearly as important as the speaker's own insistence on finding a way to deal with his own body which is subject to decay and death.

This is Yeats' most famous poem about aging-a theme that preoccupies him throughout The Tower. The poem traces the speaker's movement from youth to age, and the corresponding geographical move from Ireland, a country just being born as Yeats wrote, to

Byzantium. Yeats felt that he no longer belonged in Ireland, as the young or the young in brutality, were caught up in what he calls “sensual music.” This is the allure of murder in the name of republicanism, which disgusted Yeats.

Byzantium was an ancient Greek city, which Yeats draws on for its decadent associations. The Byzantine Empire was centered on Constantinople, later renamed Istanbul.The speaker thinks that by escaping to Byzantium, he can escape the conflict between burning desire and a wasted body. Once there, he pleads to God’s “sages” to take away his life, meaning his body.

This stanza is suggestive of Yeats’ religious beliefs, as he wrote this collection after a turn to theosophy. The idea of elders waiting upon God is not familiar from any Western religion, but would be acceptable under theosophy, which holds that all spiritualities hold some measure of truth. Yeats imagines this process as being consumed by a healing fire that willallow his body to take on any form he wishes when it is finished.

His first wish, to become a statue, seems too static. His second, to become a mechanical bird, alludes to the Byzantine Emperor Theophilus. Theophilus, according to legend, had just such mechanical birds. It is thus the poet’s wish to be granted a body immune to death and to sing forever.

5.6 Interpretation

The title suggests an escape to a distant, imaginary land where the speaker achieves mystical union with beautiful, eternal works of art. “Byzantium” refers to the ancient name of Istanbul, the capital of the Byzantium Empire of the fifth and sixth centuries, But Byzantium in the poem is an imaginary city a country of poet’s mind.

The poet is getting old and finds Ireland, where he is presently living is not congenialto men of advanced age. The Poet is “an aged man” who comes to the realization that youth and sensual life are no longer an option for him, and he commences on a spiritual journey tothe ideal world of Byzantium. The poet therefore decides to go the Byzantium which is atraditional place of art and engage himself there with the study of the treasures. The poet alsocalled Byzantium “holy’ for it is the center of spiritual and Intellectual activity and not a placesuitable for physical and sensuous pleasures of life.

As soon as the poet arrives in the Byzantium he prays to God’s saints to come down from heaven and teach him to appreciate art, he request them to help his being absorbed into the artifice of eternity that engaged in the pursuit of the spiritual.

Sailing to Byzantium is quite a short poem consisting of four stanzas, rhymingabababcc, all in roughly lambic pentameter. In the first stanza, the poet describes, the naturalworld, where the young of all species- birds, fishes, and people are busy loving, reproducingand commending the flesh. As an old man, the poet at once celebrates the fertility and joyfulimages of teeming fish, birds and people but despairs of their temporal ignorance.

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

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

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

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

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

5.7Symbolism

The use of symbolism is very important throughout the poem. The title of the poem "Sailing to Byzantium contains two important symbols-

a) Sailing which depicts a metaphorical journey and gives substance and a physical aspect to what Yeats is trying to achieve.

b) Byzantium symbolizes a world of artistic magnificence and permanence, conjuring up in the mind of the reader, a rich and inclusive culture such as that associated with the Byzantium Empire. The images of birds, fish and young lovers used by Yeats in the first stanza symbolizes transience and mortality.

Yeats highlights this aspect of the world he lives in, so that the world which he seeks i.e. Byzantium, becomes more clearly focused. In the second stanza Yeats uses the symbol of a scarecrow to represent the decrepitude of old age. The scarecrow is a repulsive lifeless image symbolizing everything that Yeats wants to reject in his mortal existence.

The symbol of music and song runs through the poem providing a unified motif between the worlds of intellect and sensual worlds, in the opening stanza the song is that of the birds in the trees, a sensual though transient song. In the second stanza he projects an image of “a singing school” a suggestion that the joy experienced in this artistic paradise is more comparable than the joy of song. This idea is again repeated in stanza three. In the final stanza the song of the golden bird which entertains the lords and ladies of Byzantium represents the intellectual joy to be experienced by Yeats.

The golden bird of the final stanza is a chosen image of the permanent form Yeats wishes to take, in essence it represents durability which one associates with the untarnishing quality of gold, by virtue of its physical permanence. There is the understood contribution of its song, thereby providing what Yeats hopes will be the representation of the artistic existence he yearns for.

5.8Imagery

The imagery in the first stanza is all natural, all changing - “those dying generations”-”the young”, “the salmon”, “mackerel”, “fish, flesh or fowl”.

There is recurring imagery of music throughout the poem, with various connotations - “sensual music”, “sing, and louder sing”, “singing-masters of my soul”, “set upon a golden bough to sing. Music tends to have cyclical implications, both to the young, and to the lords and ladies of Byzantium. The difference is that the first is not perceived by the listeners,generation after generation, and the second is. Singing can be a source of power, but also a sign of desperation.

The image of the scarecrow old man is a weak, contemptuous one, singing loudly ofhis own achievements, for lack of anything else to sing about.

In Byzantium, the imagery suddenly shifts to Old Testament; power, trial by fire,cleansing. The riches of Byzantium are those of Babylon. There is “God’s holy fire”, “soul”, “theartifice of eternity”. Once again the poem is contemptuous of impermanence, “the dying animal” is an unworthy home for the heart-”it knows not what it is”.

The narrator will not “take his bodily form” from nature, but the form of Art, “of hammered gold and gold enameling”, to sit in the eternal cycle and sing of it.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What is the theme of the poem, ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ by WB Yeats?

a. Man versus Science b. Man versus Nature c. Man versus Religion

d. Man versus Man

5.9 Glossary

Dying generations - people approaching old age.

Salmon - a variety of fish.

Mackerel - another variety of fish.

Monuments of unageing intellect - Immortal products of the intellect and the spirit.

The holy city - Byzantium is a holy city for the poet since it is a centre of art andculture.

Sages-saints and great artists in history.

Mosaic a type of artwork in which figures are made out of pieces of colored glass or some precious stones.

Perne in a gyre-to rotate in an elliptical movement.

Artifice-merge into the craftsmanship of the artists of Byzantium.

5.10 Summing up

The poem comes to the conclusion that in order for true peace and immortality to be achieved, the soul of the speaker has to “dance and sing” or be joyful. In this way, old age is fought off.

5.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS’ ANSWER

A. b

5.12 Questions

1.Examine the use of symbols in the poem ‘Sailing to Byzantium.

2.Year’s poetry is a perpetual effort to escape reality. Discuss.

3.How does Yeats depict his journey from the world of reality to an utopiandestination?

5.13 Suggested Readings

1. Howes, Marjorie. *Yeats’ Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness*. Cambridge University Press, 1998
2. Brown, Terence. *The Life of W. B. Yeats: A Critical Biography*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2001

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Unit-6

AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

STRUCTURE

6.1 learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Structure: Among School Children

A.Self-Assessment Question

6.3.1 Text

6.3.2 Substance

6.3.3 Interpretation

6.3.4 Diction, Mood and Tone

6.3.5 Poetic Devices

6.3.6 Figure of Speech

6.3.7 Imagery

6.3.8 Concluding Lines of the Poem

6.3.9 Glossary

B. Self-Assessment Question

6.4 Summing-Up

6.5 Questions

6.6 Self-Assessment Questions' answers

6.7 Suggested Reading

6.1 Learning Objectives

Dear students,

I am certain that by this time you will have studied some of the notes in the previous lessons. A sincere effort has been made to simplify the poems in your course. In this last lesson on the poetry of W.B. Yeats, an attempt is being made to introduce you to another poem of this great Irish poet - 'Among School Children', which is the fifth and last poem in your course. I hope this lesson will clear many of your doubts regarding this poem.

6.2 Introduction

The genius of great poets almost always reveals itself early. But many of the sublime works of the acknowledged masters were composed while the poets were either fast approaching old age or more or less settled into it. This was certainly so in the case of William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), the best of whose late poems continue to challenge, Inspire and move scholars, poets and devotees alike. Of these, "Among School Children," a meditation on life, love and the creative process written by Yeats in his 60th year, stands out for its poignancy as well as its profundity.

The poem-modest in length, if not in scope comprises eight stanzas of eight lineseach and employs a rhyme scheme, abababcc, known as ottava rima. Although the lineswhich include a congeries of symbols, allusions, insights and memories represent a kind ofextended reverie, not a word among them seems awkward or imprecise, let alone superfluous.

The inspiration for the poem was a visit to St. Otteran's School in Waterford (often misidentified as St. O'Heran's) which Yeats made in February, 1928 in his official capacity as a senator of the Irish Free State. The poem begins with an ostensibly simple line that is also one of Yeats' most underappreciated: "I walk through the long schoolroom questioning." It soon becomes clear that the poet refers here not only to a room of St. Otteran's, but also to the metaphorical schoolroom that is life.

As "a kind old nun in a white hood" leads him about the school- a Montessori school emphasizing practical skills as well as academic ones the poet becomes conscious of the fact that he is himself being observed by the curious children. To them, the renowned poet in their midst Yeats had won a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923 - is not merely "a sixty-year-old smiling public man," but also quite naturally, if only momentarily, a source of wonder. Whatthey cannot possibly know is that Yeats' smile masks a bitterness resulting from a lifetime of creative and romantic frustration.

It's in this moment of intense self-awareness that Yeats is moved to reflect upon hislife's great if unrequited love: his decades-long love of the actress, feminist and Irishnationalist Maud Gonne. Yeats famously observed that after meeting Gonne, "the troubling ofmy life began." Importantly, so too began a period of extraordinary and unceasing creativity.

6.3 Structure: Among School Children

"Among School Children" comprises eight stanzas, each of eight lines of lambic pentameter with the rhyme scheme ABABABCC. This is a standard form known as "ottava rima", and is one which Yeats used elsewhere (e.g. "The Municipal Gallery Revisited"). However, the formality of the verse form is softened by Yeats' use of half-rhymes as well as full rhymes. The final couplets are usually full rhymes, but this is not a fixed rule.

The initial stage of Yeats' reverie unites the children before him with the image of a very young Gonne. Yeats looks upon "one child or 'other there" and speculates as to whether "she-Gonne - "stood. so at that age." Presently, a vision of Gonne as a child flashes into his consciousness, prompting a startled Yeats to declare, "She stands before me as a living child." The apparition deepens and darkens Yeats' reverie and sets him on an interior odyssey during which he brings to bear no small measure of his enormous erudition.

The middle part of the poem is jam-packed with allusions, referencing - among otherpeople and things - Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Aristophanes, Porphyry, the Bible and art ofthe Italian Renaissance.

Despite its complexity, the poem progresses smoothly by way of "hooks and eyes" to the last two stanzas, which comprise some of the most beautiful and profound lines Yeats ever composed. Although grammatically distinct, and apparently thematically unrelated,

those stanzas are linked by a semicolon - surely the oddest use of punctuation in Yeats' oeuvre. It's as if the poet, having moved to the optimism of the concluding stanza from the pessimism and frustration of its predecessor, nevertheless wanted to keep those two emotional states linked and balanced in the mind of the reader.

The seventh and penultimate stanza, which considers both religious and maternal devotion, concludes with a sad realization that, although rather different, the images worshipped by "nuns and mothers" have at least one important thing in common - they both ultimately "break hearts." Yeats associates these demoralizing images with what he refers to as "Presences" - entities "That passion, piety or affection knows,/And that all heavenly glory symbolize." Yeats, distraught, calls out these potent and cruel abstractions. They are to him, as to all who create, strive and love, "self-born mockers of man's enterprise."

Yet the first half of the last stanza represents a touching epiphany about the possibility of creative progress despite the numerous and diverse impediments and discouragements of life. "Labour is blossoming or-dancing where! The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,/ Nor beauty born out of its own despair,/Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil."

Yeats recognizes his own culpability for much of the frustration and misery he has endured, even as he notes its absence in other creators, strivers and lovers. This is an insight that the headstrong and obsessive Yeats could not have had or, rather, would have rejected -at an earlier stage in his life. The second half of the stanza consists of two couplets, each of which is also a rhetorical question: "O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,/Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?/O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

These remarkably concise lines constitute Yeats' most memorable statement about a desired but elusive "unity of being. The chestnut tree that Yeats conjures as a symbol of integrity, vitality and endurance is as well-chosen as it is striking. And obviously without the dancer there would be no dance: The person and the performance are inextricable and ultimately dissolve into one. The succession of the static, nonhuman image by an active, human one is both poignant and key, for beyond it we can sense the poet himself in the challenging and ever-changing role that was his own creative life. Yeats implies that no small part of the wisdom of old age is the recognition of the importance of all one's experiences in shaping one's life.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What is the rhyme scheme of the poem "Among School Children"?

6.3.1 Text

Among School Children

William Butler Yeats (from *The Tower*, 1928)

I

I walk through the long schoolroom questioning:

A kind old nun in a white hood replies;

The children learn to cipher and to sing.
To study reading-books and histories,
To cut and sew, be neat in everything
in the best modem way the children’s eyes
in momentary wonder stare upon
A sixty-year-old smiling public man.

II

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

III

And thinking of that fit of grief or rage
I look upon one child or t’other there
And wonder if she stood so at that age -
For even daughters of the swan can share
Something of every paddler’s heritage -
And had that colour upon cheek or hair,
And thereupon my heart is driven wild:
She stands before me as a living child.

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil
O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

6.3.2 Substance

The poem begins with ironic reflections of Yeats inspecting a school, and this evolves into an inquiry of the human condition, broken dreams of life, and the perfection that can be incised in art, laborers of creation and understanding and being. When this was written, Yeats was the senator of the Irish State and was a widely recognized poet who had fame and respect. There is a striking contrast between the successful public figure and private turmoil at the same time.

The poem reaches questions about old age and triumphant art in the human condition. Yeats questions the point of life, questions education growing up and love. Yeats grew, becoming old, and having broken dreams. He also questions life and if its worth being born. He wants to know what the meaning of life is. He laughs at great philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle because they look ridiculous. He also wants to know about the perfection of art, his imagination compared to the reality of life.

Yeats dwells on his physical decay and irony that whilst he's in decay, the spirit, imagination and passion remain alive and lively. Tensions at work, Yeats imagination brings to life the past with much intensity, yet he is stuck in a physical world that destroys his dreams. Also, in real life, his life leads to false dreams. He is torn between crying inwardly and comfortable pose outward, neither real life nor imagination can quite be recognized.

He envies children for growing up. Prevailing tones include bitterness and disillusion of hopes as he walks through the school, he feels sorry for them too. The tone is ironic. Children are taught in the best way possible but learning is formal unlike the tumultuous education of real life that awaits them. Movement from children to a single child brings memories of Maud Gonne.

The poem deals with facing mortality and old age. This poem was made 11 years before Yeats' death. The theme is about time, identity, platonic ideals or physical world Language is that resembling the Leaden body. It's shocking to bring it up. The format is first person narrative. It is controversial in tone. There is a sense of Yeats allowing music more swans. He can't isolate form and context, they aid the meaning. The structure is ABAB ABCC. Roman Numerals to add formality. The most difficult part of the poem is the ending, in what ways can the images of the trees and dancer be seen positively and how do they fit with the rest of the poem. The context of the poem is important in the poem.

6.3.3 Interpretation

"Among Schoolchildren" by W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) is a carefully constructed poem consisting of eight stanzas of eight lines each. (Incidentally, Yeats died exactly 73 years ago, on 28th January 1939) Generations of readers have enjoyed this poem and have been impressed by its artistry. It is a masterpiece by a great poet. This information 'about the poem' is not strictly necessary, but it may be necessary to establish its claim to our attention.

In the poem we overhear what the poet is musing over privately while visiting a school as a 'public man' Yeats was a senator of the Irish Free State. He had won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, the first Irish to be so honored. He is being taken around St. Otteran's

School in Waterford (which he visited in February 1926) by ‘a kind old nun’, probably the head of the school. Yeats sets the scene with the opening line “I walk through the long schoolroom questioning” The kind old nun’s replies explain how the children are learning to read books, to do arithmetic, to sing, to cut and sew, to be neat in everything “in the best modern way”. The children’s eyes light up “in momentary wonder” and stare upon the sixty-year-old smiling visitor.

More than just a schoolroom

It is easy to see that this long schoolroom’ is more than just a schoolroom; it may mean the school of life where learning never ends. Questions about the meaning of life, the illusory sense of selfhood in a person in the face of inevitable physical decay over time, the relationship between body and soul/spirit, and mind and matter occur to many of us. Yeats was concerned with these problems, too. For those of us who have lived long enough to realize it, life is often a matter of waiting to live: we learn, we labour, and we merely prepare for ‘life’ until death comes, or until we realize that the meaning of life is in the living, as probably Yeats did.The poet’s fascination with the children is, however, more lasting and more profound than their curiosity about him. He is reminded of a tale told by the woman he loved about some childhood Incident (“a harsh reproof or trivial event”) which pained her deeply as a child; the relationship between them as young lovers was such that he felt at one with her “from youthful sympathy”. The phrase ‘Ledaean body’ refers to this woman. She was the Irish nationalist Maud Gonne who was only eighteen months younger than Yeats, and who had great physical and intellectual attraction for him; to him she was like Helen in Greek mythology who was a demigoddess, being the daughter of Leda, a beautiful woman raped by Zeus in the form of a swan (hence the ‘Ledaean body’ above). In his lifetime, Yeats proposed to Maud Gonne five times in different circumstances, only to be rejected. The other classical allusion in the same stanza is to Aristophanes’ speech in Plato’s book “Symposium”.

Man not separate from woman-

Originally, according to Aristophanes, man was not separate from woman; the man-woman had four feet and four hands, one head with two faces looking opposite ways, four ears, two sexual organs, and so on; man-woman were strong, arrogant and violent; to stop them becoming a threat to the gods, Zeus divided each of them into two “as you might divide an egg with a hair”. Yeats alters Plato’s parable and says that the two of them (Maud Gonne and Yeats) became “the yolk and white of the one shell”, that is, they felt inseparable from each other.

Thinking of the intense sorrow or passion he felt on hearing that sad story, Yeats looks upon “one child or the other there” and asks him if Maud Gonne looked like her at the same age. The child he’s looking at may not be as extraordinarily beautiful as his lady love was according to his imagination,

For even daughters of the swan can share

Something of every paddler’s heritage -

And Maud probably had “that colour on cheek or hair”

And thereupon my heart is driven wild:

She stands before me as a living child.

‘She’ means Maud. She was of Ledaean kind, i.e. like semi-divine Helen; yet she “can share/Something of every paddler’s heritage” and is human; she is subject to old age and bodily decay So, the woman’s present image that ‘floats’ into his mind is a complete contrast to her apparition as a living child before him, for the woman today is old and “hollow of cheek” and looks as if she’s feeding on shadows. “Did Quattrocento finger fashion it” he is compelled to ask himself because she is so thin and shriveled as depicted by a 15th century Italian painting. When she was young, she was an incomparable beauty like Helen; and he himself, though he did not possess the same kind of good looks, “Had pretty plumage once...”, he modestly claims. With this he emerges from his reverie for it’s

Better to smile on all that smile, and show

There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

Old scarecrows uncomfortable

Of course, this ‘old scarecrow’ is not comfortable; he is looking back on his life with a sense of frustration: his love was unrequited; he’s a man with sixty winters’: on his head, troubled not only by such frustrations, but by what he perceived to be failures in his creative endeavors.

The whole of the fifth stanza is a single sentence, a rhetorical question: What young mother would think her son a compensation for all the pain she had to undergo in giving birth to him and for all the anxious concern she experienced in launching him into the world as an Individual, if she saw him as an old man of sixty? Critics debate about who is being betrayed here, the mother or the baby? I, for one, think that in terms of the main theme of the poem and the immediate context (as I understand them), it should be the mother. The mother is betrayed by being given a ‘shape’ (newborn baby) which must “sleep, shriek, and struggle to escape”, as if it was resisting birth. Having superimposed the present image of Maud on his vision of her as a beautiful young woman, Yeats imagines that his mother would have been mortified by the same sort of frustrating experience if she had had the chance to see him with “Sixty or more winters on (his) head”. The phrase “the honey of generation” alludes to Neo-Platonist philosopher Porphyry’s belief that sex drugs the unborn infants and causes them to forget the honey-like sweetness of ‘prenatal bliss’ or ideal reality before they are born and become mortal (subject to decay and death).

Plato Aristotle and Pythagoras

In the next stanza, Yeats turns, with this question, to some legendary wise men in the western cultural tradition, the Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, only to contemptuously dismiss them and their philosophies mocking them all as “Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird”, that is, mere scarecrows like himself. Plato thought that the material world and everything in it including us are dark illusory shadows cast by the bright light of what he called the Forms; these are the immortal abstractions which alone are

permanent in his view, to Yeats, Plato's Forms are "a ghostly paradigm of things". Aristotle was "solider" or was less abstract: he believed that children were substantial enough to be considered worth driving some sense into through punishment, and he played the taws.

Upon the bottom of a king of kings

(taws' means a leather whip with its end cut into small strips used to punish school children; 'a king of kings' was Alexander the Great, whose teacher Aristotle was). By using played' Yeats discounts Aristotle's action. Like Aristotle, Pythagoras seemed to consider the material world to have some permanence; he said that music echoed what he called the Music of the Spheres (or planets). Though the three philosophers disagreed among themselves about how to value things of the world such as children, all of them believed that permanent forms or shapes or images are the foundation of experience. Yeats thinks that these philosophies are shallow, and ridicules the three ancient philosophers as scarecrows.

The seventh stanza brings the poet to the images that nuns and mothers worship. But they worship different kinds of images. Nuns' images are statues that "keep a marble or bronze repose"; a mother's dreams are centred on a conception of a perfect child; if she saw this child aged and decrepit, it would break her hearts. The nuns Images too break hearts: The god they worship disappoints them. So, nuns, mothers, and lovers including him have their hearts broken alike. "Heavenly glory" is what they want to symbolize. It's nothing real; it's all in their imagination. The Presences that the poet addresses are these images, shapes, which are "self-born" because they are products of imagination, and they are not from the world of reality; in their permanence they mock "man's enterprise": to Yeats, Maud Gonne will always be the beautiful young woman she was (and not the shadow of reality she's been reduced to at present) which is a delusion. The Presences reveal the vanity of. "man's enterprise".

Enterprise and Labour

The last word of the seventh stanza "enterprise" links with the opening word of the eighth "Labour", for both imply work; "labour' is also mother's work in birthing. Even the chestnut tree is a 'blossomer': its work is blossoming. In the last stanza, the performer and the performance are fused into a unity.

O chestnut-free, great-rooted blossomer,

Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,

How can we know the dancer from the dance?

These concluding lines give us the two metaphors of a chestnut tree (great rooted blossomer) and a dancer (body swayed to music) which help define what some readers would possibly interpret as its central theme: a bitter-sweet reflection on his own life as a lover, poet and public man, the "unity of being" subsisting through a relentless process of ageing, the riddle of a reality he experienced, but found it hard to pin down. The chestnut tree is neither its leaf, nor its flower, nor its trunk; it is a unity composed of those different parts; the tree has no separate existence from them. The second image (that of the dancer)

transfers our attention from the natural to the human plane: How can we separate the dancer from the dance? Forthere's no dance where there's no dancer, and vice versa. The meaning of both these metaphors can be extended to represent the dynamic unity, the mysterious harmony that characterizes all existence, the universe, of which we are a part. Incidentally, the dancer image reminds us of the Nataraja (King of Dance) statue of the Destroyer god of Hinduism dancing in an aureole of flames. Shiva's cosmic dance is said to represent the vibrant unity of the universe, its awe, beauty, majesty, and mystery. Life is a part of that universe and shares in those qualities. The rhetorical question "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" is where Yeats' ruminations have led him.

6.3.4 Diction, Mood and Tone

The poem is written in the first person (present tense), apparently from the perspective of the poet, or at any rate a "sixty-year-old smiling public man". He describes the children in the first stanza, and the "Ledaean body" In the second, a description which has the pronoun of "she" but seems to be "it", an object, sometimes. The "she" of the third stanza is still Leda, but in the present. The fifth stanza is in the third person, the "youthful mother", and the "he" - the son. The sixth is again third person the Greeks, and the seventh returns to sons and mothers, and the eighth is addressed to the reader in the second person.

The first stanza is comfortable, friendly, the second awakened, awed, inspired by memory. The third is apprehensive and curious, cautiously reflective. The fourth is again reflective, but more assured a "Better to smile on all that smile." The fifth is more worried (note the poet's choice of verbs), more conscious of pain and suffering. The sixth is contemplative, sitting in the realm of the Greats. The seventh is knowing, knowledgeable, again the poet is in a world he is comfortable in. The concluding stanza is hopeful, in a way, hopeful of understanding.

The first stanza is placid, complacent, the old man in the room of "children" and a "kind old nun", children being taught to be "neat". The "sinking fire" of the second stanza gives it a powerful, mythical tone, a "parable" of superhuman unity and knowledge. The third stanza is uneasy, aware of the slumbering power that may be in the children. The fourth stanza is again uneasy with a three-way contrast between the present children, Leda and himself. He tries to drag it back to some sort of normalcy by referring to himself as an "old scarecrow.The fifth stanza is foreboding and the sixth is transcendent. The penultimate stanza is half knowing, half worried, and the last is more comfortable, happier, having broken through.

6.3.5 Poetic Devices

Alliteration - "cipher... sing", "sixty... smiling", "sphere... sympathy", "Plato's parable", "finger fashion", "pretty plumage", "sleep, shriek, struggle", "drug decide", "star sang", "passion, piety", "body... bruised"

Assonance - "through the long schoolroom hood", "driven wild... living child", "shape. lapOnomatopoeia-"paddlers", "shriek, struggle"

6.3.6 Figures of Speech

Metaphor ‘a Ledaean body” ‘nature but a spume that plays/Upon a ghostly paradigm of things”. “Soldier Aristotle”, “Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?”

Simile-”Hallow of cheek as though it drank the wind”

6.3.7 Imagery

The image of the children in their classroom is a comfortable image, to match the “sixty-year-old smiling public man”. It is later subverted, but is very pure as it stands, having the obvious associations of innocence. The second image is of the “Ledaean body, an image of mystic, which is associated with her childhood tale, a less pleasant story of “a harsh reproof, or trivial event/That turned some childish day to tragedy”, an event harsh enough to register on the mind of such a creature, and it strikes a chord in the poet too - and their natures are able to blend. Here the universal nature of childhood, and its power.

He remembers this as he looks back at the children, every person “canshare/ Something” of the children, and so the poet is reminded of her. Another image which heuses to remind the reader that every person is similar is the beauty that every child has.

He wonders then if any “youthful mother would consider her son at sixty “A compensation for the pang of his birth”. He is exploring the relation between the pain of childhood and the fulfillment of age, and wonders if the first is equal to the second.

He thinks about the old men, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, and their thoughts and ideas, and dismisses them as “Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird.” He places his valueon childhood. He then moves on to the images of mothers and nuns the children and theidols. Even the candles and ideals of the nun are capable of “breaking hearts”.

The last stanza contains several images first the reward of labour being anundamaged body, not the desperate beauty of struggle, or the wisdom of late nights of work.He asks whether the part of the tree he addressed is the leaf, blossom or bole (perhaps food,ornament or centre), and then declares that the person cannot be separated from their task.

6.3.8 Concluding lines of the poem

The last two lines of this poem are the most-often quoted part: “O body swayed to music, O brightening glance. /How can we know the dancer from the dance?”

The “dance” to which Yeats refers is defined earlier in the final stanza. It occurs when there’s a sort of unity between body and spirit where neither is dominant. Use of the word “Labour” at the start of the stanza refers all the way back to the start of the poem and the work of the school children, but he’s saying that work that is worthwhile transcends separation intoparts (self or soul - a reference to at least another of his poems, “A Dialogue Between Self andSoul”).

The final question about the dancer and the dance is, as you might guess, rhetorical. Because of this (and without meaning to be confusing), this question and the one preceding it are, in fact, the answers to questions posed by the poem. Just as a chestnut tree cannot

be separated into parts (leaf, blossom or bole), the creator and its creation (chestnut tree and flower/leaf/bole, human dancer and dance) cannot be completely separated. You may not be what you eat, but read him as meaning that you are part of whatever it is that you create - dance, art, writing.

Yeats' conclusion appears to be Ars Longa, Vita Brevis, commonly rendered intoEnglish as "life is short, but art is long."

6.3.9 Glossary

Cipher-sums in arithmetic.

Ledaean body-having classical beauty like that possessed by Helen.

Harsh reproof-sharp scolding

Blent into a sphere- became united.

Daughters of the swan - beautiful women like Helen or Leda.

Paddler's heritage - ordinary, common type women; here used in a derogatory sense.

Quattrocento- the cultural and artistic style of 15th century Italy artists and the earlyRenaissance period.

Comfortable kind of old scarecrow - an old but presentable figure.

Spume-froth, foam.

Paradigm an example.

Played the taws-whipped.

Solider Aristotle-man of action and substance.

Presences-idols.

Bruised -made to suffer.

Blear-eyed-with swollen eyes.

Bole-the trunk of a tree.

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

How many stanzas are there in the poem?

6.4 Summing-up

Among School Children' is at once public and private: its 'action' takes place in a public setting, but this public backdrop prompts the private musings of the aged poet; but he then makes his personal meditations public again, by choosing to publish the poem. In the last analysis, it is at once direct and elliptical in its meaning – typical Yeats, we might say. The symbols refuse to be pinned down too tightly. In order to dance, after all, one must have some freedom.

6.5 Questions

1. Critically examine Yeats' 'Among School Children.
2. Bring out the elements of romanticism in the poetry of Yeats.
3. Write an essay on Yeats' symbolism with reference to the poems you have read.
4. Explain the line "How can we know the dancer from the dance"?
5. Write a note on the use of imagery and some other poetic devices used by Yeats inhis poetry.

6.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS'ANSWERS

A. abababcc

B. eight

6.7 Suggested Readings

- Harold Bloom, Yeats, London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Richard Ellmann, The Identity of Yeats, London: Macmillan, 1954.
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- T.W. Henn, The Lonely Tower, London, Methuen, 1950.
- Louis Macneice, The Poetry of WB Yeats, London: Faber and Faber, 1967.
- F.A.C. Wilson, WE Yeats and Tradition, London: Gollancz, 1958.
- Peter Ure, Yeats, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963.
- AN. Jeffares, A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, London: Macmillan, 1968.

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Block 3
Unit 1
WALT WHITMAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Structure

1.1 Learning Objectives
1.2 Introduction
1.3 Trnascedentalism
1.4 The Gilded Age
1.5 Walt Whitman
1.5.1 The Publishing Years
1.5.2 The Civil War
1.5.3 Political And Socio-Economic Thoughts
A. Self-Assessment Question
1.6 Theme Of Whitman's Poetry
1.6.1*leaves Of Grass*
1.6.2 "Song Of Myself"
1.6.2.1 Theme
1.6.2.2 Structure
1.7 Summary
1.8 Glossary
1.9 Questions
1.10 self-Assessment Questions' answers
1.11 Suggested Readings

1.1 Leaning Objectives

Dear Student:

Most of the literature of the United States is written in the English language, much of it by men and women whose forebears came from the British Isles. It was the Puritans of the seventeenth century who wrote most of the literature of the first colonial century. The kind of government the Puritans wanted was theocracy-a Holy Commonwealth governed by God's- representatives, i.e. the clergy: They also subscribed to Calvinism. The Puritans wrote considerable prose, but little poetry.

1.2 Introduction

In the 17th Century, a few non-conformists fled the Puritan town and set up their own religious communities. During the 18th century, the hold of Puritanism was weakened even as the ideas of the Enlightenment spread from Europe to America bringing a view of men as inherently good in a World which he could enjoy in this life and which he could improve

through his own natural powers. From this view came a new religion in New England. The Unitarian Church evolving in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was the product of men who had absorbed the spirits of the Enlightenment. They rejected the Puritan notion of the innate depravity of man, as well, as the idea of predestined salvation for an elect few in the name of reason and common sense. They created a theology based on man's innate goodness and his spiritual freedom in a universe presided over by a benevolent God, (The most famous of America's Unitarian ministers was the writer Ralph Wallo Emerson, But after 1832, when he became, the spiritual leader of the movement called Transcendentalism, he was its most famous opponent.)

Nevertheless, one aspect of Puritanism which persisted and continued in the 19th and 20th centuries was "The New England Conscience of American "Puritanism" with a small 'p' This meant an intense moral earnestness, a heightened sense of duty and guild quest of truth and goodness, righteous conduct, love of industry thrift introspection, as also belief in self-discipline. Attacks against Puritanism have enlivened American liberation throughout its history and loud have been the cries for liberation from its power to exclude beauty and to discourage joy spontaneity and the natural affection in the name of an intolerance it and liberal-minded morality.

During the 18th century an optimistic rationalism emerged as the view of life according to which God and nature are benevolent to man, and all are facets of a harmonious universe; progress is inevitable; and men and society are perfectible: These were the assertions of the men who led the American Revolution and created a new form of government, the democratic. The writers of the Revolutionary period-mostly adopted the standards of eighteenth-century classicism, neo-classicism as practiced by Pope. Johnson, Dryden and others. But the main European influence on the literature was of Romantic developed in England: France and Germany. A highly individualistic movement with revolutionary implication in its earlier phases, its optimistic aspect consisted of a belief in the attainment of virtue and happiness through the spontaneous expression by man of his desires and by living close to nature. It also consisted of idealizing the simple or the primitive for their more natural living. These aspects of the movement obviously appealed to writers trying to give literary expression to the American faith in the individual. This faith has been based on the nationalistic philosophy of the Enlightenment. These doctrines of Romantic individualism were developed by a number of American writers of whom Emerson. Thoreau and Whitman were the most important. Other American writers were more deeply affected by the pessimistic aspects of Romanticism. The Romantic exploration of the individual personality did not always result in an Emersonian optimism. It led also to an emphasis on morbid emotional forces, on a basic contradiction between man's aspiration and the conditions under which he must live and on his isolation from other human beings. These items were developed by such writers as Pope, how throne and Melville, none of whom had faith in the possibilities of social reform. The more important writers of the period can, thus be roughly classified as optimists or pessimists according to whether they presented the individualism of American society, in bright of dark colours. But all of them were primarily engaged in exploring the implications of the American

doctrine of individualism in the light of Romantic conceptions of the emotional personality: They were, therefore concerned with the emotional experience of the individual and with his place in nature rather than with the social structure or inter personal relationship. A number of the themes with which European writers have always been largely occupied did not appear in American literature until a later period. Before the Civil War American novelists, for example made little attempt to produce realistic portrays of American society, there were no American equivalents of Dickens or Balzac. What is perhaps even more remarkable is their lack of interest in sexual-emotion. Love a favourite theme of writers elsewhere was singularly lacking in American fiction until near the end of the 19th century (except), rather mildly in Hawthorne). Most American writers either ignored it or like Poe and Melville were concerned with it chiefly in its more morbid forms.

The 18th century can be quickly dismissed the first American to devote himself exclusively to literary career. Charles Brockden Brown, published six novels bearing traces of European Romanticism in its exotic aspects. One of the most popular literary genres during the Romantic period was the "Gothic' novel dealing with morbid emotions and sensational experiences medieval castles and supernatural elements. Washington Irving and James F. Cooper were other novelists the late 18th century.

Now England after the Revolution passed through a period of intellectual stagnation, chiefly because its dominant classes fell into a state of panic adopt the radicalism of the French Revolution and the religious infidelity associated with it. The seeds of Romanticism transplanted from Europe and germinating in a soil already well fertilized by traditional aspect for the life of the mind, eventually flowered in to the so-called "New England Renaissance." The New England writers of this period fall into two groups: the radicals who endeavored to break completely with the past and in Emerson's words "work to an original relation to the universe," and the conservatives who remained closer to the 'Brahmin' tradition of the old- mercantile families and were mostly men of scholarship rather than of creative originality.

The radical of, the Renaissance were represented chiefly by Transcendentalism. This is the name given to the intellectual attitude developed by a number of young men living in the Boston area in the 1808. In 1808 the organized a club philosophical discussion and issued a magazine called. The Dial Among the members of the group were Emerson: George Ripley. Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau and the unitarian minister Theodore Parker.

1.3 Transcendentalism

The word "transcendentalism" was derived from German Romantic philosophy. Systematizing the Romantic district of the intellect and exaltation of institution of philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Fichte and Schelling had affirmed that man could apprehend reality by direct spiritual insight. In their phraseology, the "reason" (by which they really meant intuition) knows truths which "transcended" those accessible to the "understanding" (which was the faculty employed in logical argument and scientific inquiry). Emerson and other New Englanders

acquired this attitude partly from the German directly and partly from their English interpreters, such as Coleridge and Carlyle. It appealed to them largely because it provided a metaphysical justification for the ideal of individual freedom; if every man could apprehend the Truth by direct intuition, then any form of external authority political or religious, was unnecessary. And they found it easy to think in these terms because of the traditional emphasis of New England Puritanism of man's capacity for direct spiritual insight. The Puritans had believed in original sin but they had a so believed in, divine grace; when man was enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he knew the truth by immediate revelation. Transcendentalism may be defined as Calvinism modified by the Romantic doctrine of man's natural goodness. Denying original sin. It affirmed that all man and not merely the eject few might achieve a state of grace by casting off, external authority and responding to their own spiritual intuitions.

Calvinism (the teachings of John Calvin, the French Protestant Reformer of Geneva) had five principles: first. God elects individuals to be saved; second. He designs complete redemption only for the elect; third, fallen man is, himself incapable of true faith and repentance; fourth, Gods' grace is sufficient for the salvation of Abe elect; and fifth, a soul onceregenerated is never ultimately lost. Calvin's teachings seemed confirmed by the Bible andexperience.

Emerson stated best the implications of doctrine of transcendentalism. He was tooindividualistic to have much faith in institutional changes; while he sympathized withmovements for social reform, he did not join them, feeling that the most necessary reform was that of the individual within himself. But the radical implications of his thinking were undeniable and Emerson underlined them by denouncing the commercialism and the intellectual timidity of the upper classes with the severity of a Hebrew prophet. As a critic of the American life of his time Emerson was always shrewd and often profound. And he could express his ideas with a pungency and a poetic vividness which made him one of the great phrasemakers of literature. Thoreau was the most rugged and uncompromising of the Transcendentalists. The other members of the group are Margaret Fuller chiefly remembered for herchampionship of the rights of women. Bronson Alcott, experimenter in progressive education,and Theodore Parker, a militant champion of abolitionism.

While Concord was the main centre of radical individualism, these figures were mostly associated with Harward. Touched by the literal and reforming, spirit of the time, they accepted the optimistic doctrines of Unitarianism and generally supported the abolitionist movement. H.W. Longfellow and James Russell Lowell belong to this group.

As against these New England writers, the literary Renaissance of the South wasdelayed until the 20th century. The society of the South prior to the Civil War was too rural, toosuspicious of the free play of ideas, and too busy with politics and cotton growing to developan intellectual class.

The two writers of this period, whose importance was not recognized during their lives were Herman Melville and. Walt Whitman (the latter to be discussed in detail in subsequent lesson) Throughout Melville's books among them *Moby Dick*) companionship can be found only (among the ship's crew at sea, never with either a man or a woman on shore (except

perhaps among the savages of the far away Marquesan Islands), and for Melville this loneliness was an essential aspects of man's place in the scheme of things man was doomed to fight against implacable cosmic forces and to be deferred.

Whitman's distinction lies in harmonizing the three elements of the revolutionary trinity of democracy viz individualism, equality and the principle fraternity-the mainly love of comrades. 'Loving comradeship' was for Whitman the essential keystone of American democracy, and its celebration was the main purpose of both his writings and his personal life. In so far as he made this principle a reality, he may be said to have supplied that was lacking in the origin of Transcendentalist doctrine, and to have surmounted the pessimism of writers like Pope, Hawthrone, and Melville.

Both in England and the United States the extremes of Romanticism were avoided in life as well as in art. In these countries there was little of the extravagance, the chaos, the license of German Romanticism in America the strongest restraint came from the Puritan culture, its discipline still effective even when the sanctioning beliefs had evaporated as-one can readily see in men like Emerson and Hawthrone: The revolt was moderate because American rationalism 'and neoclassicism had been moderate and because the way to romantic outlook had been gradually prepared by the opening of the frontier of a land of opportunity and by the democratic revolution that preceded the French Revolution by about 20 years. The heady ideas of European romanticism came to a nation of free man accustomed to belief in human dignity and habituated to self-control no less than to self-assertion.

1.4 The Gilded Age

The romantic period before the War when farm and factory were happily adjusted, when regional culture strove between North and South, where mind and spirit flourished in an idealistic literature, and "plain living and high thinking" still and prestige is called the Golden. Age by the social and cultural historians. The change from it to the quarter century following the war (1865 to 1890) when individualism was "rugged" and materialism following the new machines of the Industrial Revolution unbridled and ashamed and when political and, moral corruption preceded unchecked, when artistic and literary taste was vulgarized and debased and when in a word plain living and high thinking became high living and plain thinking is called the change from the Golden Age to the Gilded Age. The rugged individualists of the Golden age were tough minded man who proposed to deal with life realistically. In practice this largely meant to borrow plain words from the historian trickery, dishonesty, lying, bribery, stealing. A good way to understand the wild speculation and wide-spread moral corruption that attended the rush of exploitation is to read Mark Twain's and Charles Dubely Warner's satirical novel *The Gilded Age*. The master key to the Gilded age in science which changed the scene of life, and-the life of the mind. If reason was the center of the neo-classic period, and feeling at the center of the romantic facts came to be at the center of the new period the realistic period.

The aim of the nineteenth and twentieth century literary movement known as realism is the representation o the realities of life. The so-called realists rejected the romantic vision of life as unreal and proposed instead as their conception of reality the world of actual

experience which modern science was so patiently and fruitfully exploring. American writers and especially middle-class readers were not ready for so bold and wide a departure from the convention of the romantic period. The conventional American public was in no mood to welcome a resolute and through going realism of the French and Russian sort. But Mark Twain, by virtue of being the expresser of the nation, and by using the American language his day the words and rhythms of natural speech reached masses.

For the aesthete theory of realism, we have to turn to his two chief contemporaries. Howells and James. Henery games owed much, at first to Hawthorne, thereafter to GeorgeEliot and especially Continental realists (Turgenev, Flaubert). He 'aimed at a realism learned by ideal elements, an ideal of joy "and an ideal of delicacy". What he attempted was a psychological realism guessing" "what does on beneath the vast smug surface," of life as it is experienced by this or that individual. James preserved in terms of a highly sophisticated realistic analysis the romantic exaltation of the individual and especially he individual artist.

The decade of the 1890's was one of sudden and swift cultural change. The term "naturalism" is far too limited to describe the new intellectual and literary movements which American writers of the nineties began to snare with the Europeans. Man was now being pushed out of the centre of the biological world, and his will was being taken from him by such theories as that natural selection economic determinism, subconscious rather than conscious motivation. As literature undertook its normal task of giving expression to life it was inevitably plunged into an era of experimentation and uncertainty. The literary movement of the nineties was an attempt or, the part of a new group of Americans writers to describe life in general and life in America as it appeared to the dispassionate eye of new science. Zola's new theory that the exact methods of experimental physical science can and should be applied by the writer to the analysis of society and the individual was well known to American writers such as Norris. Crane Dreiser and many others. Through this new naturalism American literature was to become an important part of the world literature in the next few decades, by supplying a core of fundamental ideas about God, man society, and nature it served to focus second renaissance in American literature as transcendentalism and romantic philosophy no served the first.

Sometimes between 1910 and 1920 American literature came of age. It was a time of youth and change and promise the launching of America's second literary renaissance. Emerson had ushered in the first American renaissance by his call for introspection. The second renaissance began when the United States was about to move as a single people into a distant world.

In its exalted second coming of age American poetry (along with American Fiction) seemed almost ready to throw off connection with the past, and with tradition. But the purest poet of the group. Robert Frost was conservative as well as an experimenter, who together with many younger men and women shred in the vitality of the movement without accepting its radicalism Robert Hill Mark Van Doren, Edna St. Rober Hill prove that the heritage from America formal verse stil,l had its own vitality, if shorn of its mannerism and conventional restraints. Forst was a twentieth century transcendentalist, a latter-day naturalist (for a further treatment the students advised to turn to detailed lesson Frost the poet).

In the period between the two World Wars literature in the United States reached a new height of technical perfection and depth of meaning. By 1925 the literary movement of the century had stabilizedfiction, poetry, and drama threw off their old restraints and plunged into era of experimentation ‘and self-conscious power each as had never been equaled on theWestern continent. By 1925 the second renaissance had come to full flower. The year 1925 saw the first important experimental work of Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and their contemporaries. It was a cross road in time, at which two generations and critics of France. Russia, and England appeared on the surface of the company of idealists and reformers, but at heart they knew that the end they were fighting for lay closer at home than the cared to admit. These young men needed the perspective of distance as well as of time in order to discover new forms apart from tire expression of man’s dilemma in the twentieth century. The elder writer had posed the problems with which literary are must and the younger must learn to write. Out of the creative naturalism came the great works of Eugene ONeill, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, T. S. Eliot, and all the others once youngmen who by 1935 had lived through war and spiritual exile and into an uneasy but dynamic harmony with their country.

When ONeill’s *The Emperor Jones* (1920) moved up town from Washington Square to Broadway, the modern movement in literature could be said to have reached the American theatre. Here was a play on the most urgent of American social problems -that of the Negro presented as a psychological rather than as a social analysis of the consequences of fear, and expressed in a wholly symbolic medium, but onlyafter undue delay America.

O’Neill’s success in the realistic and expressionistic drama turned others from the traditions of romantic comedy and melodrama which had for so long bound the American stage and opened the walt for new literary experiments. He was followed m me succeeding years by Susan Glaspell, Maxwell, Anderson, Sidney Howard, Robert E. Sherwood, Thornton Wilder, Clifford Odets and a host of others who made the period of the twenties and thirties the high point in the history of American drama.

Romantic naturalism in the twentieth century had developed a large and dynamic symbolism in O’Neill and Wolfe as an earlier romanticism had in Melville and Emerson und the second time in American literary history there was a major renaissance. By 1965 the movement had reached its climax. The outbreak of the Second World War within a few years probably deferred the reaction for at least a decade but by 1975 the counter revolutionary movement was exerting its full force as a balance and corrective. The aesthetic school of criticism led the way in this reaction. Some years elapsed before those associated with this movement came to be generally known as “New Critics”. In 1945 it suddenly became apparent that America had a strong entrenched and authoritarian body of literary critics most of whom were accomplished writers of verse, but that American poetry had no new voice.

This hurried survey of American literary scene should enable us to place American authors prescribed for study in their proper context and facilitate their better understanding and appreciation.

1.5 WALT WHITMAN

Let us now turn to the authors prescribed for special study. We first deal with Walt Whitman (1819-92) the poet. Before discussing his various aspect in detail, we shall deal with his times and trace the background influences of his poetry.

1.5.1 The Publishing Years

The-publishing years-1955-89 of Whitman during which various editions of Leaves of Gross were brought out, was the most critical period of American history. It was a period of much turmoil and upheaval in political social, economic religious and philosophical fields. Politically the period coincided with the Civil War (1861-65) between North and South, following the War of Independence. The Civil War posed a grave threat to the dream of a strong free, democratic American nation. But under Abraham Lincoln's leadership the War ended and the country emerged as a strong united nation. After a hard long drawn out struggle America was on the threshold of a new era, a new world with new experiments in democracy and individual freedom. In a new, affluent society. Whitman was the spokesman of this American nation, bubbling with enthusiasm and life, and shaping itself into a definite character out of multifarious, contradictory elements. Whitman's thought embodies the spirit, reflects the supremacy, and contains the two main features of the American Constitution adopted "to form a more perfect union".

(i) The idea of the local self-government ensuring to each section the right to develop according: to its own particular need and nature. This provided for a rich diversity side by side with effective training in self-government: and

(ii) The idea of a Union strong enough to maintain peace and friendly cooperationbetween the various States and respect and prestige for itself-among the nationsof the world. Thus, the foundations of democracy were to be laid firmly. Whitmanopposed slavery. South's peculiar institution, when it sought to expand into thenational domain.

In his letter to Emerson (August 1816) Whitman wrote: "Always America will be agitated and turbulent. This day it is taking shape, not less so, but to be more stormily, capriciously, on native principle, with such vast proportions of parts. As for me I love screaming wrestling boiling hot days. Of course, we shall have a national character, an identity. Such character is the brain and spine to all including literature. Including poem.Such character is to stand compact upon that vast basis of the supremacy of the Individuality:

1.5.2 The Civil War

The Civil war was fought on the issue of slavery. The abolitionist cause swept less immediate issues aside and reasserted with renewed humanitarian zeal the ancient American doctrine of the rights of man. In this regard the name of the Humanitarian Quaker, farmer, poet, John Green Leaf Whittler (1807-92) is most significant. The principal of the rights of man emerged as the ever-flexible principle of the age.

In the socio-economic scene the period between 1855 and 1870 was the breaking pointof three fundamental issues:

(i) Conflict between the agrarian ideal of Jefferson and the industrial ideal ofHamilton.

(ii) Conflict between Plantation gentility of the South and the commercial gentility of the North: and

(iii) Conflict between a culturally mature East and a raw and expanding. West

The European immigrants were tired with expansionist ideas and ambitions in the virgins, comparatively unexplored land. Consequently.

changes of progress happened at a tremendous' pace and there was maximum exploitation of the rich resources.

1.5.3 Political and Socio-Economic Thoughts

The political and socio- economic currents of thoughts made an impact on the intellectual, philosophical and religious ideas of the time. Tolerance and freedom of thought took the place of Puritanism and ecclesiastical views also emerged German Transcendentalism, intellectualism and romantic concept of philosophy as represented by E. Kant. American intellectuals like Emerson and Thoreau rejected ecclesiastical authority and rituals and preached the doctrine. God is everywhere and reveals Himself in every individual particularly in communion with nature (pantheism). Transcendentalism, a religious, philosophical and literary reveal revolutionized American literature. The Transcendentalists were the strongest champions and advocates of antislavery abolitionists. Thoreau and his friends gave shelter and political asylum to political fugitives; MargaretFuller, a transcendentalist was a pioneer worker for American Women's Rights Movement. Other writers of the period (Bryant, Lowell, Emerson) all advocated free thought.

Lastly the rise of realism meant the ultimate dominance of the West after 1870 not as West but as a continental Nation. This marked the rise, triumph and decline of the Americaromantic movement.

Bearing this influence on Whitman in mind, we can now examine critically the themeof life poetry with special attention to the particularpoems prescribed.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Calvinism is attributed to:

a.France b. England c. Germany d. Russia

1.6 Theme of Whitman's Poetry

But before coming to grips with the verse we must note a few aspects of his biography which influenced his writing. The co-presence of both English and Dutch brood in Whitman's Veins his mother was Dutch, a quacker whose main teaching was that there is an "inner light in each person which he must heed, that all Church rituals are forbidden, and that there is complete freedom of conscience and equality between man and man, and his father was an English immigrant from England before 1940 and a free thinker leftan indelible impression on his life and work. His extensive study of writers such as Shakespeare, Homer. Barns, Scot and-Goethe, and contact with modern scientific thought, especially the evolution theory as

expressed by Darwin, Wallace and Spencer, as also the American transcendentalists (Emerson, Thoreau) which led him to their English and Continental forebearers--Carlyle, Coleridge, Hegel, the Hindu mystics, Victor Hugo, George Stand and other enriched his mind and imagination. Second with his anti-rationalism and democratic and humanitarian outlook, his egoism, unconventional ways (Whitman was made up of contradictions, complexities and social aberrations), and above all with the lofty concept of a poet's destiny a great poet according to him to the 'arbiter of the the poet's equalizer of his age). Whitman appears as a unique personality.

1.6.1 *Leaves of Grass*

And now the poem collected under the title *Leaves of Grass* which, on its first appearance in July 1855 caused a furor and had as many admirers as there were detractors. Among the eulogists were Emerson, Rossetti, D H. Lawrence and Bernard Shaw whose cryptic comment was Whitman is a classic. ..... curious that America should be the only country in which this is not as obvious as the sun is in the heavens."

Obviously the most important poem in the collection is "Song of Myself" the first longest, and most characteristic of Whitman's poems because it is in the nature of an announcement of his programme. Among its chief features are (1) Absence of organizations (11) Exceptional diversity and vividness of materials made possible by a knowledge' of widely separated regions, and a multitude of occupation: (i) Arrangement of characteristic lists with parallel phrasing; (iv) liberality in admission of details and phrase generally thought vulgar ofindecent: (v) Exquisite lyrical passages; and (vi) insistent note of grandiose egotism.

"Song of Myself" contains the gist of all that Whitman ever had to say, but his awareness may over consciousness verging on arrogance of the novelty and change makes it impossible for us to accept his message so ready, His first words celebrate myself and stag myself, are quickly tempered by "And what I assume you shall assume "in Whitman, life and art are integrated he pours the multiform experiences of American life through his sense, through his uninhibited imaginations, through his violent joy in life and urge to create. Even in those opening lines he is thinking or the self as a powerful, sensitive instrument for receiving and expressing rather than as Whitman of Brooklyn. He moves for himself to you and to others, to all humanity, enmasse about him to the brave violence of his nation to now and death to the pantheistic God in every object to the future and to eternity.

His abstract idea of personality is so close to Emerson's concept of the over-soul. Through all the intervening layers of friend, lover, the "enmasse; nation humanity, this idea of self moves from its fully realized inner core to the extreme outward limits of cosmic unity. The mystical experience rather than the logical mind must and can along make this journey. "The most limited and personal of poems becomes the largest and most nearly universal."

With the passage of yeas and with later edition of *Leaves of Grass* as Whitman lost some of his youthful extravagance the poem was much altered, but in never lost its original meaning of all in each.

1.6.2 "Song of Myself"

"Song of Myself" has been variously interpreted as "inspired prophecy, as inverted mystical 'experience, and for its structural beauty. One reason of the misinterpretations is the disproportionate share of attention paid by scholars to its sources in contemporary culture- Emerson, George Sand, Francis Wright (*A Few Days in Athens*), Dr. Abbott and others. But the poem is not a journalist's report of popular culture of 1850s. The real nature of the poem becomes clearer when it is related to quite another list of works even though Whitman may not have read any of them in 1855 because many of them were not yet written or not published or not translated into English. This other list might include *Bhagwad Gita*, and *Upanishads*, Chirstopher Smart's long crazy inspired poem *Jubilate Agno*, Blake's prophetic books, Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, and Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, as well as *The Gospel of Sri Rama Krshna* and a compendious handbook *The Philosophies of India* by Heinrich Zimmer.

1.6.2.1 Theme

Whitman's familiarity with the Indian philosophy at the time of writing the poem probablynext to nothing but the poem must have been the result of mystical experience in the propersense of the term which, as Dr. Richard Maurice, the most acute of his immediate pupilsremarked, took place on a June morning in 1853 or 1854 and repeated on other occasions.This experience resembled the illuminations or ecstatic of earlier bards and prophets whichconsisted in a rapt feeling of union or identity with God (or the Sour, or mankind, or theCosmos), a sense of ineffable joy leading to the conviction that the seer has been releasedfrom the limitations of space and time and has been granted a direct vision or truths impossible to express. Whitman says in fifth Section or stanza.

"Swiftly.....Sisters and lovers"

Such ecstasies may not occur but these may be grouped together as the perennialphilosophy in Aldous Huxley's words.

The poem is hardly at all concerned with American nationalism political democracy, contemporary progress or other social themes commonly associated with Whitman's work Emerson's, incomparable things, in the poem are its philosophical and religious principles. Its subject is the state of illumination induced by two or three separate moments of ecstasy described in more or less narrative sequence, their sequels in life arm the doctrines to which they give rise. The doctrines are not expounded by logical steps or supported by arguments instead they are presented dramatically ie, as the new convections of a hero and revealed by successive unfolding of the text is not to be compared with the Whitman of daily life. He is a dramatized or idealized figure, and is put forward as a representative American working man but one who licks to loaf and invite his soul thus, he is rough, sunburned, bearded; he cookshis hat as he please, indoors or out in the first edition text he has no local or family background, is deprived of strictly individual characteristics, accepting curiosity, boastfulness and an abnormally developed sense of touch. This dramatization of the hero makes it possible for the living Whitman to exalt him, but also to poke mind fun at the hero of his gab,

for his talk of “omnivorous word” and for sounding his “barbaric yawp” over the roofs of the world, The religious feelings in “Song of Myself” is counter-poised by a humour that takes the form of slangy and mischievous impudence.

1.6.2.2 Structure

The structure pattern of “Song of Myself” has been the subject of wale discussion (compare the revealing analysis by Strauch and James E. Miller). The prevalent feeling however, is that it has no proper structure but is uneven, repetitive and especially weak in transition from one theme to another. The chants of paragraph can be read as separate poems the unity and flow of the work as a whole. In vain do scholars look for a geometrical pattern in this poem as is to be found in some of the later poems, the absence of such a pattern in this poem is due to the fact that it was written on a different principle one much akin to the spirit of the symbolists or even the surrealists. The true structure is primary not logical but psychological, not a geometrical figure but a musical progression. As a piece of music it is closer to, a rhapsody or tone poem, modulating from theme to theme often changing in key and tempo, falling into reveries and rising toward moments of climax, but always preserving its unity of feeling as it moves onwards in a wave like flow. The poem la conceived as a Whole and written in one prolonged burst of inspiration but its unity is als4 the result of conscious art as is clear from Whitman’s corrections in the early manuscripts. There is no singe superfluous of weak message in the first edition.

The repetitions are so many musical variations or amplifications. Some of the transitions seem abrupt but Whitman’s themes modulate into one another by pure association as in a walking dream, with the result that all transitions seem instinctively right.

However, the form of the poem is something more than a forward movement in doing and subsiding waves of emotion. It has a firm narrative structure who can be divided into nine parts or sequences as follows:

The First sequence (Chants 1-4) deals with the Poet or hero introducing himself to his audience.

The Second sequence (Chants 5) is a description of the Ecstasy; rapt union of the poet and his soul described figuratively in terms of sexuality.

The Third sequence (Chants 6-9) explicates the grass symbol. Its Keynote (In Prof.Strauch’s words) is in two words-”I observe”.

The Fourth sequence (Chants -20-25) is about the poet in person.

The Fifth sequence (Chants 26-29) is about ecstasy through the senses.

The Sixth sequence (Chants 30-38) deals with the power of identification.

The Seventh sequence (Chants 39-41) is a character sketch of the super man.

The Eighth sequence (Chants 42-50) gives the Sermon. The last month sequence (Chants 51-52) is the poet’s farewell at the beginning of the poem the poet had been learning and loafing at ease in the summer grass.

Thus, the whole movement is rounded in “Song of Myself” which invites comparison with TS. Eliot’s “Four Quartets”. Both are so much like, yet so different.

In two outstanding poems: “Song of the Open Road” and “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”, as in much of his later poetry. Whitman conceives of self as being in motion. In “Song of Myself” the self-hood confident and “aplomb in the midst of irrational things” Whitman then began to lose his sense of the perfect and arrogant autonomy of the self, and now sends it on pilgrimages and voyages whose destination. If must be admitted, is not always clear.

“Song of the Open Road” develops the idea that while there is or should be, before very human being and open democratic road leading to better things on that road the ‘great companions’ are those individuals who have a proper sense of human values and who: have at great cost of effort and faith achieved a select alliance which is itself “good fortune.”

Few of his poems (not even Song of Joys) breathe such courage and gladness in therealization of unexpanded power. Here the individual is a young god to whom appearancesbow, institutions give way, and the sky spreads a world of opportunity and plenty. He is likeWhitman’s spreading live oak tree hospitable, protective silent assured yet by its verycompleteness keeping other trees at a certain distance. There is nothing vicarious in this thepoet’s service to humanity only the inspiration of a successful example.

Wisdom cannot be passed he says. ‘from one having it to another not having it “nor can anyone or any society live the life of another. Of the open Board the Great Companion says: “I tramp a perpetual journey public road,” this road like the passage to India, girdles the globe. When Whitman comes to think in emotional terms, he will make the application as vigorously to nations also yet since nothing endures but personal qualities the strength of the nation is to him but the united strength of its many individuals.

The poem is a kind of American version of the mediaeval allegories of the itinerary of the soul to God and a forerunner of all these American writers from Dos Passos and Robert P. Warren to Saul Bellow who have written of the American “on the road”. The poem’s main virtue is its exuberance and its bracing apostrophe to the free spirit and the free will. One does not even mind the dubious French.

“Allons: with power liberty.....a materialistic priest.

The poem has a weakness: it is its lack of imagery adequate to the emotions invoked.

“”Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”” is one of Whitman’s most successful poems; it is more of unity surely, though it is less ambitions than the most notable-poem that drives from it. Hart Crane’s “The Bridge Crossing” is free from the comic spirit of “Song of Myself” of the excessive assertions of “Song of the Open Road”. The mood of the poet is meditative, purely lyrical. But the theme is Whitman’s familiar one the mystery of identity. Whitman muses on the paradox of individuality which is at once different from and a part of the flue of nature. “I to have been struck from the flour for ever held in solution, and which is at once difference from and part of society represented hereby the small world of people momentarily gathered on the ferry. His assertions about the simple, separate person and the en masse (“Song of the Open Road” and “Song of Myself” are here modulated into a quietly beautiful

statement of faith in an ordered harmonists and benign universe. Union, harmony and order are perfectly symbolized by the repeated journeys of the ferry, by the ebb and flow of the tides and by other-similitudes of the past and the futures", such as "the fine centrifugal spoke of light around the shape of my head In the Sunlit water", and by "the slow wheeling circles" the sea gulls make in the sky.

Any poem and particularly by a poet like Whitman is likely to be given depth and authenticity if the post is able to question or doubt himself, whether frantically or by candid admission, the self-doubting, self-proving quantity, entirely, missing from a poem like Song of the, Open Road is found in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry". In section 6 Whitman admits that both he and his poems are a mixture of good and the bad:

"The best had done seemed..... old knot of contrariety.

Whitman's success in finding related symbols for his subject ensures the success of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry". The "dumb, beautiful ministers" as he calls the images he sees "furnish" their "parts" not only "toward eternity" and it toward the soul" but toward the completed form of the poem. One may readily agree with Thoreau that "Song of Myself" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are his best early poems. In "Crossing" ..... Whitman, in fact makes a frank acknowledgement of all the tendencies in himself and this long before Freud had pointed out the dynamics of suppressed desires (the remaining poems are being dealt with in the next lesson along with a discussion of the aspects of Whitman as a poet.)

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

"Song of Myself" is a .....

(A) a lyric

(B) an epic

(C) a sonnet

(D) None of these

1.7 SUMMARY

Walt Whitman has been claimed as the first "poet of democracy" in the United States, a title meant to reflect his ability to write in a singularly American character. An American-British friend of Walt Whitman, Mary Whitall Smith Costelloe, wrote: "You cannot really understand America without Walt Whitman, without *Leaves of Grass* ... He has expressed that civilization, 'up to date,' as he would say, and no student of the philosophy of history can do without him

1.8 GLOSSARY

Transcendentalism

1. an idealistic philosophical and social movement which developed in New England around 1836 in reaction to rationalism. Influenced by romanticism, Platonism, and Kantian philosophy, it taught that divinity pervades all nature and humanity, and its members held progressive views on feminism and communal living. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were central figures.

2. a system developed by Immanuel Kant, based on the idea that, in order to understand the nature of reality, one must first examine and analyse the reasoning process which governs the nature of experience.

Puritanism

Puritanism is behaviour or beliefs that are based on strict moral or religious principles, especially the principle that people should avoid physical pleasures. [disapproval] ...the tight-lipped puritanism of the Scottish literary world. Synonyms: strictness, austerity, severity, zeal More Synonyms of puritanism

Ecclesiastical

relating to the Christian Church or its clergy.

Pantheism

1. a doctrine which identifies God with the universe, or regards the universe as a manifestation of God.
2. the worship or tolerance of many gods

Surrealist

an artist or writer who is an exponent of the avant-garde movement in art and literature which sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind.

"the wildest fantasies of the European surrealists and dadaists"

Allegory

a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Impudence

1. marked by contemptuous or cocky boldness or disregard of others : insolent. 2 obsolete: lacking modesty.

1.9 QUESTIONS

1. **Who is the speaker in the poem** "Song of Myself"**and how old is he?**
2. What are some themes and symbols in "Song of Myself"?
3. What is the tone of "Song of Myself " by Walt Whitman?

1.10SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS'ANSWERS

A. a B. a

1.11SUGGESTED READINGS

- McCann, Sean. A Pinnacle of Feeling: American Literature and Presidential Government. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008
- Skaggs, Carmen Trammell. Overtures of Opera in American Literature from Whitman to Wharton. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010.
- Whitman, Walt. A Noiseless Patient Spider. Seattle: Holburne Press, 2008.

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Unit-2

WALT WHITMAN: Poetry

Structure

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 Poems
    2.3.1 Out of Cradle Endlessly Rocking
    2.3.2 Passage To India
    A. Self-Assessment Question
2.4 Whitman And Democracy
    2.4.1egotism
    2.4.2 Poetic Style And Technique
    2.4.3 Technical Devices
    2.4.4 Musical Language
    2.4.5 Verbal Melody
    2.4.6 Orchestral Effects
    2.4.7 Prosody
    2.4.8 Diction
    2.4.9 Subjects
    2.4.10 Symbolism
    2.4.11 Mysticism
    B. Self-Assessment Question
    C. Self-Assessment Question
2.5 Summing-Up
2.6 Glossary
2.7 Questions
2.8 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
2.9 Suggested Readings

2.1 Learning Objectives

Dear student.

In continuation of our discussion of Whitman's poems prescribed for special study let us now turn to the remaining poems.

2.2 Introduction

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", first published in 1856, in one' of Whitman's most successful poems more of a unify; surely though less ambitions, than the most notable poem that

derivesfrom it Le. Hart Crane's "The Bridge". It has nothing of the comic spirit of "Song of Myself" theexcessive assertions of "Song of Open Road". Its mood is meditative and purely lyrical, and itstheme is his familiar one: the mystery of identity.

2.3 Poems

The poem begins on realistic note with the poet discussing his ties with the past the present and the future. He establishes complete identity with all the people who have crossed the Ferry in the past and then moving through the contemporary scene he projects his thoughts into the future and the coming generation:

"I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generationshence.....

Symbolically speaking the poem itself is a ferry, shutting across the river of time. The ferry ride from Brooklyn to New York acquires a special significance. Both land and water form an indispensable part of the total image of the ferry boat and the' two symbolize the quality of the physical and the spiritual, body and soul, life and death, secondly, the coming together of the people for a while before their dispersal for their respective destinations symbolizes the spiritual unity of all mankind.

Whitman muses on the paradox of individuality, which is at once different from and a part the flux of nature:

"I too have been struck from the float forever held in solution".

This is also at once different from-and a part of society represent here by the small world of people momentarily gathered on the ferry. Whitman's assertion about the simple, separate person and the enmasse are here modulated into a quietly beautiful statement of faith in an ordered, harmonious, and benign universe. Union harmony and order are effectively symbolized by the repeated journeys of the ferry by the ebb and flow of the tides and by other "similitudes of the past and the future", such as the fine centrifugal spoke of light, around the shape of my head in the Sunlit water," and by "the' slow wheeling circles" the sea gulla make in the sky.

Like any other poem of Whitman "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" has a layer of deeper meaning especially when it has a self-doubtingself-proving tone a quality entirely missing from a poem like "Song of the Open Road". In section sea of "Brooklyn Ferry", Whitman candidly admits that he and his poems are a mixture of good and the bad:

"The best had done seemed.....old knot of contrariety." In fact, in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", Whitman makes a frank acknowledgement of all evil tendencies in himself and this long before Freud had pointed out the dynamics of suppressed desires.

The poem is also distinguished for giving related symbols for the subject The "dump,beautiful ministers, as he calls the images "furnish" their parts not only toward eternity and"toward the soul" but toward the completed form the poem. One may readily agree withThoreau that "Song of Myself" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are Whitman's best early poems.

2.3.1Out of Cradle Endlessly Rocking

"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" originally published under title Reminiscence is one of Whitman's best, most complex and-beautiful poems, its main theme although it does not exhaust all the meanings of the poem is the origin of the poet's genius. Whitman asks for and receives from the sea "clew" or "word" and we are led to believe that his poetic genius originated in childhood and then came its first intuition of the alienation and loss which are the lot of all human beings and which culminate in death. The Sea whispers the word "Death" and it is the same as emerges out of the endless rocking of the cradle. (In 1880 the new title given to the poem was 'A World out of the Sea" in place of a "Child's Reminiscence", and finally in 1871 it was named as "Out of the Cradle.....") The word "Cradle" suggests motion, as also life young life and therefore, birth.

Many critics believe that the poem is an elegy and mourns the death of someone dear to the poet. This is expressed in an allegorical manner through the wall of the mocking bird who has lost its female companion.

The meaning of the poem, however, is not clear, if its main theme is apparent. Does the poem affirm a whole view or reality in which life and death or love and death are understood-as compensatory parts of a living universal rhythm? Is the "old Crone" who rocks the cradle at the end of the poem a benign mother, ushering new life spiritual or otherwise, into' being? But what or the rather obvious ambivalence felt by the poet towards this "old crone" with her "sweet garments"? In the cradle coffin like? Many of Whitman's poems do assert an organic universe and an immortal and universal rhythm of life, but not Out of a Cradle.... The quality of experience conveyed by the poem involves love without an object: It also involves anxiety, alienation, insoluble contradiction and ultimate despair-a despair not comforted even by the sentimental resignation. Illusion of universe in which opposites and contradictions are reconciled is sustained only at the very beginning of the poem where the poet confidently speaks of himself as the 'chanter of pains and joy, uniter of here and hereafter". The, illusion of unity of continuity is not sustained, or sustained only fitfully after the aria of the two birds:

Shine Shine ..... we two together.

After this the she bird suddenly disappears and the he bird sings his melancholy dirge, pouring out meanings, as Whitman says, "Which I of all men know", the song rises to a pitch of desperate assertion.

"Shake out Carols I ..... O reckless despairing carols I Finally it recedes intoresigned reminiscence of what used to be. "We two together no more.

In form the poem is like an opera, beginning with a rich overture in which themes are stated and the mood evoked:

Out of the Cradle a reminiscence sing". This is followed by passages of recitative and aria beginning with line 130 and continuing through to line 144. Here we get a series of pictures. The poet imagines that the bird is singing as "aria" to the accompaniment of the

ocean music the finale does not much the overture in symphonic complexity, being comparatively muted despite the suggestive images of the bird, the sea, and the old crone rocking the cradle It is relatively down right and matter of fact in tone. The conclusion is a short recessional rather than a finale.

The language and imagery, whether its free fold invocation to death, the dusky demon or the old crone "do not reflect a world of pain assuaged, contradictious reconciled and disruptive powers placated. "Out of the Cradle.... is "more unflinching and uncompromising and more extreme in its perception of disorder and anxiety than its critics have seen."

2.3.2 Passage to India

Passage to India (Published in 1888) celebrates the simultaneous opening of the Suez Canal in the East, and the Pacific railroad at home both marking the completion of that path'which bold explorers and patient engineers had made around the earth. The theme here isthus, as extension of the idea embodied in "Song of the Open Road" where the road gridles theglobe "leading where I choose."

The disappearance of the frontier did not mean the end of pioneering efforts: In fact the race of pioneer had conquered a continent and opened homesteads to its polyglot people's only as a prelude the new conquests of the mind. Whitman drew much of his inspiration from science and acknowledged its absolute flats, but for him the soul of the poet moves higher. Moreover, only man's moral nature can rightfully decide what is to be done with the results of scientific experiments. Unlike Thoreau. Whitman did not distrust science industry and social organization as enemies of individualism, but he did declare that political freedom implied mastery of natural steps towards a leisure in which man may learn to think and to cultivate the aesthetic and social arts.

Ironically the *Passage to India* has confronted the West with the East and related thetwo in a new sense. Past and present, backward and forward, have less meaning now thanthey did. The Occidental spirit of action has been pitted against the Oriental spirit ofcontemplation and introspective self-control. This return to "the realms of budding bibles" is welcomed by the poet as a much-needed counterpoise to the eternal business of a young and restless people. Early in his career Whitman had pleaded for American originality by warning against the danger of aping the customs traditions and aesthetic models of the old world. But now he felt that without the "old chants", the European, Greek and Hebrew cultures and British tradition there would have been no Whitman and no America as he knew them.

"With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or swim with thee."

In *Passage to India* Whitman perceives that we are but part of a long procession which has at last returned upon itself in the Orient. No ideology however great can hope to escape the classification of its sprit and the institutionalization of its activities. It rests upon the broad and varied base specified by Mill. Incidentally this is the starting point for Whitman's searching analysis of democracy and this poem, according to Whitman is the 'key-stone of

my democracy's enduring arch". Emerson feared that Christianity would deteriorate into mere social reform if it did not go back for some of its inspiration to the original well springs of mysticism in Germany and Asia, In China and India a compensating influx of western energy has begun to raise the economic and political condition of the masses so that they too may hope to share the ancient culture which is their birth right. With the demolition of geographical barriers, the world of tomorrow may be enriched by a free circulation of the philosophies, the arts and even the humour of many races, each testing and checking the others. According to Whitman, democracy alone is fit to govern it for long only because free government provides for its own constant representation. On practical as well as idealistic grounds then, the future history of the world depends upon the Triumph of the Four Freedoms.

But undue emphasis on Whitman's serious concern with the human soul a voyager through space and time is to focus attention on the puritan element in his country's tradition, which be sought to liberalize. Both his Dutch ancestry and his mystical type of mind tended to free him from "the tyranny" of Time.

All in all*Passage to India*is a chart of man's evolutionary growth over several periods before 1492,1869, and so on.

When Lilacs last in the dooryard Bloomed is an elegy on the death of Abraham Lincohn first published in 1865 as a 'sequel to Drum Taps" Like other elegies, the dead person is mentioned by name and the poem moves from an impassioned grief to a philosophical resignation to death. This idea is expressed through the symbols of lilacs, Venus (the evening star) and the hermit thrush which all signify rebirth and resurrection.

From inconsolable sorrow, the poet the mourner progresses to a stage when he derives some consolation and this ultimately leads to a complete reconciliation with the fact of death. The bird's carol or song (Line-13-162) is a song of Joy and ecstasy Death in this song isdescribed as a "Lark mother" and a "strong deliverer. "Death is universalized and endowed with goodness;

"Come lovely and soothing death

....

Sooner or later, delicate death"

The bird's song creates for the poet a state that bestows mystical insight- The poet sees long panorama as of vision".

In the death of Lincoln, Whitman found the symbol for the suffering and death he had seen in the case of do many forgotten soldiers. Thus, in giving his love to the dead Lincoln the poet gave it to mankind. This is especially the idea underlying another poem by Whitman predicated to Abraham Lincoln.

O Captain My Captain

After this brief analysis of some of the major poems of Whitman let us now discuss a few at his aspects as a poet First, we will deal with Whitman as a poet of democracy.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The poetry in *Leaves of Grass* clearly demonstrate Whitman's faith in

A.bureaucracy

B.fedrealism

C.democracy

D.socialism

2.4 WHITMAN AND DEMOCRACY

Whitman identified America with the concept of democracy and his poetry can be called one continuous song about democracy, in *Democratic Vistas* (1871) he wrote, "I shall use the words. America and democracy as convertible terms", In fact he identified democracy with poetry and art, and believed them to be different expressions of the free life of a free people. *Specimen Days* (1882) he tells us that democracy, most of all affiliates with the open air, is sunny and hardy the same only with Nature just as much as art is, American democracy, in its numerous manifestations, in factories workshops stored, offices, through streets and cities, and all their sophisticated life, must be vitalized by regular contact with outdoor light and air, farm scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds because otherwise it will certainly dwindle and pale. Whitman also believed that the comparatively free environment of the Americans aptly suited the growth of a noble race of people. And this race according to Whitman, consists of not kings, princes or nobles out of the "divine average" of American citizenship engaged in the homely, every day duties of life. Such people are labourers, tradesmen - the black smith, the Negro teamster, the butcher, the farmer returning from the fields, the mother sewing, the soldier keeping watch on the battle fields, the prostitute, the pioneer, and hundreds of others, all moving in a motely, yet somehow intensely living though across his pages. We hear the hum and clatter of house building Ship Joining ferrying mining, iron smelting, stone cutting, and cotton loading. Unlike the poets of the past, who wrote about the romantic or the heroic Whitman made the whole cosmos the stuff of poetry, end sang about the fields, follies, Lusts and sundry problems of every day Americans.

"I here America singing, the varied carols

I hear,

Those of mechanics.....

....

.... the deck hand singing.

A description of American life in cities, the country, fields, farms, factories etc.are distinguished by detailed catalogues:

Land of coal and from I land of gold I land of cotton, sugar, rice. I

....

Land of Ontario, Eric; Michigan .....

His passion for enumerating details, nuns' names, places, big words and little wools, made Emerson ask whether Whitman' was writing poetry an auction inventory of a warehouse."

His catalogues innumerable in the entire course of his verse illustrate perfectly his thought in the following lines:

One's self I sing, a simple separate person

Yet utter the World Democratic the world "Em-Masse."

Whitman called himself the mate and companion of people" the "En-Masse" who comprise' all kinds of people the proud man, the sweet head the old maid, the mother, and the mother of mothers,

His identification with the common people is complete and perfect:

"Who ever degrades another degrades me

I speak the pass word primeval,

I give the sign of democracy.

By God I will accept nothing which all cannot have

their counter part of on the same terms.

The "Son of Manhattan's" democratic embraceis not only for all races and religions of the American nation but also, people of all stations of life and even those who are social outcasts such as the slaves, the fugitives, and the prostitutes as well as the sinners and other criminals. His poetry breathes the spirit of charity and tenderness which is almost Christ like:

"The prostitute draggles her shawl her, bonnet holes on the tipsy

and pimpled fleck.

....

"Miserable I do not laugh at your oaths nor Jeer you."

And this sympathy is no more pose, as some critics have tried to make it to be. It is genuine, sincere, heartfelt stronger in its democratic overtones than even Emerson's. There is however, nothing Christian about it (Whitman more of a rationalist than an orthodox thinker). He did not recognize the distinction: between natural and degenerate, bad and good, wrong and right, low and high inferior and superior". This is going one batter than Christian values,

Whitman's ideal of democracy. In short is not rooted in polities nor is it motivated by political exigency but is humane and moral may it is spiritual. In the words of Emory Halloway" both m theme and in method... Whitman is as Thoreau said if not a people's poet then that rare thing—the poet of Democracy.

2.4.1 Egotism

We can next discuss Whitman's egotism. In this respect we observe how "Song of Myself" only celebrates the poet himself, and it is a perpetual return by the Poet to his own-self his own personality, his own likes or dislikes, his own whims, and his all-embracing

humanity. (The students are here advised to cull and quote quite a few of the lines in which Whitmans talks about himself so pronouncedly). Here as in other poems such as “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”, “Song of the Open Road”, Whitman is his own hero, reminding us of Byron’s glories almost exclusively in the first personsingular. There can be no third person in his world; and the second person must necessarily be at the loving mercy of the first. He describes*Leaves of Grass* as an attempt to put a person, human being (myself, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, in America) freely, fully, and truly on record”. In his poetry everything though belief experience is referred back, to his ego:

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own..... ...heard stones elder, mullein and poke-weed’. The ego in his poetry, is not only self-assertive but self-preservative, but great catalogues are just so many “expensive forms for one who defines himself as cosmos.”

But while “I” in his poetry smacks of egotism, it is given a universal character. In the first place Whitman identifies himself or his own self with other selves and his merging of the Individual in the universal:

Every atom belonging to me ‘as good belongs to you” makes his egoism acceptable to us. In the second place there is a kind of mystical union of the self with God, the Absolute self. The union may not parallel the experience of an Oriental mystic or saint but itcertainly imbues his philosophy with mystic or metaphysical colouring thus lifting his thought from the groove of narrow selfish outlook, Lastly the “1 ‘of his poetry is any great American citizen who has a distinct character of his own as a soldier, pioneer, adventurer, humanist, artist etc. He is the American everyman. This new dimension to his own individual personality gives it nobility and loftiness.

Thus, his utterances are only Seemingly egotistical, no different from the baste universality of his self:

‘I am the mate and companion of all people, all just as immortal and fathomless as myself”.

Whitman was an “egoist in any ordinary sense of the word”; he had transcended theramifications of his individual self to seek identification with the universal, the divine.”

“Come, said the Muse..... the universal”,

(Song of the Universal)

Now we discuss his style poetic technique and other features of his poetry.

2.4.2 Poetic Style and Technique

Whitman’s Poetic Style and Technique has been widely discussed by critics and he is probably, the only American writer whose poetry has engaged so much controversy. This is because he endeavored to break away from orthodox and conventional style of writing; and coined as idiom which was fresh sincere, and personal to suit his subject matter and the demands of the democratic men inhabiting new Continent. He cast aside the conventions, of rhyme and metre, and infused new life into the outworn poetic diction. The sources of his

Inspiration were the Old Testament, Shakespeare's blank verse and French and Italian operas. His style in the words of a critic may be called functional..... admirably adapted to describe the immigrant and emigrant American on the move. The dreams of a nation sure of an illimitable future and the revolutionary idea of a modem civilization finding their greatest release in this some America."

2.4.3 Technical Devices

Some of the most obvious technical devices employed by Whitman include a frequent use of alliteration, assonance: internal rhymes, trochaic and dactylic lines, usually breaking the long lines into parts of different lengths repetition d rhythmic patterns and words as also the use of dramatic dialogues, catalogues exhortations etc. All these contrivances more than make up the absence of conventional rhyme and metre, ""Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is an excellent instance of the employment of assonance, alliteration and internal rhyme. The whole poem is structured on the pattern of an opera overture, recitative, musical meditation, the lyric of the bird song and the finale. The poem marks the consummation of the experimental style initiated in certain portions of "Song of Myself". His poems are also distinguished by personification, rhetorical patterns, although he sacrificesstanzas refrains and similar devices except in poems such as "O Captain! My Captain!" and "Pioneers! O Pioneers!".

2.4.4 Musical Language

Whitman sometimes uses musical language to describe and to announce the voices in his poems, so that "aria" and "recitative" became favourite words with him. The mocking bird's song to the listening boy in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is an aria, the mast lengthy of which is the lament despairing carol of frustrated love, sung against a background of the beach the tow hangings moon, and the rising stars. The song communicates the bird's grief directly to the boy. In When Lilacs last in the- dooryard bloom'd the carol of the hermit thrush a hymn to the beauty of death "the dark mother" who brings love's fulfilment and final joy in meant for the poet's ears. The passage is highly musical and the verbal melody is created by the pattern of vowels sibilants and liquid consonants.

2.4.5 Verbal Melody

The verbal melody and felicity in Whitman are on Tennyson from whom he claimed to learn, in addition, pictorial and dramatic art in poetry although in him we have just a fleeting glimpse of it. But a comparison of Whitman with Tennyson the most skillful of his contemporaries reveals "how limiting Tennyson's terms have seen, of how much Tennyson he has had to leave out even in those discursive poems where he is trying to put everything in, Whitman's poems represent his world and himself much more satisfactorily than Tennyson's do his in the words of a critic Whitman's poetry has "Some of the freshness of childhood. How inexhaustibly interesting the word is in Whitman ".

2.4.6 Orchestral Effects

The music is Whitman's poetry is capable of the widest orchestral effects. It is a music accomplished in a number of ways by repetitions at the beginning of lines and reiterations

within the lines by following his recitatives with a soaring aria. For instance, in “Song of Myself”, in the ads of elaborate catalogues are passages of lyrical outbursts such as “Press close, bare bosom’s night” “Smile, O, Voluptuous cool breath’s earth”. The last sound of the day holds back for me.” “A child said what is the grass? etc. According to a critic the lines are sheer music. Whitman drew upon his knowledge of Ossianic poems by Macpherson and King James’s translation of the *Bible* which he had read m his youth, for the bold rhetorical expressions and the free rhythms of *Leaves of Grass*.

2.4.7 Prosody

The most distinctive quality of his prosody is the invention of the free verse, of which in American poetry he is considered the father, Free verse as used by Whitman is to all intents and purposes. Just stringing together words of prose in an unconventional rhyme scheme, searching for a new poetic form to fit his new poetic content. Whitman came upon models in operatic recitative (“Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking”), the English *Bible*, Shakespeare and translation of Greek and Latin oratory. He also looked for fresh idiom and vocabulary, especially adopting words from other languages such as French (“Allons” in “Song of the Open Road”). Since his poems were written to be spoken, they exhibit a wonderful range in both rhythm and tonal quality from fierce declamation to the aria from “the mocking bird’s throat the musical shuttle” consequently his diction is for multitudes which enabled him to put him intopoetry what current fashion regarded as prosaic. Distinguished for extra flexibility it meant saying in literature anything and everything which had never been said before in American poetry. In this respect Whitman’s role was exactly that Chaucer in English poetry this prosaic style however made him a ranter who specialized in padding: This made for eccentricity of style in him and repelled a large majority of readers who had been accustomed to the sophisticated tone of English poetry.

2.4.8 Diction

But his handling and manipulation of words and phrases is superb, equaling that of writers such as Homer Dante, Shakespeare and Browning. He was a poet of the great and boldest delicacy and originality and sensitivity. For instance, note expressions such as blind, loving, wrestling, sharp tooth’s touch in “Song of Myself”, countenance smiling death under the breast bones, bell under the skull bones, in “Song of the Open Road” and Agonies as one of my changes of garments in “Song of Myself”. He saw grass as the “flag of my disposition”, and the “sharp peak’d farm house with its scalloped scum and slender shoots from the gutters”. He heard a plane’s “wud ascending lisp for him the sea was bowler and scoper of storms” reaching out to us will “crooked inviting fingers? He went by “leaping chasms with a pika pointed stair, clinging to topples of brittle and blue”.

His account of illustrious emigree” in the New World excels everything:

Enough !Enough! Enough

....

I discover myself at the verge of a usual mistake

(“Song of Myself”)

Or mark the originality of conception:

"I am a dance play up there I the At is whirling me fast I

....

Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards"

(The Sleepers)

2.4.9 Subjects

Whitman specializes in the art of introducing long catalogues and lists of things which apparently look irrelevant, but a closer look reveals their artistry in the juxtaposition of contraries-likeness and opposition.

"The pure control to sing in the organ loft.

....

The married and unmarried children drive home to their

Thanks giving dinner..... ....

("Song of Myself" 15)

At times Whitman shows his artistry in imbuing a common place subject with unusual tenderness, subtlety and understanding. Compare for instance the incident ("Song of Myself") of a woman observing men bathing naked, in the same way he is adept in describing the very spirit of things, the very essence of matter, as also in hinting at the most essential, intimate characteristic of say God experience:

'As the hugging and loving Bedfellow asleep at my side

....

....

the house with their plenty"

("Song of Myself")

The opening words of his poems are most Impressive and striking, and drive home the message of the poem and the poetry.

I sing the Body electric.

There was a child wept forth every day.

Aloof and light hearted O take the open road.

A woman waits for me.

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking.

I hear America Singing

O take my hand Walt Whitman Such gliding

wonders Such nights and sounds!

Notwithstanding these excellences of his poetic style, "such gliding, wonders". Whitman has deficiencies: There is enough of bad poetry in him which repels many a serious reader

of modern poetry a discriminating reader. In the first place, the form employed by him is one of the greatest obstructing factors in the proper appraisal of his poetry. The form which is neither verse not prose... and is farthest removed from all tradition and normal instinct, was no should the only answer to the pool's desire for a medium of expression most suitable for his now concepts of democracy and metaphysics, but it certainly explained his perverse temper. It showed his impatience of the discipline of verse and desire to practice the indicated rhythms although unconsciously, as it were he did produce the conventional rhythms as, for instance, in the beginning of poems entitled "Boston Ballad", "Song of the Universe". The form of verse despite its genuineness and nobility is the least calculated "to teach the average man the glory of his dally walk and trade", since could not reach the average man's ear. Yet his form was not asrevolutionary or novel as it seemed (it had the *Old Testament* as its model) and Whitman was the first to object strongly to the change that his work had "the freedom of formlessness". He did' not 'admit its inequality.

Whitman is an uneven a stylist as Wordsworth. A whole succession of tiresome repetitions and exclamations a whole series of undigested impressions produce and effect of tiresome monotony. The contradictions of his style reflect the contradictions of his personality, aiming at a simplification of style, the verse is not always homely and racy. R.L. Stevenson wrote well of the strange and admirable merits of his writing regarded as speech rather than verse. The right detail is seized, the right word, bold and trenchant is thrust into its place. Whitman has little regard to literary timidities. He is neither afraid of being slangy nor a being dull, nor let the odd of being ridiculous. At times it is mere flat statement, then it is a grotesque combination of the colloquial and the, grandiose. Other times it is marked by linguistic bad taste and polyglot phrasing:

> I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,
>
> I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
>
> By the love of comrades,
>
> By the manly love of comrades.
>
> For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!
>
> For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

He is notorious for his catalogues of details, in which device the succeeds. But more often as in Salt and Monde, his lengthy details only invite parody there are a whole lot of pages in *Leaves of Grass* which readers would gladly skip.

On the whole Whitman's transcendental, nationalistic message, together with his vast portrayal of America could not have been conveyed except the style of expression adopted by him the avoidance of the stock poetic phrasing of his time and the employment of the racy language of the street corner, including slang the use of the neatly turned heroic couplet of Pope, or the rapid octosyllabic verse of Scott, or even the majestic organ verse of Milton would hardly suffice for the purpose. That message demanded the medium of Whitman's own free and "sonorous chants" parallelisms and cadences. To the novelty of his

verse and diction, he added the novelty of his construction. It is remarked that Whitman seeking a medium fit for ins vast American one diversified the prevalent romantic forms more and more.

But his greatness lies in being an innovator. His formula for style is to have no style, and his aesthetic theory in nutshell is “Be natural, Be natural?” He would break down barriers of form between prose and poetry and restrict the use of rhyme and metre to comic verse. Yet his verse is different from ordinary prose as from ordinary poetry, His unit of rhythm is the phrase instead of the foot and his unit of thought is the line instead of the sentence. The most distinctive features of his verse are repetitions, parallelism and a high rhetorical tone.

He very beautifully pointed out that by following a conventional aesthetics poetry endsby making parasites of its readers: “Not so much the book needs to be the complete thing butthe reader of the book does”. Not parasites but poets Whitman would have his readers to be.

Turning our attention now to another aspect of Whitman’s poetry we might as well dealwith him as a symbolist.

2.4.10 Symbolism

Symbolism is one of the most important characteristics of Whitman’s as a poet he himself wrote that “no one will get at my verses who insist upon viewing them as a literary or as aiming mainly toward art or aestheticism”. He meant to imply that his poetry is not to be judged purely as a literary performance or as merely historical or sociological thesis.

As a symbolist Whitman is not of the category of writers of either the French or English school of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His approach is distinctly his own. He was motivated by a desire to abolish distinction between the subjective and objective world so that the world may be approached and understood through the sensations and institutions of the poet, and art has a deeper base in the consciousness. He is a modernist in so far as his poetry, like modem art, conveys hidden and mysterious meaning by Indirect means, and the symbols employed by him for this purpose and interpreted in terms of direct and prosaic meanings, rather than in their poetical significance. Strangely enough some of these meanings were interms of sex or indecent human relationship. In his early poetry he is sometimes merely fantastic and absurd in his symbolism in word, phrase, Image for instance in “Song of Myself” Section 41 he sings:

“By ray life pumps I becoming already a creator.

Putting myself here and now to the ambush’s

womb of the shadows.

His symbolism now, especially in sexual matters, is difficult to interpret although he does raise it to the level of the magnificent.

In his later poetry, however, with his firmer grip on the realities and meaning of life and a mastery of the poetic technique he is more lucid and intelligible and sheds all the eccentricity of eroticism.

In “Song of Myself” “I” a symbolic term has both egotistical (individual) and universal application. He merges himself with all mankind and he equates his soul with all other things (soul?) in the universe. Section six gives us five different symbolic meanings of the grass. Thereference to the “Loving bed fellow” sleeping at the poet’s side is the symbol of God; theOmnipresent. The twenty-eight youngman in Section eleven are twenty-eight imperfect aspectsof human nature. While the pretty, richly dressed lady symbolizes the Soul who is conscious ofthis imperfection and will set it right. Thus, beneath the sensuous nay sensual image is thesuggestion of spirituality.

The “ferry of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” is highly symbolic. The poet establishes a sense and bond of identity with thenumberless men and women who have been crossing the river in the same ferry since time immemorial. Subsequently the verse itself becomes a ferry to carry the poet’s message across the span of time and space into infinity, thus from sights and sounds of mortal existence the ferry transports the poet to and Immortal life. The symbol spills over into the entire poem and it is not difficult to interpret its meaning in the succeeding lines the dark shadows symbolize a period of doubt and uncertainty through which he passed. The poem, from this point of view turns out to be a price of metaphysics, and a sort of personal history.

“Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking” is a whole series of symbols. Its theme itself is the story of a boy developing into a man and a poet. The death of the female bird is the fact of death, an inseparable part of the cycle of life. The poet’s asking for the clew in his search for an answer to the enigma of suffering and death in the world. The bird, symbolized as Nature, fails to give a satisfactory reply which ultimately comes from the sea, the “old crone rocking her cradle. The sea is, this, motherhood which means birth and life. The word death coming from the sea implies that death leads to regeneration, that it is natural transition to rebirth.

Similarly, another major poem When Lilacs last in the Door Yard Bloom’d employs a number of symbols lilac, Venus (the evening star, and the hermit thrust, all associated with spring, the time of the death of Abraham Lincoln, and all suggestive of rebirth and resurrection. The hear shaped leaves of the lilac bush are symbolic of love, and the breaking of the twig is the beginning of a symbolic act of love. The lilac bush with its rich colour and strong perfume represents physical life. The hermit thrush is a symbol of reconciliation and through its song symbolizes spiritual life. Its song is Death’s outlet Song of life’ i.e. a song giving an outlet from death into the spiritual life. “The journey of Lincoln coffin from the shore through natural setting is symbolic of Journey through life. And the symbol can be further understood and explained in the light of this implication: Thus, Lincoln’s death symbolizes the act of death perpetuating life. Eternity, immortality and the breath, amplitude and vision of the soul.”

Passage to India is not only a passage to India, but a passage to more than India. The poem is a symbolic treatment of the ceaseless exploration of man since departure from the Garden of Eden, not only through the Suez Canal but all the expeditions in History. The word “passage” has symbolic significance. It means the voyage of the mind’s return to

innocence and promotive power. The East is not merely the geographic East but the historical and mythical past of the religious bibles, legends, fables.

The road of "Song of the Open Road" is the road girdling the pathsymbolizing the mysterious spiritual force informing this universe in its manifold aspects. The journey on the rond is the journey of the human soul in quest of divine power of which it is not certain at the beginning. The journey implies adventure in a mood and spirit of joy.

In a large majority of his poems. Whitman's symbols are the ocean, the stars, the birds, calmness, plant, etc. which all have a universal meaning. Many symbols are of barrenness and growth and fertility. He is also fond of botanical imagery and vegetation.

In a word, symbolism was the native language of Whitman's poetry. Dealing primarily with the mystical and metaphysical aspects of human experience he could not write except in the language of symbols.

2.4.11 Mysticism

And now a word about Whitman's mysticism. Basically, a transcendentalist Whitman acknowledged his debt to Emerson:

- I was simmering: simmering Emerson brought me to a boil" What is common between the two is the absence of logic, rationalism in their thought and the preponderance of intuition. Whitman writes:
- Wisdom is of the-Soul, is not susceptible to proof is its own proof.

Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is continue. Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things and the excellence of things:

Something there is in the Goat of-the sight of things that provokes it out of the soul".

"Song of Myself" is prolonged experience in mysticism in so far, as it is a blend of spiritualism and sensualism of faith and science. The poem also established the principles of a communication between the soul and the Oversoul represented in the poem as the soul of the universe. The experience recorded here is entirely different from the oriental mystical practice in which the mystic or the devotee attains the goal of unification or union with the Divine through physical mortification and torture. Whitman however, celebrates the freshest and fullest indulgence of the sense for the achievement of his objective. "I have said that the soul is not more than the body and I have said that the body is not more than the soul," this blend ofthe spiritual and the physical, of the soul and the Body gives the poem a rare mysticalcolouring.

Critics who have referred to the mystical experience of the poem terms of the or lent have "Produce great persons the rest follows defined it as an inverted mystical experience. It means that whereas in the Orient union is the last stage in a devotions' exploration or spiritual experience. "Song of Myself" begins with it as the initial stage.

Other poems which are mystical in tone are:

Sing the Baby. Electric.Prayer of Columbus, Whispers of Heavenly Death. In these poems mysticism is dominant. *Passage of India*, written after 1867, a poem which bridges

the gap between the transient life of the body and the permanent life of the soul. It is noblest and the most adequate expression of Whitman's religious aspiration.

Whitman's mysticism is also seen in "The Sleepers", where night is regarded as asymbol of the innate spirituality of all things.

Whitman's is a 'mystic without a creed". It seems God is revealing Himself everywhere incities as well as in wild nature. The body in the manifestation of the spirit, which is 'liberated bydeath for a higher life.

Whitman's mysticism is very much, a part of his liberal humanitarian outlook which is identified with his democratic his comic vision. Between all terms there are only variations of meaning. Listen to him in *Song ofMyself*:

> "My spirit has passed in compassion and determination ground the whole earth, I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in all lands, 'I think some divine rapport has equaled me with them.

"Divine rapport" Whitman's religion is a religion of humanity. He is no systematic philosopher. He is unacquainted with state-craft, and but poorly read in history. He commits himself to no partial reform only to the slow, pure reform of individuals, themselves:

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

In what year was the first edition of "*Leaves of Grass*" published?

C. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Whitman's poem "Passage to India" reflects upon his spirituality and his interest in

A. Colonialism

B. Eastern culture

C. Engineering

D. Buddhism

2.5 SUMMING-UP

"Passage to India" begins with a description of the new marvel of the modern world and how they are part of God's plan. These works, the Suez Canal, the great American Railway, and the transatlantic cable allowed men and women to know one another in a new way. He sees India as a mysterious and fabled place that once visited, will allow rejuvenation of his soul. He will return to the birthplace of mankind and be renewed for the rest of his life.

""Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"" is one of Whitman's complex and successfully integrated poems. Whitman used several new techniques in the poem—the use of images like bird, boy, sea. The influence of music is also seen in opera form. Some critics have taken the poem to be an elegy mourning the death of someone dear to him. The basic theme of the poem is the relationship between suffering and art. It shows how a boy matures into a poet through his experience of love and death. Art is a sublimation of frustrations and death is a release from the stress and strains caused by such frustrations.

2.6 GLOSSARY

Prosody:

1. the patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry.
2. the patterns of stress and intonation in a language.

Diction: the choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing.

Mysticism: belief that union with or absorption into the Deity or the absolute, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender

Illusions: an instance of a wrong or misinterpreted perception of a sensory experience.

Homestead: a house, especially a farmhouse, and outbuildings.

Polyglot: knowing or using several languages

Hermit Thrush: a small migratory North American thrush, noted for its melodious song

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. Describe Whitman's conceptions of the soul and the body, and the relationship between the two. Which is more important, in his view?
2. What kinds of structures does Whitman use in his poetry?

2.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

A. c B. 1855 C. b

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Roger Asselineau, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman* Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, c1999
- David Haven Blake. *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, c2006.
- Harold Bloom (ed) *Walt Whitman*New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, c2008.

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Block - 4
Unit 1
ROBERT FROST: Background

Structure

1.1 Learning Objectives
1.2 Introduction
1.3 Robert Frost
    1.3.1 Literary Output
    1.3.2 As A Poet Of Nature
    1.3.3 Picturesque Quality
    1.3.4 Multiple Layers Of Meaning
    1.3.5 Lyricism
    1.3.5 Psychological Perception
    1.3.6 Fantasy
    1.3.7 Symbolism
    A. Self-Assessment Question
1.4 Summing-Up
1.5 Glossary
1.6 Questions
1.7 Self-Assessment Questions'answers
1.8 Suggested Readings

1.1 Learning Objectives

Dear Student.

This first (introductory) lesson on Robert Frost involves a critical study in his poems. The poems prescribed for study are: "Birches,""Mending Wall","Home Burial","Design","The Road not Taken,"After Apple Picking". It need hardly be stressed that an intensive study of at least these poems is a must for proper understanding of the poet.

1.2 Introduction

Robert Frost is a celebrated American poet. He had a great mastery of American colloquial speech and made realistic depictions of the early rural life. His great work in poetry mostly included settings from the rural life in New England in early 20th century. He used poems to examine complex philosophical and social themes. During his life, individuals honored and at many times quoted him due to his work and he also received four Pulitzer Prizes.

1.3 Robert Frost: General Background

Robert Frost (1875-1983) is considered as one of America's finest poets to be ranked with Longfellow, Whitman, Whitter. He had the rare distinction of winning the Pulitzer Prize for poetry four times. He belonged to the second Renaissance, the 'excited second coming of age when American poetry seemed almost ready to throw off all connection with the past and with tradition. But he was the purest poet of the group a conservative as well as an experimenter. Frost was New England bred. His father a copperhead politician and newspaperman had early migrated to California and the first decade of the poet's life was spent there. His life long hobby of buying farm at New England seemed almost a symbol of a passionate need to establish his rootage in tough mountain soil. His was a life of devotion and his spiritual inheritance, as well as shrewd acceptance of the world into which he had been born.

1.3.1 Literary Output

Frost was a prolific writer, and wrote in all three hundred odd poems collected m volumes entitled. A Boy's Will, North of Boston, Mountain Interval New Hemisphere West Running Brook, A Further Range. Steeple Bush and two plays. *A Masque of Reason*and*A Masque of Mercy*. The poems meant for special study are from these volumes. In tone the different volumes could have been, like *Leaves of Grass*, gathered under a single title as a single work, a book of life. Then personal tragedy struck Frost, much as it had Mark Twain. The poet was attacked on blow after blow... but he stood unbroken and though like a hard, oak tree. At last, with one more warm but a smile he wrote his major work which he had all this time been holding back. Many years before, he had put into a silly little lyric called 'Not All There', the capsule of his philosophy of life; Man turned to speak to God and found "not over half. To celebrate his seventieth birthday the half man turned to God once more man in the person of Job flung his challenge at him, in *A Masque of Reason* God replied in the person of Jonah.*A Masque of Mercy*: Nothing can make injustice just but mercy. In such poems the voice of nature is made human and freely with God.

1.3.2 As a Poet of Nature

On first reading Frost may be taken as merely a poet of Nature, but a closer attention reveals deeper meaning between beneath the deceptively simple verses. 'Birches' the first in the list to be studied is an apt illustration.

Taken from *Mountain Interval*, "Birches" is one of his best-knownpoem beginning on an easy conversational note:

When I see birches to left and right.....

It soon and, most unexpectedly, plunges the reader into the realm of fancy which weaves imaginative pictures out of simple facts, And, this, blending of fact and Fancy continues as a sustaining metaphor through the poem and is one of its characteristic features Accordingly the crystal ice is spoken of a heap and fallen the arched trees are girls on hands and knees throwing their hair before them over their hands to dry in the sun. No other image could be more exotic than the country boy, whose only play was what he found himself, riding and subduing his father's birches, grows into the nature poet whose belief is started thus.

"Earth's the right place for love:

I don't know where its likely to go better'

1.3.3 Picturesque Quality

There is in fact a whole series of pictures in the poem which make it so sensuous in appeal, its popularity, however is further enhanced by the mingling of wisdom and fancy so that despite its 'shrewd turns' and the rate twinkle the poem rises much above the level of a poem of observation of the mere matter of fact and thus meant for the naïve and the uninitiated into a poem of depth and a new dimension.

Day Lewis recommends the poem to readers of Frost who come to him for the first time. According to him this is a poem in which observation and reminiscence, realism and fancy, the light tone and the serious, are perfectly blended it moves with beautiful assurance from mood to mood, image to image, thought to thought its variations of speed within the blank verse metre are masterly (how descriptive is the rhythm of Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish"). Like all Frost's best poems this has worn well and weathered well and will go on doing so, because it is soundly constructed of seasoned materials is carefully sited, shapely and because a spirit of sober joy inhabits it'

1.3.4 Multiple Layers of Meaning

"The Road Not Taken" also taken from Mountain Internal is a poem with multiple layers of meaning. Apparently, it is a simply thing about the traveler, of a poet taking to one road in preference to another when he comes to a crossing in but natural and a part of common human experience the choice of the comparatively uncommon or less frequented path illustrates the poet's love of the unconventional untraditional course of thought and life the road that he took was not only the different road, the right road for him, but probably the only road he could have taken. His destination was directed by the spirit behind him. The road thus becomes symbolic of the inner compulsions, the spiritual promptings in man and assumesa universal meeting this is what Yvor Winters calls spiritual drifting of the poem. The poem according to him the experience of a spiritual drifter and expresses uncertain melancholy of his condition.

But in modern terms the poem can be interpreted as an expression of existentialist philosophy. It expresses the dilemma of modern man face to face with the complexities of life. In which condition he is incapable of making choice between conflicting strains of thought. Ultimately when he does choose, he rationalizes his choice and is committed to it. This modern stance of the poem lifts it out of the pedestrian meaning we might attach to it. Frost after all, is a contemporary poet, endowed with the best of modem sensitivity and perception. He also felt the effect of the American post war world technological milieu.

Yet another angle of the poem is the one projected by the poet himself. Frost said that this is a poem about Edward Thomas, his English poet friend, killed early in World War I. He remarks further, that this has something to do with the same question of being understood. It is one of the great ones of literary criticism. There is an old school of art that insists on the right to be misunderstood by everybody. Some say that we must insist we write for no

audience at all, there must be an audience, an audience Invisible, a blend of all the interesting people whom I have dealt with'. This, however, does not imply that the writer is a quiz master. It only speaks for the multi-dimensional verse of Frost, which has not to be taken at its surface meaning.

"The most widely quoted' of Frost's poems. "Mending Wall" is impregnated with deep thought. Built around contradictory, statements that something there is that does not love a wall' and that good fences make good neighbours. It aims at an ultimate reconciliation of the two parts. They are two halves of one whole, both complementary to each other and reinforcing the truth. This is more so because the statements are made by two different types of persons. Man cannot live without walls, boundaries, limits and self-limitations. In the words of John, 'Bartenderthe New England rock will become a symbol of the forces which men erect to divide themselves from other men. Countess Cullen's..... incident Baltimore plaintively reveals a young Negro boy's first encounter with prejudice. At the same time man chafes at all barriers and feels satisfied when they are pulled down. "We keep the wall between us as we go, and yet we wear our fingers rough with handing them'. One of the neighbours stresses the utter futility of erections the boundary line:

There where it is we do not need the wall:

'And he further emphasizes the point by adding playfully that his apple trees' will never get across and eat the cones under his neighbor's pines. To this the other neighbor replies in the words and language of his father, 'Good fences make good neighbours'.

Some critics have explained the poem in terms of political life and argue that it states onof the greatest problems of our times viz the relevance of national and also probablyinternational boundaries. Do they hinder mutual understanding and eventual brotherhood -?And as such should they be removed? In the context of contemporary, political and racial prejudices and the problem of colonialism in different forms, in different part of the universe. the poem assumes great topical interest.

Again, the poem is highly symbolic and its two speakers represent two points of view: that of the progressive, new-fashioned thinker who is the child of enlightenment the new age of science and technology, and opposed to him in the orthodox, old-fashioned farmer who is the slave of his inheritance. The lash is, thus, between the spirit of revolt, which challenges tradition and the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be upheld, and he walks built up and continually rebuilt as a matter of principle. From the human point of view the poem juxtaposes conservatism, rigidity of outlook and mental flexibility.

May be that the poem does not mean anything more than what is apparent. It is an answer to the paradox of people, the neighbours and competitors, the contradictions of life Itself, the words 'Good fences make good neighbours', is the refrain of the poem and its central idea."

In the three poems "Birches", "The Road Not taken" and "Mending Wall", Frost's humanism become firm and complete. He had learned to leave his message as an integral part of his observation; the lifting and resetting of the stones that winter frost had rolled the

wall was an act of darkness in itself, as necessary at it was futile; the other road might have made all the difference if it had been the one taken; to set back on earth by the flexing birch was the most satisfying of all possible rewards for the climber. A movement of life involving nature and man is what to most people would be a routine and meaningless act becomes in each of these poems sharp and complete symbol of truth. The observation, its meaning, and the poetic form in which it is embodied are fused into one, and is perfect art.

1.3.5 Lyricism

Robert Frost is a celebrated poet of lyrics short lyrics, filled with the beauty of charming simplicity, directness and felicity of expression. As a writer of lyrics, he reminds us of the English romantic poets especially Shelly, and Tennyson. “Stopping by Wood on a Snowy Evening” is one of the best lyrics by Frost characterized by all the virtues of great lyric poetry: it is short, it is simple, it is direct in appeal, and it records an experience which is strictly personal but universalized in a mysterious manner.

Apparently, it is the description of a simple event ride, through the dark woods on a snowy evening, pause in the ride, moments of quiet observation and enjoyment of the beauty of nature symbolized by the white flakes of snow coming down against the dark tress and at the end departure from the scene in response to a call to duty and responsibility. The short poem moves from to climax till the highest Bitch of feeling is reached in the last stanza in the last three lines:

But I have promises to keep.

And miles to go before I sleep

And miles to go before: I sleep

The whole poem is in the form of the traveler, who lays bare so graphically and yet so dramatically his feelings which run an undulating course from a mood of mystery of the opening stanza in which the traveller is ignorant of the ownership of the woods, to the mystery of his heart’s reaction in stopping without a farmhouse between the woods and frozen lake’ to the beauty of the scene on that ‘darkest evening of the year, then to the amazing puzzlement of his animal and finally to a decisive step taken pull himself out of the morass of Indecisions, and procrastination, as it were. The images employed are direct and clear, The poem is psychological in the manner it presents a mind in conflict between a mood of uninterrupted enjoyment of beauty (In this case, beauty of nature) and the call of duty, obligations and responsibilities of life, And this is now the lyrical cry assumes an impersonal, universal significance, and the traveller’s experience is universalized in talking of our studies, responsibilities and commitments the poem has also an existentialist stance. We are obliged to accept our commitments; and real progress in life implies our acceptance of them cheerfully- These are the promises we have made to ourselves and which others have made to us, and which must be fulfilled.

A deeper layer of meaning is the implication of the words ‘promises’, ‘miles, ‘sleep”, dark. The suggestion is probably of death and of life at once of tragedy and peacefulness. The dark woods silently filling up with the coldness of snow symbolize death which is an

absolute answer having a strange attraction for man. The answer attracts the traveller, but he turns away from it, because he decides with a certain weariness and yet with quiet determination, to face the needs and demands of, life. These mystical suggestions make this poem of Special appeal to the Indian mind: it was a special favourite of the late Shri Jawaharlal Nehru especially the last lines of the poem which the happened to be realize just before his death.

These Nature favours, served as interceptors to poems. “Stopping by Woods”... is he says a series of almost reckless commitments feel good in having guarded it so. It is my heavy-duty poem to be examined for rime.

The poem is a poem of superb craftmanship. It employs the simplest and commonest words consisting of not more than one or two syllable each. And yet out of this Frost creates a deeply meditative poem by combining ‘homely music with a deep significance.

1.3.5 Psychological Perception

Another poem which combines psychological perception with usual Imaginationis Two Tramps in Mud Time” The poems make a direct statement of the poet’s conflicts as aman and as a poet an argument between his ‘avocation’ and ‘vocation’. The poet believes that his object in life is to harmonize his avocation with his vocation just as his ‘two eyes make one in sight” Ne invocation to heaven in the last line is somewhat intriguing; it is difficult to decide whether the address is to the heaven of orthodox Christianity or It is merely some desirable state of existence imagined by the poet.

The poem runs a very interesting course. It begins with the poet working in his door yard one April day splitting huge logs of wood with a lively sense of satisfaction. Two tramps come along the muddy road, and one of them remarks: ‘hit them hard”, Then he lingers by the roadside, suggesting that he would like to take up the job for payment. This made the poet think that they wanted employment since they might have spent the winter in a lumber camp, and might have spent the last night God knows where’. The poet, however lets them go and walk away without offering them the job or food or money. Then there is a sudden twist and the poet takes on tile role of the wood cutter and turns to the reader with the sermon on the ethnical value of the block of wood. ‘But yield what will to their separation etc.

This didactic tone, however, comes as an anticlimax. According to Malcom Cowley, itmakes the reader vaguely uncomfortable.

The underlying idea of the poem can only be humanitarian: the feeling for the underdog, the social outcasts whose miserable lot provokes sympathy and fellow feeling. The dichotomy between the mind and the heart however, is quite natural in the case of an indifferent spectator like the poet, especially when he is occupied with something.

All in all, a simple poem free from complexity of thought.

1.3.6 Fantasy

“After apple Picking” is a fantasy, ‘a poem of reality’ having “the enchantment of a lingering dreams, an unusual poem, very original and refreshing. If the story of plucking apples-from the apple trees with a long two-pointed ladder sticking through a tree toward

heaven. Work entails fatigue, and the man is done with apple picking now over powered by the intoxicating scent of apples he feels drowsy and the world looks strange to him.' H projects his imagination into his sleep which will-induce dreams. In dreams he thinks he will see 'magnified-apples," Stem end and blossom end" and "every flack of russet'. He feels the ladder away and the boughs bend. But he is not sure about the king of sleep he would enjoy: whether it will be the wood chuck's long sleep or just some human sleep. But he is certain that the world is to be a strange world à world of make believe.

Obviously a very simple theme, not very fascinating it before the languorous atmosphere evoked by sleep and dream. But according to Cleanth Brooks it is imbued with deep symbolism. According to him. "The concreate experience of apple picking is communicated firmly and realistically, but the poem invites a metaphorical extension. The task of apple picking is any task, it is life. The drowsiness which the speaker feels after thecompletion of the task associated with the cycle of the seasons'. The poet points out that death in the context defined in the poem, might be considered to be something natural, a sense of fulfillment with a great deal of honest weariness and a sense of something well done through for too much drowsiness for one to bother that every one of the apples hid not been picked.

Between the lines, therefore, the poem is a lesson in the reward of honest labour, orany task howsoever simple and ordinary well done. Into it is slipped its mystical note about liferind death.

The greatest of the poems, however, is Directive", written in Frost's seventy second year and taken out of *Steeple Bush*, his swan song volume. The volume is largely composed of thoughtful commentaries, many of them on topics of the day. While it illustrates Frost in his latest phase as an informal philosopher it also communicates to readers his characteristic desire to provoke response in kind. Frost never showed a disposition to underestimate the pangs of living nor to shrink from them. He heartily disagreed with the loose humanitarian trends of time, but he can truly be said to 'deserve the sentence-he composed for his epitaph:

"I had lover's quarrel with the world".

"Directive" is rightly Frost's best poem had one that seems to sum up the whole of his philosophy of life.

The seeker in the poem goes to a lost from this side of a mountain. On the way the traveler is watched by eyes from forty cellar holes, but he at last reaches the site of the abandoned farm, where he comes upon some shattered children's toys. The site of the house or the toys, however, are not either the 'destination': or the 'density" of the speaker, but it is a brook that was once the water of the house, a brook always untouched by hoods. Near the brook lies - hidden a drinking goblet.

"Like the Grail

under a spell so the wrong ones can's find it"

The seeker is directed to take up the cup and

"drink and be whoe' again beyond confusion.

This means that man can be whole and sane he will only accept, Nature as an entity that is sane. In other words, man should not confuse catastrophe and death with the basic design of the natural order of which man is part. This is understandable if we realise the fact that when man builds artificial cities and lives there, be becomes not merely unnatural but essentially in human.

1.3.7 Symbolism

"Directive" is one of the most symbolic poems of Frost. The house, the farm, and the town visited by the speaker/ seeker are illusory. The ambiguity of the place reflects the ambiguity and riddle of life as a whole. The wanderer wayfarer "finds himself by losing himself, and the paradox is further extended in the fact that he drinks the cold brook water out of a broken cup stolen from the children) playhouse. The poem implies that the water of life must be drunk from the cup of imagination, and for want of actuality or reality one has to rest content with the broken up. A critic's analysis of the poem is that it is 'one of the strongest and most characteristic most dismaying, and most gratifying poem any poet has ever written'. It climaxes the blending of the poet's three obsessive themes viz. isolation, extinction, and the final limitation of man. The poem is saturated with, longing tenderness, and passive sadness. The poet here suggests that the pathos of every Life ends-up in death, that the salvation in death is illusory like drinking from a child's, 'broken and stolen goblet, a plaything hidden among the ruins of the lost cultures. The waters of Lethe are the waters of childhood, and in their depths man's end is joined to his beginning. The poem triumphs by its blend of humour and acceptance and humanity.

Another and a more significant aspect of the poem is having the crux of Frost's attitude towards New England and the philosophy of life in general the poem cautions us against lapsing into the complacent regional mannerism. In writing about the rural scene the poet is aware of the confused present:

"All this now too much for us".

(Reminiscent of Wordsworth's "the world is too much which us1 the poet looks for a source of strength and wisdom. The directive-sends the seeker up an old country road and the poet seems to be close at hand peering curiously, out of the abandoned cellar holes, like.

"eye fairs out of forty firkins"

But actually, there is no going back to the poet or the land or even to the country atmosphere. The destination is the brook, cold as a spring the water of the house that once flourished at the top of the hill. The implication is that it is not the America of the past that counts, but the perennial source of wisdom that created 'a life full of vitality and happiness. As is customary with the thinking of Frost, his directive is not towards any short cut through current problems the verse affirms the difficulty and complexity of finding a true source of spiritual wisdom and strength which, however, is the inevitable goal of human ambition and endeavor. The water of the mountain brook is nectar having life giving potency:

"Here are you waters and your watering place

Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.

Apart from the lofty message of the poems and its philosophy, metaphysics, and myths. It has classical grandeur both in its narrative, sentence structure, and felicity of phrase and expression. Particularly noteworthy are its first wonderful sentences beginning:

'Make yourself up 1 cheering song"

Its incidental graces (e.g. 'eye pairs out of forty firkins: 'harness gall' and the 'belflacedcellar hole"), the whole description of the children's playhouse, with the mocking and beautiful.

"Weep for what little things could snake them glad,

the grave and terrible.

This was no playhouse but a house in earnest'

and the four wonderful concluding sentences climaxed by the last

Drink and be whole again, beyond confusion."

The opening statement is marked first by a grouping, hesitant syntax than by a series of parallelisms." 'Die shifting syntactic effect is reinforced by a shifting of accounts. Then as he describes the place the tone strengthens. The house and the village culture he admits are lost. But he ends up with consoling statement. Thus, the poet is led to wholeness beyond confusion' to life simplified life free from the bonds of time and space, like eternity itself. Perhaps the source of happiness, peace, contentment is the original Frost stead, nine generations back. Perhaps he suggests that man is not man without a sense of his past, nation, race and planet. Perhaps he means the backward motion toward the source' in West Running Brooke that's is most us'.

Finally, and above all the real significance of the poem in the context of twentieth century American life and thought is the manner in which it focusses attention on the sense of alienation, loss of identity, which is a malady that afflicts modern man in the age of technology and automatism. Frost is thus 'directing' attention to the element of tradition in man's life. The title is thus highly signified.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

How many times did he get Pulitzer Prize?

1.4 SUMMING-UP

Robert Frost is a matchless poet who has left behind him many excellent poems. His contribution to the American poetry is praiseworthy. It would be better to keep him in the category of genius. He is considered a great American poet because he captured the language, people, and landscape of the region of America known as New England.

1.5 GLOSSARY

Lyric:

a. suitable for singing to the lyre or for being set to music and sung

b of, relating to, or being drama set to music

c. expressing direct usually intense personal emotion especially in a manner suggestive of song

Fantasy:

a. a pleasantsituation that you enjoythinking about but is unlikely to happen, or the activity of imagining things

a. a type of story or literature that is set in an imaginary world, often involving traditional myths and magicalcreatures and sometimes ideas or events from the realworld, especially from the medievalperiod of history

b. Picturesque:(especially of a place) attractive in appearance, especially in an old-fashioned way

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. *Why does Frost choose to write about everyday life in a rural environment? What is the effect of this choice on his poetry?*
2. *How did Frost's personal life influence his poetry?*
3. *What is the role of fantasy in Frost?*

1.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS'ANSWERS

Four

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Bagby, George F. *Frost and theBook of Nature*, 1990.
- Blackmur, R. P. "The Instincts of a Bard." *Nation* 142 (24 June 1936), 819.
- Cady, Edwin H. and Louis J. Budd, eds. *On Frost: The Best from American Literature, 1991.*
- Bloom,-Harold (ed.) *Robert Frost: Modern Critical Views*, 1986.
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Unit 2

ROBERT FROST: POETRY

Structure

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 Content Of Frost's Poetry
2.3.1 Realism
2.3.2 Truth
2.3.3 Characters
2.3.4 Politics
2.3.5 Nature
A.Self-Assessment Question
2.4 Form Of Frost's Poetry
24.1 Tone
2.4.2 Dramatic Monologues
2.4.3 Poetry As Communication
2.5 Philosophy
2.6 Theology And Frost
2.7 Symbolism
2.8 Language
B. Self-Assessment Question
2.9 His Shortcomings
2.10 summing-Up
2.11 Glossary
2.12 Questions
2.13 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
2.14 Suggested Readings

2.1 Learning Objectives

Dear Student:

After a discussion of the poems, let usdeal with Robert Frost as a poet.

2.1 Introduction

Robert Frost became a national poet of America (like Longfellow and Whitman) with the publication of *A Boy's Will* (1913) and *North of Boston* (1914). His poetry mirrors the New England where he spent a major part of his life. At heart, he considered himself a farmer. He is deep rooted American, even though he started his poetic career in England. His work is marked by bitter conflict, although F.O. Matthiessen calls him a naturalistic' poet

full of complacency. We should not miss the subtlety and sophistication of his best work, and his stark simplicities should be regarded as the simplicities which a man finds after much experience and after a great of painful self-questioning.

His earliest work, like the earliest work of W.B. Yeats shows a certain vague, nostalgic yearning. To a certain extent both Yeats and Frost show similar whims and prejudices. Both are fond of making cryptically oracular pronouncements. Both are scornful of social reform. According to d critic. Frost may be looked at in two ways; there is the Frost whom everybody and there is the Frost even talks about: Frost that "everybody knows" is the poet who has written good poems that ordinary readers understand, without any trouble and that they like This 'easy side of Frost is most attractive to academic readers. At the same time this easy side of Frost is responsible for his being neglected or depreciated by intellectual.

Ordinary readers think Frost to be one of the greatest poets of the century, and love some of his best poems almost as much as they love some of his worst ones. He seems to them a sensible tender, humorous poet who knows all about trees and farms and folks in New They regard hint as fairly optimistic, with nothing hard or old or gloomy about his (thoroughly American) philosophy. In his younger days, Frost called himself "the author of several books against the world in general." In poems like 'A Servant to servants: 'Home Burial" and The Witch of Coos' he showed 'a keen awareness of the deprived and the dispossessed, the insulted and injured.

In his old age, he was, most of the time, an older statesman full of complacent wisdom. Often the later Frost makes only minimal demands on himself: he uses a little wit and a little observation and a little sentiment to fill a little sonnet, for instance. His later poetry is completely deficient in the extremely wonderful dramatic and narrative of the early phase. The poems of his later work are usually the special case, rather than all-out, full-scale affairs. While the younger Frost is lively in, the company of his characters living beings he has known or created, the older Frost is a lonely being. And this loneliness the reflection of his private life is responsible for the cold finality of the poems suchas Neither Out Far nor in Deep or 'Design in fact, the poems of his old. Age deserves little attention, because they have few of his virtues, most of his voices, and all of his tricks. Excepting: "Directive" and perhaps The Ingenulties of Debt: they all seem to be the work of someone who was once a great poet. The later volumes from *West Banning Brooks* to *Steeple Bush* reflect a more abstract interest and a more public manner which are to be found also in the blank verse plays. "A Masque of Reason' and 'A Masque of Mercy'.

2.3 Content of Frost's Poetry

Talking now of the content of Frost's poetry we may note that Frost's poetry deals largely and explicitly with the old rural New England stock folk who cultivate their rocky acres with stubborn courage and forbearance. His subjects are the common places of the country side apple picking, hay making the sleep of an old man alone in an old farm house the cleaning of the pasture spring. His diction is simple and colloquial whether the person speaking is the farmer who sees no reason for mending the wall between his apple orchard and his neighbours pine grove; the farm woman whose mad uncle was housed in a homemade cage

in the attic; the man and wife to whose kitchen the incompetent worn out hired hand comes 'home' to die. Frost has equally as much to say of happy wooings and matings of friendly encounters and, generally neighborliness as of the bleaker aspects of farm life. Frost's attitude is conservative in the best as well as in the less happy sense of the term. His poems assert the need to conserve, to protect, those values that the post has tested and found good; Frost shows New England's reticence.

Although Frost confined the scope of his poetry to New England his word widened content and technique from volume to volume. He has shown a great capacity for growth each volume discloses a particular fact of his genius some new attitude of approach.

2.3.1 Realism

Frost is a thorough going realist in the sense that he more than any other American writer, knows his subject, people and places, and he knows what he is talking about. But his realism is a class itself: instead of giving a catalogue of mean trifles or piling up bald and brutal details (as in Whitman), offering in his own words "a good deal of dirt with the potato to show- that it is a real potato he "is satisfied with the potato brushed clean'. To him, "the thing that art does for life is to clean it, to strip it to form" On another occasion he described himself a synecdochist instead of a realist (Synecdoche is figure of speech in which we use a part for the whole". Frost gives us part for the whole, and without telling all he suggests all. His poems are pieces of life a part for the whole. In poems like The Witch of Coos' and 'Paul's Wife' he uses suggestion and understatement.

2.3.2 Truth

Frost always aimed at the truth, and truth was his central passion. However, his persistent search for truth does not mean that he is a grim philosopher. He is light hearted and casual in handling even the most tragic subject. Frost's fidelity to fact is particularly noticeable in his shorter poems. But this fidelity does not make him give us a mere transcript or copy ofwhat he sees. His faithfulness la always touched with a note-of lyricism. He mingles beautifully fact and fancy especially in his lyrics (*The Kitchen Chimney*). He also throws over his everyday subjects and experiences the garb of fantasy this is how he brought to a culmination many of the tendencies of nineteenth century American poetry. For instance, when he approaches the figure of heaven, he is careful to return to earth; be leaves his ladder in the apple tree pointing "towards heaven stilt, but Be comes down.

2.3.3 Characters

Frost's subjects are usually characters, events or creatures or rural New England, which lend his poetry a popular antiquarian appeal by capturing the vanished Joys of agrarian America. These are mixed with a large number of the celebrated poems of the nineteenth century. Thus, at a time when most poetry was lyrical in nature. Frost popularized verse narrative as a living and fresh lot. His stories are Gothic and grotesque in spirit, akin to Edger Allen Poe: compare his ("The Witch of Coos"). Frost is not interested in the eccentricities of his characters, but in their humanity. In his own words: "I am not a regionalist; I am a realist. I write about realms of democracy and realms of the spirit." His central subject is humanity.

He has written “on almost every subject as common as a woodpile and as uncommon as a pre historic pebble, as natural as a bird singing in its sleep and as mechanistic as the revolt of a factory worker..... His poetry lives with a particular aliveness because it expresses living people. Other poets have written about people. But Robert Frost’s poems are the people, they work and walk about and converse, and tell their stories with the freedom of common speech” As a humanist he reaffirmed human values in both lyric and narrative poetry, and that in an age dominated by science. He was a learned man, well versed in Greek and Latin, History, philosophy and science as well as in country things. He was also a vigorous and patriotic individualist.

The characters of Frost’s poems are neither good nor evil, neither saints nor sinners His people are attractive or admirable pitiable or unpleasant or even contemptible and to him such qualities are evidently sufficient. In such a poem as ‘the *Self-Seekers*. *West Running Brook*, show men who may really be capable m dignity and stature and joy. He is not a partisan of his characters, plough-men, mowers, hired men gathers of buckle, berries and tree gumin spite of his sympathy for them and his gift of psychological insight into their lives. He treats them with a detachment which is ironic, humorous, or merciful. He made of their toil and defeat what they would have never imagined tor themselves. The people in his poems become known to us by the very style of their humour. Frost is not a humorist in the sense at the comic paper fun-maker or the joking journalist. His humour like his truth-seeking, is in the main stream of native tradition. This humour may be mild or uproarious, talkative or taciturn. But humour is found in the earth rather than in the bookish philosophers, in the serious home spun American humorists and naturalists, like Thoreau andMark Twain Poems such as “Two Tramps in Mud-time, ‘Fire and Ice’ are a perfect mixture ofquiet witticism and casual wisdom.

2.3.4 Politics

Politics does not interest Frost and it does not enter his verse. He is also not a religious poet, nor a nature mystic inspire of all that nature means to him. His verse is sin the great tradition of pastoral poetry from Theocritus to Wordsworth. He is a metaphysical poet in tire tradition of Emerson and Dickinson which means that he tries to go beyond the seen to the unseen. But his imagery is less involved them.

2.3.5 Nature

Frost as a working farmer could not be romantic about Nature. According to W.H. Auden. Frost’s “poems on natural objects are always concerned with them not as fool for mystical meditation or starting points for fantasy but things with which and) on which man acts in the course of the daily work of actual tone of a dweller of a country side:

(i) ‘He is all pine and I am apple orchard My apple trees will never get across. And eat the cones under his pines. I tell him”.

(ii) Home le the place where, when you have to go there.
They have to take you in’.

(iii) .....Earth the right place for love
I do not know-where it’s likely to go better.

These quiet pithy little bits of moralizing are quite significant. As Frost himself said. A poem begins in delight-and ends in wisdom C. Day Lewis says that he could define frost's poetry in one word "Wise Some of his poems are palpably moralistic. Others like The Road Not Taken' and Two Look at two' have the metal concealed under the surface. But all the poems have a hard core of moral truth. The tendency to attribute qualities and sensations to inanimate objects a certain anthropomorphic quality is particularly the feature of his early work. The tendency declines in the later work, where the wish to preach or point a moral is secondary to the visionary experience which the poet is trying to communicate. As time passed. Frost became increasingly a contemplative poe. His contemplation involved with other people, things as well as Nature. Indeed, the presence of other people is a great necessity to Frost. This fact is seen clearly in 'All Revelation."

"Eyes seeking the response of eyes

Bring out the stars, bring out the flowers....."

As poet Frost gives significance to seemingly insignificant things and places. In 'A-Patch of Old Snow" it is a patch of old snow in the shaded corner of a field that is made significant. Similarly, In 'A Boundless Moment" significance is given to wintry tree still- bearing last year's leaves. But he is much more than a descriptive poet. For him places and people are equally significant. A scenelives vividly in his poetry because it is crowded with the intimate human drama. For instance, the empty place in *The Census Taker'* is peopled with the business of living takes on fresh significance. 'A Brook, in the City' depicts the decline of a brook into a sewer, The poet wonders whether such change must not be paid for, whether the underground muttering of the debased stream might not keep 'this new built city from both work and sleep.

Frost (like Hardy) war always a regional post, and his region was New England (moreparticularly New Hampshire) which he considered one of the two best states in the U.S.A., theother being Vermont. He never felt the slightest desire to include all America within the scopeof his poetry. But at the same time, he never tried to bring his characters into a regional unityand did not dream of an Utopia for them.

The men and women in his poems are isolated, like their farms. His regionalism resembles that of Emily Dickinson. It gives him a place to stand where he can see what is closely in a field or in a collar hole, and, at the same time a clear view above the hills to the 'further range' beyond.

Life for Frost is a mystery, which poetry may partially reveal without discovering the whole truth. So his poems are partial revelations. But Frost is not an autobiographical or introspective writer. His first concern is outward things and objects, and he looks inward to examine how the human mind works and not because he is specially interested in his own mental process. Like all great poets he does possess a generalizing power, but he always starts from a particular case, a certain scene, a single man, or a group of people. Truth to experience was the cardinal principle of Frost as a poet and hated anything that seemed like trickery in' poetry. Throughout his life he remained faithful to his own dictum that 'poetry

begins in delight and ends, in wisdom.' Many of his poems certainly wry a moral. But the moral is usually presented either as an argument running through a descriptive, or sensuous or lyric as an ingredient of a dramatic situation, seldom does he make a moral lesson as explicit and obvious as Wordsworth sometimes did. As Cleanth Brooks remarks: "Frost's themes are frequently stated overtly, outside the symbolical method... At his best of course, Frost does not philosophize. The anecdote is absorbed into symbol" His poems chart his own inner world. Although he is gazing constantly at the external world, he is also very much an inward poet. He never imposes himself on the external world. Instead, he strikes an extremely delicate balance in, his poems between" the world he sees an works in and the process of thought and emotion which he is always keenly aware of in himself. When this balance is disturbed, his poems become either merely didactic on the one hand or else descriptive, on the other.

But for all his descriptive realism he is temperamentally, a poet of meditative sobriety. He is no philosopher with a formal system. The truths he seeks are innate in the heart of man and in common object But people forget and poetry, he says, "makes you remember what you did not know you knew A poem is not didactic, but provides an immediate experience, and it provides at least 'a momentary stay against confusion' Like Thoreau and Emerson, Frost isdwindling to become a rebel in the cause of transcendentalism, of earlier New Englanders, and like them but so unlike the skeptical poets of his age, he had only a 'lover's quarrel with the world'.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What was the name of Frost's first book of poetry?

(a) *A Boy's Will*

(b) *A Friend's Determination*

(c) *A Child's Desires*

(d) *A Man's Wants*

2.4 Form of Frost's Poetry

2.4.1Tone

As regards the form of Frost's verse we might remark that to him the tone of voice was the beginning of poetry. He would use the limbic metre because it was the most natural one for the English language, but he would spring it and spread it to catch the 'speaking to of voice'. Somehow the technique of the dramatic lyric, learned mainly from Robert Browning and already popularized in America E.A. Robinson came alive in Frost's homely colloquies such as 'Home Burial' the Death of the Hired Man' and 'Two Tramps in Mud Time'. So exact was his timing so alert was his ear that even the same line - 'And miles to go before I sleep' could mean something entirely different from the second time it was said 'At its best, Frost's irony is the sharpest of poetic weapons; at its worst. It is the forgivable pun of a wise old duffer. A poet of extraordinary virtues. Frost has most effectively about the action of ordinary men. His wonderful-monologue or dramatic scenes employ rhythms of actual speech,

sometimes with absolute mastery. His blanks verse particularly has a movement which is characteristic of him. The objects of his exact, spaced out, prosaic rhythms have the tremendous' strength of things merely put down and left to speak for themselves.

2.4.2 Dramatic Monologues

His best work has an irresponsible conceit, an appalling in difference to everything except himself, but his best work shows an admirable organization, arid this organization in his poems is often rather simples ('Home Burial' and 'The Witch of Coos' are just two examples). Rhetoric and romance. Hypnotic verbal incitements are scarce in Frost. His word magic is generally of a quiet, sober, bewitching sort. Yet there are dazzling passages in him.

His wonderful; dramatic monologues or dramatic scenes are the result of his extraordinary knowledge of people. They are written in a verse that uses sometimes with absolute mastery, the rhythms of actual speech in the words of Geoffrey Moore, 'Frost poetry is deeper, and tougher than it seems the simple language, the conversational manner, and the near whimsy of some pantheistic romantic. Like Emerson, Thoreau and Emily Dickinson he is a true Yankee, gnarled, aphoristic and (for all the seeming directness of his manner) essentially oblique in his cements; Local, in reference, he is universal in implication it may well be, as E.O. Matthiessen said 'that when the history of American poetry in our times comes to be written. Its central figure will probably be Frost and Eliot'.

Again, poetry was to Frost essentially dramatic. Whatever his theme may be, he dramatizes it for the reader, whether it be the tragedy of the hired man and the relation of the boy to the heaven flung birches which he subdues one by one. The most dramatic moment in a poem by frost is the kind of denouement when the worldly fact achieves its full metaphysical significance.

2.4.3 Poetry as Communication

The poetry of Frost is utterly devoid of pretension, and its tone is modest and restrained. But it invites the largest and most complex question is poetry a communication, a kind of self-expression, form of thought, or a way of life? He judges, but he rarely condemns: he is fundamentally serious, but never pompous the last lines of his poem: The lesson for Today': I had a lover's quarrel with the world' aptly sums up the spirit of Frost's poetry, He questions and even criticizes the world; but he always does so with understanding, with earnest love. While he brought to his art philosopher's meditative intelligence, and a personal awareness of tragic awareness, his work shows a deep rooteddelight in Nature, and a classicist's sense of word of discipline in the form of poetry. If as a man his most striking feature was integrity, as a poet his work is characterized by a simplicity which is deceptive His mastery of conversational style is unique whether he writes of a lovely hill wife or a scythe whispering to the ground. Using familiar tones and topics, and employing technical subtitled and symbols, he evokes a fresh contemplation of simple truth. His poems are parable like. He shows a devotion of the spirit of Virgil's Eclogues. Sobriety and truthfulness are other features of his poetry.

The poetry of Robert Frost is revolutionary and to Edward Thomas is appeared to be men so because he found it so different from the romantic manner which was the fashion then. His poetry is classical, realistic, and conversational idiom. It is never grandiose and it never strains after effect. Whatever flights of fancy there are in it, are held in check by a firmly grounded irony and are seldom allowed to become wild or absurd. The colloquial touch in it and Frost's habit of, guarding or modifying a statement in the interest of exact truth gives to his verse a highly individual idiom.

The basic design of his poems generally follows a uniform pattern: it is a kind of argument of dialectic not imposed upon the subject but worked out in consultation with it. His cautious dry, reticent, slow, ruminative shows that he la deeply rooted in the New England countryside (where for year and years he farmed his own sand). Frost makes us, experience his view the world with force and clarity. He uses words with great delicacy and imagination. He combines everyday language (even regional) with that of the poetic tradition and he does so with almost unfailing taste and sureness with the result that the reader; shares the affirmation of his poetry in the face of negation. His popularity as a poet is due mainly to his direct manner, his calm tone, and the simplicity of his language. Yet his simplicity and directness are only superficial things and hide the subtlety and the contemplative turn of his mind or his great capacity for feeling.

Frost's poetry shows a wide range from a dramatic idyll. ("Home Burial") through narrative ("Mending Wall") to the lyrical pieces ('Come In' and 'To Earthward"). Then there are poems in which he has directly or indirectly commented upon ideas national affairs, and the state of the world m general. The best of his poems is perhaps those where he broods and comments on familiar country things.

Frost has been variously described as a symbolist, a spiritual drifter, a home spun philosopher, a lyricist moralizes a preacher, a farmer who writes verse. The aphoristic element in his poetry is the one most familiar to the reader. Some of the lines from his better-known poems seem to show that he is primarily a moralizer, and that his poems are, above all, didactic in content. In 'Reluctance.' for instance, he says that to go with the drift of things and to accept the end of a love or a season is nothing less than a treason to the heart of man. In "Mending Wall" he writes: 'Something there is that does not love wall... In the 'Road Not taken, of the tworoads he took the one less travelled by and this choice made all the difference." And then there are those famous "Snowy Evening" where he speaks of the promises he has to keep and the miles he has to go before he can sleep. Yet a careful reading of his poetry shows, that he works hard for his conclusions, and that there conclusions directives are quite as organic as the other elements of his poems. - or

Although Frost's poetry deeply rooted in the 19th century, yet it parallels many tendencies in the work of T.S. Eliot. Ezra Pound. Wallace Stevens, and poets of younger generation. He himself says in The Figure a Poem Makes that he is by intention a symbolist who takes his symbols from the public domain. His symbolism like his means of presentation, owes most to Emerson's and Thoreau's examples. He realizes in a contemporary idiom the potentialities latent in Emerson's ideas on poetry and language. When Ezra Pound reviewed

‘A Boy’s Willin 1930, he wrote: “This man has the good sense to speak naturally and to paint the thing, the thing as he sees it. “Without ever submitting to the Imagist dogma of ‘no ideas but in things”. Frost worked out his own brand of directness, economy, and functional metric which parallelled in Imagist programme. He is not tempted “to make irrational means the architectural principle of his poems. “If Frost has a tale to tell, he tells it, ‘not repressing everything in: the story except the moments of epiphany or self-realization, Yet the delights within the structure of plot or ideas, to make his poems move by intuitive and subtle connections: by the interlinkage’s of metaphor or the deepening of self-revelation (“The Witch of Coos’). He can make the fantastic logic of dream seem matter of fact and yet not lose its mystery (as in ‘After Apple Picking’. In the words of Lawrence Thompson: His (Frost’s) primary artistic achievement inspite of shortcomings rests on his blending of thought and emotion and symbolic imagery within the confines of the lyric.”

His shortcomingshave been-pointed out by various critics such as Malcolm Cowely, Harold Watts, Yvor Winters. Yvor Winters for instance has attacked him for being a bad poet whose popularity he says, is due to certain social and historical reasons and that he has been mistakenly regarded as a classical poet. According to Cleanth ‘Brooks ‘Frost’s themes are frequently stated overtly outside the symbolical method’.

But the appeal of his verse is the most universal. His art has been called an act ofclassification; an act which, without simplifying the truth, renders it some degree accessible toeveryone. In the estimate of a critic ‘few major poets have shown such remarkable consistencyas Robert. Frost the whole poet is he whole man, and he captures the reader as much by the grandeur of his personality as by impeccable rightness of form and phrase. ‘Art strips life to form ‘he has said, and the substance and the words of his poems co-exist in one identity in language, he has sought to catch what he has called the tones of speech; but even more successfully than Wordsworth he has pruned the language really used by men’ to achieve a propriety that spontaneous speech cannot attain. ‘According to another critic:

‘Frost is Longfellow’s successor as household bard. Although the rate of the easy neglect of his verse and his having to go to England at almost forty to find a publisher is often cited to show America’s disdain for poetry, the fact is that Frost early conceived of a Style and a method that would have had great appeal. He had only to overthrow the mellifluous, imprecise diction of the late Victorians to step into Longfellow’s place.... His uniqueness lies in his restoring to a large audience the concept of Bard - his insistence on uniting his vocation with his avocation, on living according to his beliefs and means as teacher, farmer, and poet,

Frost must be spoken of as a modem poet, although it is difficult to place him in the main current of modern poetry. ‘His modernity consisted, in Ezra Pound’s words, in breaking away from stilted pseude literary language’ and daring to write in the natural speech of New England’ Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot after him created a poetry which aroused new attitudes toward poetry itself.

Now let us discuss some features of poetry.

2.5 Philosophy

With regard to Frost's philosophy,it is noteworthy that he was a philosophical poet from very beginning. His earlier work is marked by the accuracy of keen observation, and more than by a note of reflective, stoical sadness. He is more speculative, inquiring, tentative, suggestive rather than conclusive and absolute: he is a sceptic with reference to philosophical absolutes. In expression he is epigrammatic and satirical and he perfected the poetic epigram or proverb practiced earlier by Donne. One of his best ironic epigrams is "To err is human, not to animal": or "Keep off each other and keep each other off". Often the poem la in the form of a parable relating an anecdote. In the humorous "Mending Wall" is the anecdote of the liberal inquiring man confronted with the man of inertia. In "Birches" the recollections of boyhood convey his belief that full experience grows out of a balancing of opposite forces the ideal and the real.

2.6 Theology and Frost

Fros rejects science and naturalism which he examines with amused distrust. In his acceptance of the Aristotelian golden mean and his faith in the balance between the extremes of hope and despair, belief and doubt self-love and social interest, he is almost a classicist. The ethics of his verse consists of his advocacy of self-reliance and personal integrity. According to a critic, "Frost is basically a philosophic poet who often uses the pastoral mode asa vehicle for his inquiries into the nature and meaning of life. His irony, didacticism, and Lyricism, all serve this end. Yet so completely are form and content united in Frost's work, that it is scarcely possible to remove the philosophical element in any given poem without completely dislocating it." "Directive" is an apt illustration of the fusing of meaning with verbal felicity. His language is pure, direct, simple, and conversational yet what he has to say is extremely complex. Mark the ending of the poem.

"I have kept hidden in the instep arched

....

Drink and he whole again beyond confusion'.

Frost's religious views or his views on theology and God are equally puzzling. At no time a firm number of any Christian sect, he in fact shocked his mother in the 1890's by declaring that he was a free thinker. His Christian faith whatever it be was deeply disturbed anti shattered like other thinkers or his generation by the writings of philosophers like Darwin, Huxley, Spencer and Henry Drumond. He was also influenced by Bergson's Creative Evolution as also by Richard A. Proctor in his copious references to night and astronomy in the absence of any sweeping or absolute statements about God; nature or even men. Frost is sometimes described as an agnostic. His acceptance of the possibility of witches is almost mystifying. Similarly, his belief in the supernatural is not dogmatic. The poem "Trial by Existence" suggests how it is futile to attempt a complete explanation of the many difficulties with which human life is beet. In its description of the prenatal state of the sour in heaven. It is reminiscent of Wordsworth's "Ode on intimations of Immortality" "Lost is Heaven" and "The Lesson for Today" are among other poems of religion and God. "innate Helium" gives an ambiguous metaphor or religion: "Religious faith is a most filling vapor".

The only poem which assumes Christian theology is perhaps "In the Clearing", although its ending is anti-theological. "A Masque of Reason" and "A Masque of Mercy" emerge as the two most categorical assertions on his part of the relation of man to God, and the justification of God's ways to man. He depicts not so much God's lack of reason or justice but man's stubbornness and lack of understanding. "The God of Frost lies somewhere between the God of job and the God of Voltaire. In the two *Masques* Frost holds the view that the forces of good and evil are eternal."

God in Frost's poetry is either a human construct or a being so remote from man as to be meaningless. The universe is indifferent to man's fate through the poet nourishes a secret hope that astronomical vastness and the mystery atomic energy only conceal some dark future for the soul of man. The processes of Nature are predictable; and it is wrong to substitute agloomy view of natural catastrophes for a plain reading of the seasonal cycle. It is similarly wrong to substitute accident however, overwhelming, for normal behaviour. It is useless complaining about our inevitable existence on this plant and the natural consequences of cruelty, misfortune, accident, disaster etc. It is equally foolish to speak slightingly of the Old Testament God, but at the same time it is wrong to assume the existence of an Over-Soul that communicates with us or to believe in a mysterious spiritual entity "the real love comrades" of Whitman.

Man, in Frost's poetry is an isolated being placed in the midst of a hostile world. With passage of time man learns to understand his fellow beings and develop love for them, but at the same time realises that the differences, the 'barriers' are eternal. Scientific man shows-the infallibility of natural laws and measures himself against them. These are however, no extremes in his philosophy between Plate on the one hand, and science of the other.

Prost believes with Denis Bragan that man does not live by bread alone, even pre-sliced bread, and that the material optimism bred by American experience has not been accompanied by an equally incontestable spiritual self-confidence". And yet he has "after all but a limited sense of what constitutes a difficulty". While he distrusts human intelligence he (like Nietzsche of the existentialists) stresses the importance of the human will. Yet even the will cannot maintain itself in a world of largely alien necessity. Hence resigned acceptance of the world and Its scheme of things is the best course for us in the face of despair. His strongest point is the negation of the note of despair in his verse although it is only a negative virtue since on the contrary, we have no positive, coherent viewpoint of man and life in him. He is concerned with reducing to the barest minimum the pressures of modern society and traditional culture. This is because man's experience of man in society is as superficial and shallow as his experience of God in society. With his limitation and his distance from perfection. Frost, therefore, suggests a life guided by the principles of "love and need; One should act in accordance with the facts and the needs of limited human life, but one should also act with an unselfish love of the created world. "Two Tramps in Mud Time "illustrates this attitude clearly. His attitude towards life is in harmony with his traditional concept of poetry that it 'begins in delight and ends in wisdom. "A Poetry, according to him, is both useful and pleasurable. His view of life, in the words of a critic is "austere and tragic, yet his capacity

for finding joy is poignantly ever ready. His spirit is torn by dubieties. The salvation he seeks seems hard to come by. It demands great renunciations. His sensibility is deeply marked by the puritan heritage of his ancestors. In many ways he is the counterpart of T.S. Eliot." For instance, the speaker in "Directive", like the speaker in Burnt Norton knows that the past, though real, is past, and so on. But these are only incidental similarities: we don't have in him Eliot's obtained theme and pain and redemption and the use he makes of this theme.

On the whole Frost is a philosophically inclined poet but not a Platonist. He fully believes in the physical world for all his talk of God and heaven. On the other hand, he is nomore materialist. In his later poetry thence is a perfect fusion of the solid and the spiritual Life for him is not chaos, but an assertion of order and meaning. But the poetry of his later books is: "a series of refusals rather than a set of affirmations", as Louis Bergan points out. This is the result of his realization of a degree of narrowness incompleteness, even of falsification in the vision of the and the world. This is the explanation for the mystery of the wholeness achieved in "Directive" The characters of his later poems Jonah, Mrs. Someone Harrison etc. are strawmen compared with certain characters,in Yeats.

Another aspect of Frost s poetry is its anti-social quality. Frost is not merely the poet of the farm and the village, the cellar hole at the road that goes nowhere. He is strongly disinclined towards city life and one of the best illustrations of this is his "Acquainted with the Night." The city for him is mi artificial thing apart from and other than Nature. But his isolation of solitariness in not merely confined to his dislike of the city. Frost has hardly written a poem on friendship, and his love poems are more about misunderstanding born of deep solitariness, some insuperable barrier between soul and soul. The individuals in hispoems are isolated, alienated beings running off or living alone against the vast enigma ofspace and the night.

In the earlier poems man in more natural environment, more likely to lead a healthy and interesting life than men in cities. Women, however, react to their loneliness differently for them it proves disastrous. Man successfully facing Nature is chiefly the male animal in his poetry esp in poems such as "Home Burial". "The Hill Wife".

The old-style farmer In "Mending Wall" shows his alienation by refusing to pull down theuseless barriers but to make matters worse insists upon having the last world: "Good lances make good neighbours."

The theme of alienation in Frost's poetry is quite insistent and is typically American, although Walt Whitman's desire to utter the word Democratic, they word En-Mass" as an expression of his sense of social participation is infectious. The modern American artist feels alternated from his surroundings for number of reasons. Frost, however neither wholly approves of this attitude on his part, nor does he denounce it. He is merely content with the portrayal of the barriers between man and man in his volume North of Boston. However much he may dislike it, he feels its inevitability. With the passage of time he came to realize the utter indifference of nature to man and his needs and desires. Man, he felt, was not at this centre of the universe and the world was not made for him alone. What is more, every, man is isolated within himself. This is an extreme state belonging to the last years of his poetic experience. Directive and other poems of this period such as "Design", "Desert Places" etc. express the experience.

What is also noteworthy is Frost's courage shall we say optimism(?) in the face of isolation, his love humanity and the world in the face of its cruelty and indifference, and his humour in the face of human limitations.

The theme of isolation or alienation also appears in the form of "barriers" in Frost's poetry, which are of various kinds such as the great natural barrier the void or distance between man and the stars according to which the remoteness from the stars reduces man to an insignificant entity. The barrier between man and the immediate natural world is the next and most important because it is in the realm of the immediate natural world that, most of mans "gardening i.e. the kind of work man does on the earth takes place. The struggle in this sphere actually reveals the real nature of man. Man must maintain his garden (i.e. sphere of one's activities) against Nature and must advance it. But in his endeavor to do so he comes against certain odds, certain limits which are a natural consequence of his physical existence, and which he fails to overcome. Thus, they stand as insuperable barriers. The barriers between man and man form another category and while they too are inevitable, they are at the same time conductive to mutual understanding and respect. They are also necessary for safeguarding individual identity. "Mending Wall illustrates this between man and man between two neighbours. The idea underlying his advocacy of the maintenance of this barrier is a deeper one. It is a lesson against regimentation of thought and formalization of systems of order and in favor of allowing every individual to reveal himself in very best through his peculiar art. Psychologically it is the uninhibited expression of one's self leaving no scope for complex of any type. His Poem "the Ax-Helve" showing the difference between a good and a bad helve is as much psychological as social.

2.7 Symbolism

Akin to Frost's philosophy is his love of symbols, i.e. suggesting ideas indirectly, conveying his thought or meaning not through direct statements, but through a veiled or oblique mode of communication. A poem thus has a surface meaning and a deeper meaning. A symbolic poem is all the richer and more significant for this.

Quite a few poems of Frost are of symbols significance. The surface meaning of "Mending Wall" is contained in the line: 'Good fences make good neighbours", i.e., friendly relations between neighbours can best be maintained if there is a clear demarcation or boundary wall between the respective areas of land which they own. But the deeper meaning is more relevant. Taken symbolically the fence or the wall does not imply any material construction but national boundaries, and as such the wider meaning of the poem is whether national boundaries hinder mutual understanding and eventual brotherhood? Again, the two neighbours represent two opposed forces, two points of view the old-fashioned farmer who believes in the need of good fences, and the new-fashioned individual who flouts tradition and custom of every type. The poem thus deserves a closer look for all its symbols.

Similarly, "The Road Not Taken" is superficially about a man who feels undecided about the road he is to take. But symbolically it deals with the choice of the poet faced with two different lines of poetic development. Thus a poet's destination is determined by the spirit behind the man.

The symbolic meaning of “Birches” is the poet’s belief that full experience grows out of a balancing of opposed forces the real and the Ideal. The poem is a meditation on the best way to leave earth for heaven. The final passage is reflection of the poetic hunger for withdrawal which might permit a swift and exciting return to a new sense of life: “I’d like to get away.... coming back.

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” has two meanings: The surface meaning is a traveller’s temptation to go into the woods which are “lovely dark and deep’ stay there, enjoy their beauty, and his inability to do so on account of the stirring call ‘duty and the realisation that he has other commitments and responsibilities. But the words ‘promises’, miles to go’ symbolize duties and responsibilities, and ‘sleep’ symbolizes death. The traveller is anxious to make the most of the brief sojourn in the dark woods i.e. mysterious life but commitment to death the final and inevitable commitment is more compulsive than commitment to life with all its enjoyments. Hence his moments of anxiety, doubt perplexity and ultimately the plunge of life into death.

The poem ‘Directive’ is deeply symbolic. Here drinking from the broken cup in order to be whole again beyond confusion means human acceptance of Nature as an entity that is sane, Man can become whole and wholesome through such an acceptance. Through symbols the poem shows a blending of the three major themes in Frost— isolation extinction and final limitations of man. The poet’s directive is no short cut through the complexities of current problem. The theme is an affirmation of the difficulty of finding true source of spiritual strength, which, however must be found out.

Apart from these poems selected for special reading, a number of other poems like “Design” “For Once”, Then something”, “West Running Brook’. Neither Out Far norinDeep’. ‘Most of it etc. are good instances of the use of symbols by Frost. It is significant that he makes use of simple, ordinary words to convey the symbolic meanings.

A brief reference (lesson 2) to Frost’s poetic style or the technique of his verse has already been made. To talk about it a little more we may note that Frost’s first volume of poem A Boy’s Will took the poetry-reading public by storm for its unaffected lyrics noted for simple vocabulary and sharp observation combined with unforgettable phraseology. W.W. Gibson wrote: “Mr. Frost has turned the living speech of men and women into poetry..” Mention was also made of the plain language and lack of rhetoric, the careful rendering into the metre of customary speech”. Another critic Mark Van Doren observed that “whether in dialogue or in lyric, his poems are people talking. The man who talks under the name of Robert Frost knowshow to say a great deal in a short space, just as the many men and women whom he has listened to in New England and elsewhere have known how to express in the few words. They use more truth than volumes of ordinary rhetoric can express”.

2.8 Language

The most striking feature 6f his lyrics and narrative dialogues is their language: “Seemingly colloquial homely, unpoetic yet a sensitive literary idiom”. Frost more than fulfils Wordsworth’s aim of using common speech heightened by passion. He may be called as one of the stylists of the colloquial. His goal is Emerson’s “Cut those words, and they would

bleed". Another element of his style is his "Summings up" which "resemble the conclusions to Shakespeare's Sonnets rather than the message' from popular newspaper poems". There summings up, however, do not mean the meaning of poem e.g. "Good fences make good neighbours" (Mending Wall"). His motive, in his own words is "What we try for in a piece of writing is a little order". And this "order" is excellently achieved by him in his lyrical dramatic, tragic, and stoic poems.

More than his use of dialect what is remarkable is his idiomatic phrases 'and sentences. His lines swing between regular metre and speech rhythms he language is effective not because it has specific connections with a region but because Frost makes his characteristic rhythms and twists of phrase appropriate to the total experience of the poetry. Frost regretted the absence in literature of the "sentence sounds that underline the words".

In spite of his use of free verse, Frost did not discard convention metrical forms. In fact, he complicates the problem by juxtaposing traditional metres against the natural rhythms of his speaker's sentences and tried to reconcile the two. His poems are romantic in their expression of an experience, but the best of them are marvels of construction whose form evolves before! the reader's eyes and ears. Prost a handling of prosody is remarkable and his English metres. range from the "strict limbic" to "loose limbic" "Frost's verse is formal, at times stately". It is distinguished by its scrupulous avoidance of over exactness and over seriousness. He has also no special love of "experimental" poetry which specializes in eccentricity and formlessness. He consistently aims at the appropriate verbal form and shape. But if his experiments with language and rhythm appear mild beside the more daring innovations of Eliot and Pound, his experiments with words and music nonetheless have had a purifying effect on the American poetic language. It has had impact on every American poet today. In the works of a critic: "His poems are usually remarkably flawless as far as technique goes: there are few cracks either in rhythm or verbal texture.

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

"The Road Not Taken," which of the two roads appears "less traveled" to the speaker?

a. The one he takes

b. The one he does not take

2.9 His Short Comings

Critics have also found fault with Frost as a poet. Malcolm Cowley criticizes Frost for his social philosophy and as a representative of the New England tradition. He also criticizes him for being an enemy of innovation in art, ethics, science industry and polities. According toCowley the poem "Two Tramps in Mud Time". of its admirable makes the reader vaguely uncomfortable. According to Frederic J. Carpenter Frost lacks "the cosmic Imagination which creates its world". His world is fragmentary and meaningless.

The greatest critic, however, Yvor winters who finds fault with a number of Frost's poems. He finds his ideal impossible and his style exceptionally shoddy. He praises him for his skill in the handling at short rhymed forms, but criticizes him for his extreme ineptitude in managing blank verse. In blank verse. Frost's theory of conversational style shows itself at its worst the rhythms are undistinguished and are repetitions to the point of deadly monotony.

(*Note:* Among the critics to be specially read for fair appraisal of Frost's poetry areRandall Jarrell. Yvor Winters, and Cleanth Brooks).

2.10 SUMMING-UP

The kind of poetry he writes can be best understood by observing the method by which he makes the present moment represent all other times, and the specific place he creates, the relatable human situation. Frost's poetry and poetics have had a profound influence on successive poets, not only on American poets but on poets throughout the postcolonial world, as he has sought through them to negotiate the conflicting impulses within himself and in the world around him.

2.11 GLOSSARY

Theology:

the study of religious faith, practice, and experience *especially* **:** the study of God and of God's relation to the world

Realism:

a. concern for fact or reality and rejection of the impractical and visionary
b. a theory that objects of sense perception or cognition exist independently of the mind
c. (in art, literature, etc.) showing things as they really are

Alienation:

a. the feeling that you have no connection with the people around you or that you are not part of a group
b. the act of making someone stop supporting and agreeing with you

2.12 QUESTIONS

- Compare and contrast Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.
- *What is the role played by God and religion in Frost's poetry?*
- *Does Robert Frost deserve the praise that he has received for his poetry? Why or why not?*

2.13 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

A a. B. a

2.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Block 5
Unit 1
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Structure

1.1 Learning Objectives
1.2 Introduction
1.3 William Carlos Williams' Poetry
1.3.1 January Morning
1.3.2. By The Road To The Contagious Hospital
1.3.3 Tract
1.3.4 The Unison
1.3.5 The Last Words Of My English Grandmother
1.3.6 The Last Words....
1.3.7 To A Poor Old Woman
1.3.8 The Widow's Lament In Spring Time
1.3.9 The Yachts
1.3.10 These
A. Self-Assessment Question
1.4 William Carlos Williams' Style
B. Self-Assessment Question
C. Self-Assessment Question
1.5 Summing -Up
1.6 Glossary
1.7 Questions
1.8 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
1.9 Suggested Readings

1.1 Learning Objectives

Dear student,

This first lesson on William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) the great American poet will introduce him and the poems prescribed for study.

1.2 Introduction

Born in 1883 in New Jersey, Williams was a poet as well as a doctor, and published his first book of poems at the age of twenty-six. At the University of Pennsylvania he enjoyed long association with Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens and D.H. Lawrence. We must credit the character of his poetry to this association. All four represented in varying degrees a

"Pennsylvania School". All four were subject to 'European influence' and of the four. Williams appears to be the most firmly and determinedly rooted in an American locality Rutherford. New Jersey a suburb of New York.

Of this early life and its background, Williams remarked, as quoted is The Oxford Anthology of American Literature.

"..... my forebears seem to have been restless souls, never long in the same 'place ..... Writing has been my constant companion during these years of stay school universityand parts.

Like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, Williams also visited Europe and unlike then he did not choose to stay and settle, and his poetry takes its own original American Course, Like Wallace Stevens. Williams has not caught on widely in England, and deserves better recognition: His voice is more assertively New-World even than of Stevens: It is a repudiation of the intellectual mainly European) tradition, and a determined re-exploration of the 'real' world. Along with his English contemporary Williams looks clearly back to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* the most remarkable book in American poetry. Williams agrees with Stevens that things, not ideas, are his concern and subject matter, but while Stevens is "severe and intellectual by instinct. Williams is responsive to emotion or sensation and is quick to record it directly, colloquially.

1.3 William Carlos Williams' Poetry

Let us now analyse his poems prescribed for detailed study. "January Morning" is set in New York city. Reference the 'Palisades' is most topical, 'Palisades' are high wooded cliffs on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River.

The poem presents a series of observation on a number of things ranging from thecommon place to the less common and those we usually ignore in our everyday life both incity and in nature. The poem is in the tradition of the 'imagist' poem, associated with the poetsof the imagist School of whom Ezra Pound was most famous. It is similarly distinguished for itsbrief, concrete observations free from abstractions or interpretations.

The poem also suffers from length and the spirit of slovenliness, lacks precision, abounding in pretty descriptions, useless, exclamation marks and feeble academic joking' of Section VIII words Arden. Touchstone is employed to evoke sense of humour.

Notwithstanding these blemishes the poem achieves a sense of perfection, wonder and delight. This is primarily the result of throwing all conventional rules of poetic composition overboard. The last stanza is appropriate and rounds of the narrative. The poem is written in a mood and spirit of participation. Herein lies its secret mystery and unique character.

1.3.1 January Morning

"January Morning" demonstrates beautifully Williams's poetic method using concrete images, which he later summarized in the phrase "No ideas but in things." His command of language in his verse made him a leader of the modernist revolution against the popular sentimental poetry using vague abstractions. Indeed, it was a revolution against the poetry his friend Ezra Pound said "flies away into the circumambient gas." Williams's poetry is grounded in the world around us.

Williams lived his entire life in Rutherford, NJ, the small town where he was born and raised. It is where he maintained his medical office in his home — where most people knew him simply as “Doc” without knowing he was a man of letters and leader of modernism. He often spent time in Manhattan with fellow artists, crossing the Hudson River by ferry. *Al Que Quiere!* was his third book but the first to present his unique poetic voice, as found in “January Morning.”

1.3.2 By the Road to the Contagious Hospital

“By the Road to the Contagious Hospital” is to be studied in two parts the first half describes the winter land ready for spring. “All along the road” are dead, brownleaves’ of redish’ (purplish forked upstanding twiggy) stuff of bushes and small trees and underthem are leafless vines. The picture of the ravages of winter is complete. The other half of thepicture is the description of the birth pangs of spring. Its advent is portrayed most effectively:

“Life in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches
Here time key word is ‘dazed

By gradual degrees spring touches every object with Life and Joy: ‘One by one objects are defined (its quickness, clarity, outline of leaf).

A careful reading of the poem reveals how ‘stark dignity’ is the spirit underlying itsexpression which is appropriately quite tense.

“They enter the new world naked,
Cold, uncertain of all
Save that they enter”,
or
‘rooted they
Grip down and begin to awaken
The words are charged with profound poetic suggestion.

1.3.3 Tract

“Tract’ is kind of a Sermon, a piece of instruction, written apparently in a lighthearted tone. But the theme and the underlying idea are somber: it is death, the hearse and the funeral. The advice tendered as to the making of the hearse, its decoration and its final carrying/drawing is competent as it comes from a person who has a keen observant eye. The minute detailing is reminiscent of the influence of the “Imagist school. The prevalent atmosphere is of deep solemnity from the first line to the last. There is also dramatic elementabout the poem resembling a dramatic monologue: (“A Grammarian’s Funeral”) by Robert Browning. Compare lines such as

“See I the hearse leads.

For heaven’s sake though see to the driver’

Especially the end:

‘Go now

I think you are ready’

1.3.4 The Unison

“The Unison is a union of the ‘Undying things: the mountains, the barn, the grass, the tree, the stones, the water in fact of all the objects of Nature the spirit charging this’Idyllic’ scene is of inevitability:

There it is and

We’d better acknowledge it and

Write is down that away, not otherwise,

Nature, the Immutable pen for the poet writes its story in sindere, plain mannerwithout any distortion of twisting:

‘Not twist the words to mean

What we should have said about to mean

What cannot be escaped’.

The words echo Wordworth.

There is harmony between the different sights and sounds of nature producing, aunique symphonic effect:

‘Stones, stones, of a difference

Joining the others at face, Heart

Hear the unison of their voice.....

The image is deeply pictorial as well as vibrant with meaning: Like the music of the spheres there is-music of nature comprising us various aspects.

Williams here is greatly excited about the novel discovery of the mystery of Nature hitherto unknown to him. The jerky broken sentences most appropriately express this experience of the poet. While this factor explains the occasional vagueness and obscurity of expression, the poet has perfect control over his onrushing thoughts. The resulting effect is not jumbled up words, jarring in effect, but something perfectly balanced and harmonious.

1.3.5 The Last Words of my English Grandmother

The two poems “The Last words of my English Grandmother” and the small little place “To Waken and Old Lady” can be treated as a extension of the same theme Vi old age. The later poem defines old age in terms of Nature birds, wind, weed starks, snow, Of these the central image is ‘a flight of small chirping birds Their ‘chirping is related to the wind tempered/ by a shrill/piping of plenty. The metaphor is thus rounded off and perfected Apart from the metaphorical kinship between human life and Nature, there la profound mystery about it. The title adds to the mystery. The last word plenty sounds paradoxical with reference to the fast stage of life.

1.3.6 The Last Words....

"The Last Words...." drips with pathos, although it assumes a heroic, tragic may epic grandeur in the bold forbearance displayed by the old woman. Notwithstanding the.. utter helplessness and forlorn state she has a heart of steel which remains completely unnerved in the face of death into whose jaws she is driven step by step and of which she is completely conscious:

But I, If tell you

You don't know anything.

There is deep pathos about her entreaties:

Gimme something to eat.

They's starving me..

And finally

or

"Im all right I won't go.

To the hospital. No, no, no

And finally

You can do as you please

She smiled".

The appalling spectre of death can strike awe and terror in human heart. It can shatter an old person, but it can also be a prelude to calm long rest from which there is no waking.

William's poems have an elusive charm for their simplicity, direct and naive expression.

1.3.7 To a Poor Old Woman

"To a Poor Old Woman" is another variation on almost the same theme. 'Far from being" a frivolous jotting" as it might appear to be at first, superficial reading the poem is distinguished for its delicacy and tenderness which clearly brought out by the rhythmic beat of its refrain:

They taste good to her.

The break of line in verse too reinforces the image. The poem is sensuous and pictorials in effect and establishes William's claim to be a poet in the tradition of great sensitiveartists.

1.3.8 The. Widow's Lament in Spring Time

"The Widow's Lament in Spring Time" is a clear refutation of the "Pathetic Fallacy" and the romantic notion of viewing Nature subjectively. The Widow's lament will not tarnish the beautiful face of nature all around. Sorrow is her 'own yard' where alone the flaming now grass is imbued with the cold fire..?

Elsewhere it is spring at its very best. The widow would only assuage her afflicted heartby just sinking into the marsh near “trees of white flowers’ without, in any, disturbing them.

Here Williams once again emerges as a poet of the idyllic.

1.3.9 The Yachts

In “the Yachts’. Williams has written one of his masterpieces End one the finest poems of his generation. It has greater density than the majority of his poems and it illustrates what Wallace Stevens meant when he spoke of Williams’s ‘addition to imagism an ‘addition” by the way, toward which Williams leaned before ‘Les Imagists’ arrived.

The poem presents contrast in its two halves in the first the sea cruel, the Yachts chivalrous cheater of its might, graceful and delightful:

‘Now the Sea.....

Is moody.... as if feeling

For some slightest flaw but falls completely.

Later the perfect skill of the Yachts becomes cold, almost cruel riding upon the agonized personified sea:

“It is a sea of a faces about them in agony, in despair

....

Lost of the world hearing what they cannot held.

The two pictures are really one picture which is true in both its phases. The painting isfull of precise and imaginative detail.

The form of the poem is at course, adopted from Dante’s famous tersarima of *The Divine Comedy*, but it is significant now Williams has made it completely his own. His adaption of a traditional term in this poem is more assured and a greater accomplishment than that of any other so called “traditional” poet of his time. Archibald Maclelah in ‘conquistador’ may have endowed the terza rima with brighter colours and the speed of a lively narrative, but the emotions reawakened Williams in the reader are of a deeper origin. Further, in the progress of the poem and its control of the “real” and the unreal. Williams becomes the master of his style.

1.3.10 These

Another beautiful poem of Williams is “These”. Here the barrenness and desolation of winter suggest the sense of deprivation and negation, its darkness is compared to the “stupidity of man’ and thought that spans a dark fire’ This sense of loneliness’; emptiness’ and ‘despair’ is further intensified by “the flashes and boons of war” which clearly suggest death, whose picture is so grim and gruesome:

“The people gone that we loved

The beds lying empty the couches

Damp, the chairs unused.

But the last four verses mark, a turn in the tide of thought, and the picture painted is one of hopefulness and joy unrelated to jealous/ears and eyes'. This is the 'inner they come to digall. These verses are the heart of the poem, Williams. like Stevens believes that good can be sensed an the extreme of bad. Tenenyson echoes a similar thought tre 'in Memoriam'.

Somehow good will be the final goal of III".

Williams asserts that this desolation perhaps.This sense of death's inevitability is (if carefully stored and nourished) the inspiration to creative art of poetic composition.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The Poem titled "Tract" is a:

a. Sonnet b. Elegy

c. Dirge d. Sermon

1.4 WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS' STYLE

Of the many posts who were supposed to owe their existence to the arrival of EzraPound's "Los Imagistes" and Amy Lowell's army of "free" versifiers, William Carlos Williamswas the last to gain public 'recognition. His first book poems (1909), appeared before the"poetic renaissance" had officially begun and some three years before the mysterious term."Les Imagites' had been invented. The book was also published a year before Williams beganhis medical practice, which he maintained throughout his life.

For the most part Williams' verse has been unrhymed. The free verse he uses in an instinctive part of his unfettered, untraditional attitude to poetry, and of his spontaneity. In temper it has been farthest removed from "professional" verse; it has been protestant, yet formal, and the virtues of even his slightest pieces have been those of presenting definite objects and senses before the eye of the reader. His small poems (Little portraits) whether it be a, suburban pastoral ("The Young House Wife") or a poem such as 'Nantucket" have the qualities of cleanliness, freshness, and neatness. The poems are the records of the eye and hand of a singularly alert observer where each notation has been scrupulously selected, and the entire brilliant, almost antiseptic scene has 'attained the formal virtues of restraint and a thoroughly unpretentious dignity. It is simply no more or less than what it pretends to be and one is not invited to read deeper meaning in the poem than the first sight of his words convey. Many of the shorter poems (Williams rest upon the same premise, The selection is always firm however lightly its choices may seem to have been made (Of, By the road to the contagious hospital, To Waken and Old Lady. To a Poor Old Women). Williams has always been verymuch his own man, and one might almost say his own poet", In one of his polite Essays Ezra' Pound observed Me slow growth to Williams's poetic maturity, but the slow growth, so visibly reflected through the three hundred old pages of the Complete Collected Poems of William Carols Williams (1938) was an advantage for him Despite the fluidity of many poems and- their thin if not transparent lines the impression that one gains of a poet who has wisely accepted the laws of the pace at which he has lived consequently poems such as 'The Botticellian Trees','Young Sycamore', The Sea Elephant, and 'The Jungle' attained perfection of an art that had earlier seemed a tentative experiment" in verslibre.

Williams is distinguished (like the French Symbolist poet Verlaine), for suggesting emotion and delicate control over language rather than “ideas”. But the mood created by him in his love lyric “Rain” places him at a great distance from the French Symbolist and his impressionism.

In his introduction to Williams: Collection poems (1921-31), published in 1934 Wallace Stevens found occasion to speak illuminatingly of Williams, of the romantic poet in general and of the “anti-poetic” element in so called ‘modem; poetry. Stevens wrote:

“...and generally speaking, one might run through these pages and 96th out how often the essential poetry is the result of the conjunction of the unreal and the real, the sentimental and the anti-poetic, the constant interaction of two opposites. This seems to define Williams and his poetry.” So defined Williams looks like “the realist struggling to escape from the serpents of the unreal” Stevens further remarks: He is commonly identified by externals. He includes here specimens of abortive rhythms, words on several levels, ideas without logic, and similar minor matter’s, which when all is said are merely the diversion of the prophet between morning and evening songs It will be found that he has made some veritable additions to the corpus of poetry which is certainly no more sacred to anyone than to him. His special use of the antipoetic is an example of this. The ambiguity produced by bareness is another. The image, as in Young Sycamore, the serpent that leaps up in one’s imagination at this prompting, is an addition to imagism, a phase of realism which Williams has always found congenial.

Williams’s search for ‘an honest man” as well as an instruction to other “to stand out of my sunlight; are the kinds of truth that he sought in verse. The search may at times seem wantonly naive, and at times it has resulted in incomplete and “experimental” poems, but it is certain that Williams has never falsified his language; and he has made an ethical distinction between the use of artifice of an art. His concem is craftsmanship not artifice, and in this respect, he is greatest two century writer. Consequently, a number of Williams’s poem contain a substance that is “unliterary in the best sense of the term. Some poems may be “sentimental” in Stevens’s sharp and well-mannered use of the word, but whether or not the poem achieves its end the “truth” of the poem remains unimpaired.

The later poems of Williams, “Elegy in Memory of D.H. Lawrence define the range of his poetic maturity. Two quotations from his latest books *The Wedge* (1944) “Illustrate the sureness with which he practiced his rt. One is from ‘Bruning the Christian Green”, and the second from “The Cure shown another aspect of his plainly spoken and formal austerity in umrhymed verse.

His several works in prose since 1921 are works in progress’ towards the control in prose over which Williams has accomplished such excellent mastery in his later poetry.

Like Wallace Stevens, Martanne Moore, T.S. Eliot, F.E. Cummings, D.H. Lawrence, and Ezra Pound, Williams has never modified the quality of his gifts to meet the temporary demands of commercial publication: and unlike them, his poetic maturity has been of analmost stubborn and yet hardly growth.

During the course of our discussion, we have made reference to the term ‘Imagists”. Let us now explain it briefly.

Of the so called Literary “movements that Pound fostered none that/received wider publicity than Imagism, which came to light in 1912 and achieved the nineteen years later of having an entire book Imagism and the imagists by Glenn Hughes (1931) devoted to its rise and fall. The climate that produced Les Imagistes deserves a few words of explanation. In London itself something very like a “rebirth” in poetic speech, style and manner had begun to be strongly felt among young men who had come down from the universities. The “Georgian” poets who met in Harold Monro’s (he who had written “Nymph, nymph, what are your heads)” Poetry Bookshop and who had been assembled in anthologies edited by Edward Mars, seemed to lead poetry far away in m the chintz and horse hair intimacies of sir Edmund Gosse’s drawing room into the English countryside. The venture was a far more sedate and domestic Journey than the call to the delights of vagabond that bliss Carman and Richard Horey sounded in America during the preceding decade: the Georgians’ were more decorous in pursuing their escape from both Swinburne arid Victorian “respectability”, and It must be admitted more mature. Among this group, of which Wilfred Gibson and Rupert Brooke were prominent figures. Pound quickly discovered and welcomed a fellow American, Robert Frost, but no sooner than he recognized the “New England Eclogues” as being “infinitely better” than fake Pound returned to an earlier circle. The Poet’s Club, which had held its meetings in Sono restaurant under the spell of a young philosopher from Cambridge whose name was T.E. Hulme, Pound bad been introduced to the members of the club by F.S. Flint. The members of the club were high spirited talkers and they sustained he atmosphere of after mid night conversation held by undergraduates of College.

To be sure, the phrase “Les Imagistes” was not unattractive: and Pound bestowed its magic (and whatever mystery it contained to the uninitiated) upon all the poetry written by his friend. He gave it to Hulme, to Richard Aldington to F.S. Flint to John Bournos, to Ford MadoxFord, and most importantly and with an air of conferring a special honour upon her and gifts, to Hilda Doolittle “H.D.”

Within a few years several Imagist anthologies were planned and some were published. The movement attracted the willing co-operation of Amy Lowell Som Brookyline, who was given strictly limited permission to spread its gospel in the United States.

Pound, however, deserted his followers by Joining forces with Wyndham Lewis in newer ‘Movement” that had the more exotic name of “Vorticism” to its credit.

“Pound’s critical affinity in his friendship with T. E. Hulme earn be attributed to is critical remarks in The Spirit of Romance (1910): “I have used the term “classic” in connection with Latinity both terms (classic and romantic (are snares, and one must not be confused by them Certain qualities and certain furnishings are germane to all fine poetry, there is no need to call them either classic or romantic. The difference is neither of matter nor or paraphernalia. Seeking a distinction in the style, we are nearer to sanity. Terms of architecture such as “Doric Romansque and Gothic would convey a definite meaning and would, when applied to

style, be difficult of misinterpretation...Poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us educations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations for human emotions the spells or equations of “classic” art invoke the beauty of the moral; the spells of “romantic” art are said invoke the beauty of the unusual”.

As poets Pound and Eliot specialize in compression and intensity. For them the malaise was due to external forces: it was society and its standards that were crumbling. A culture adapted to the older aristocratic system of landed proprietors was falling to pieces in a world governed by big business. Civilization was becoming a few scores of broken statues an old bitch gone in the teeth or ‘a heap of broker images’. It was necessary to sift out from the mass of habits. Institutions and conventions the traditions that were worth preserving. For the moment all that the poet could do was to concentrate upon surfaces: in a world in which moral, Intellectual and aesthetic values were all uncertain; only sense impressions were certain and could be described exactly. From such minute particulars perhaps, something could be built up. In 1913 a few poets shocked at the vagueness and facility of the poetry of the day, determined:

(i) To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word not the merely decorative word.

(ii) To create new rhythms at the expression of new moods, and use free verse inplace of conventional forms in order to express better the individuality of a poet

(iii) To present an image-not as en painting/in the belief treat poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal with vague generalities.

(iv) To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred a indefinite.

(v) Finally, to believe that concentration is the very essence a poetry.

Edited by Ezra Pound a number of “Imagist” anthologies appeared. The later development of the movement appears in the work of Marianne Moore, T.S. Eliot had been Influenced by Baudelaire, Laforgue and Rimbaud.

The name “Imagier itself recalls Symbolist and the Imagists themselves sometimes confused the image, the clear evocation of a material thing, with the symbol the word whichstirs unconscious memories. But the scope of pure imagist poetry was limited to clearrenderings of visual experience the poetry of D.H. Lawrence shows both the possibilities and the limitations of the method.

Wallace Stevens in “The Emperor of Ice Cream” writes a poem to insist that only the commonplace is real; let ‘be’ be the end of ‘seen’, but the reality he describes in itself highly coloured and the poem contains more than a clear visual image.

The poetry of Wallace Stevens and Miss Sitwell still shows the Imagist concentration upon the sensuous surface of things but even with the latitude which they allow themselves. Imagiam, is limited in scope.

T.S. Eliot possesses imaginative order, which is not somethings arbitrary, specific and inexplicable. If the images which are used to denote complex situations were replaced by abstraction, much of the apparent incoherence of the poem would vanish. It would become a prose description of the condition of the world, a restatement of a myth and a defence of the tragic view of life. The Images and rhythms of the “Waste Land” are not conventionally poetical: their aura of suggestion radiates from a definite meaning relating to the ordinary world.

The obscurity arising from the use of little known or intricate ideas in say Eliot’s orEmpson’s poetry is easily removed when accompanied by elucidatory notes to make it vanish.The condensation of metaphor demands an initial effort or understanding in the reader and laless difficult than the understanding of a simile or a more prosaic and long-winded metaphor.The compressed analogies moreover involve no dental of logic: it is simply an extension of theimplications of grammar.

This new form of poetry, therefore, makes interesting study.

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

For most part William’s poetry is rhymed. (True/False)

C. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

In his teenage poetry Williams was influenced by:

a. Romantics b. Metaphysical poets

c. Shakespeare d. Milton

1.5 SUMMING -UP

From Williams’ amateur teenage poetry to his final publications in the 1960s, William Carlos Williams’s poetic style transformed. Williams’ early, unpublished poetry was inspired by his poetic idol John Keats (1795-1821), however, as Williams began to publish his first professional works of poetry, he became increasingly associated with the Imagists. Williams’s Imagist poetry is most clearly showcased in his first collection, *Spring and All* (1923), especially in “The Red Wheelbarrow” (1923) and “This is Just to Say” (1934). These poems are sparsely worded; “The Red Wheelbarrow” contains just 16 words while “This is Just to Say” contains 28.

After the publication of *Spring and All*, Williams moved away from Imagism and stayed within the **Modernist** school of poetry. Williams developed his own Modernist style by focusing on writing poetry that reflected the distinctly American vernacular that he heard and spoke each day.

One of Williams’s most salient contributions to poetry was his use of the **”variable foot”** in his poetry. Rather than use the predominant English meter in his poetry, Williams developed the variable foot which determined the placement of line breaks in his poetry to better reflect American cadence and intonation. In practice, this meant that Williams rejected rigid poetic structures such as iambic pentameter and instead applied line breaks in order to reflect American patterns of speech. Williams often used enjambment (where a line of poetry carries into the next) to achieve this goal.

Williams developed this poetic style when writing *Paterson*, his five-volume epic poem which utilized the "variable foot." *Paterson*'s influences include the speech of Williams' neighbors and patients and other Modernist literature such as James Joyce's*Ulysses*(1922), and the poem is also considered a response to T.S. Eliot's ""The Waste Land"" (1922). While Williams knew Eliot, he disliked ""The Waste Land"," as he didn't view it as modern poetry given its reliance upon classical themes and styles. With *Paterson*, Williams wanted to hone a distinctly American approach to poetry without the influence of classical European poets.

1.6 GLOSSARY

- **Vers libre:** (French: "free verse"), 19th-century poetic innovation that liberated French poetry from its traditional prosodic rules. In vers libre, the basic metrical unit is the phrase rather than a line of a fixed number of syllables, as was traditional in French versification since the Middle Ages. In vers libre, the lengths of lines may vary according to the sense of the poem, the complete sentence replaces the stanza as a unit of meaning, and rhyme is optional.
- **Foot (in poetry):** A poetic foot is "a unit of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry."Poetic feet are based on the number of syllables in each foot. Two of the most common feet in English poetry are the *iamb* and the *trochee*. Both are made up of just two syllables. Iamb is pronounced like I am, and trochee rhymes with pokey. The difference between them lies in which syllables are stressed.
- **Contagious:** (used about a disease) that you can get by touching somebody/ something
- **Terza rima:** an arrangement of triplets, especially in iambic pentameter, that rhyme *aba bcbcdc* etc., as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*
- **Free Verse:** poetry that does not rhyme or have a regular rhythm.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Comment on William Carlos William's style?
2. Write a summary of the poem "These".
3. How is Carlos Williams a modernist poet?

1.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

A. d B. False C. a

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. John Malcolm: William Carlos Williams (A brief pamphlet. butextremely useful).
2. Linda W. Wagner: The Poems of William Carlos Williams.
3. James Gulmand: The Art of Williams Carlos Williams.
4. J.litilisMiller: William Carlos Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays.
5. Minnesota pamphlet: William Carlos Williams.
6. Mita Biswas: The Visual Imagery of William Carlos Williams.

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Unit 2
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Structure

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 William Carlos Williams: Definition Of Poetry
2.4 William Carlos Williams: Assessment As A Poet
2.4.1 Paterson
2.4.2 Poetic Style And Diction
2.4.3 Delicacy And Subtlety
2.4.4 Imagism
2.4.5 Uncertainty
2.4.6 Sensational
2.4.7 Empathy And Sympathy
2.4.8 Characters
A. Self-Assessment Question
B. Self-Assessment Question
C. Self-Assessment Question
2.5 Summing -Up
2.6 Glossary
2.7 Questions
2.8 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
2.9 Suggested Readings

2.1 Learning Objectives

Dear Student,

And this, final lesson on Williams involves a further study of him as a poet.

2.2 Introduction

William Carlos Williams (September 17, 1883 – March 4, 1963) was an American poet, writer, and physician closely associated with modernism and imagism. Williams is strongly associated with the American modernist movement in literature and saw his poetic project as a distinctly American one; he sought to renew language through the fresh, raw idiom that grew out of America's cultural and social heterogeneity, at the same time freeing it from what he saw as the worn-out language of British and European culture.

2.3 WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: Definition of Poetry

Williams explained what a poem is in the following words: "A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words. When I say there's nothing sentimental about a poem, I

mean that there can be no part as in any other machine. that is redundant. Its movement is intrinate, undulant a physical more than in a literary character therefore each speech having its own character, the poetry it engenders will be peculiar to that speech also in its own intrinsic form. The effect is beauty, what in a single object resolves our complex feelings of propriety When man makes poem, makes it mind you, he takes words as he finds them interrelated about him and compose them without distortion which would mar their exact significances into an intense expression of his perceptions and ardors that they may constitute a revelation in the speech that he uses. It is not what he says that counts as a work of art. It's what he makes with such intensity perception that it lives with an intrinsic movement of its own to verify its authenticity.

The explanation is most relevant with regard to the criticism about the insufficient organization of William's poem. Consider, in this context his own lines:

"And we thought to escape rime
By imitation of the senseless
Unarrangement of wild things- the stupidest rime of all"

One realizes, however, with a sense of reassurance, that few, people know better than Williams how sensible the arrangement of wild things' often is. Williams's good poems are in perfect agreement with his explanation.

2.4 WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: Assessment as a poet

It is embarrassing to call Williams original. Originality is one of his major virtues and minor vices. About some of his best poems one would think: I've never road or imagined anything like this: and about some of his worst poems one can remark: I wish to God this were a title more like ordinary poetry. He is even less logical than the average good poet he is an intellectual in neither the good nor the bad sense of word but loves abstractions for their own sake, and makes accomplished characteristic, inveterate use of them, exactly as if they were sensations or economic. There is no "dissociation of sensibility" in Williams. But he handles both generalizations and particulars with unique freshness and humour and imagination, with adelicacy and fantasy that are especially charming in so vigorous, realistic, and colloquial a writer.

2.4.1 Paterson

William's poem such as 'Paterson' (Part 1) develop the mosaic organization characteristic of Imagism or 'objectivism' naturally into the musical, thematic organization. Many of the structural device are interestingly if quite independently, close to these of T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets', though Eliot at the same time utilizes many of the traditional devices that Williams dislikes. Contemporary poetry particularly desires a large-scaleorganization which is neither logical dramatic nor narrative. Such an organization stems possible, but improbable, does not exist at present and is most near in approach to "Four Quartets' and 'Paterson' (Part 1) is certainly Williams most impressive single piece a model of modern poetry distinguished for extra ordinary range and reality a clear rightness that sometimes approaches perfection.

2.4.2 Poetic Style and Diction

With regard to Williams's, poetic style and diction it may be remarked that his poems are fun of imperatives exclamations, troches the rhythms and dynamics of their speech are being insisted upon as they could w be in any prose. In it this insistence upon dynamic that is fundamental in Williams's reading of his own poems: the listener realizes with astonished joy that he is hearing a method of reading poetry that is both excellent for these particular poems and completely unlike anything else has ever been heard before. About William's metre one remark might be enough; that no one has written more accomplished and successful free verse. It is obvious that ordinary accentual syllabic verse in general, has tremendous advantages over "free; accentual, or syllabic verse in English, of course. But that these other kinds of verse. In some particular situations or with some particular can work out better for some poets is so plain that any assertion to the contrary seems obstinate dogmatism. It may be explained why Williams's free verse or Marianne Moor's syllabic verse is successful. The verse form of one of these poems, as anyone can see, is essential to its success; and it is impossible to produce the same effect by treating their material in accentual syllabic verse. Anyone can invent the genius who might have done the same thing even better in ordinary English verse, but he is the most fruitless of inventions.

2.4.3 Delicacy and Subtlety

There-are continually apparent in Williams that delicacy and subtlety which are sometimes so extra ordinarily present, and sometimes so extra ordinarily absent, in Whitman their other feature. Another bond between the two is the hair-raising originality of some of their other feature. Inspite of their faults some of them obvious to the most foolish reader poets like Whitman and Williams have about them something more valuable than any faultlessness: a wonderful largeness a quantitative and qualitative generosity.

2.4.4 Imagism

Williams's imagist objectivist to critic calls him formal objectivist) background and blas have helped his poems by their emphasis on truthfulness, exactness, concrete presentation, but they have harmed the poems by their underemphasis on organization, logic, narrative, generalization and the poems are so short, often that there is not time for much. Some of thepoems seem to say. Truth is enough' Truth meaning data brought back alive. But truth is not enough. Our crudest demand for excitement, for the 'actions of men', for the 'real story of something important, something strange this demand is legitimate because it is the nature of man to make it. And the demand can hardly be neglected so much as a great deal of the poetry of our time if the good poetry of our time has neglected it. The materials of Williams's unsuccessful dreams have great reality. But very little has been done to them. In these poems the Nature of the American city the weeds, clouds, and children of vacant lots and its reflection in the minds of its inhabitants, exist for good.

2.4.5 Uncertainty

Williams has a real and unusual dislike of and distrust in authority, and the note of priggishness and superiority is conspicuous for its absence in his poetry. He possesses the

ability to rest in contradictions, doubts, the general guess work without showing any traces of certainties. This characteristic is the opposite of Whitman's love of uncertainty. But the spirit behind the two poets is the same. William's range is narrower than Whitman's and yet there top one tai reminded of Whitman. Williams has much of the freshness of an earlier America, though it is a freedom "haunted about by desperation and sorrow." The little motto, one could Invent for him "In the suburbs, therefore feels free' is particularly ambiguous when one considers that those subjects of his are overshadowed by and are a part of the terrible industrial landscape of north eastern New Jersey. But the ambiguity is one that Williams himself not only understands but insists upon, if his poems are full of what is clear, delicate, and beautiful, they are also full of what is coarse, ugly, and horrible. There is no optimistic blindness in Williams, though there is a fresh gaiety, a stubborn or 'invincible Joyousness'. But when one thinks of the poems of Williams himself in the midst of these factories dumps, subdivisions, express high ways, patients, children, weeds and wildflowers of theirs with the city of New York rising before them of the horizon a pillar of smoke by day, a pillar of fire by night when one thinks of this one seen an ironic light the flat matter of fact light of the American landscape. James a remark that America 'has no ruins". "America is full of ruins, the ruins of hones'.

2.4.6 Sensational

One remarkable thing Williams' poetry is how radically sensational and perceptual it is "Say it I no ideas but in things Williams shares with Marianne Moore and Willace Stevens is a feeling that almost nothing is more important, more of a true delight, than the way' things took. Reading their poems is one-long shudder or recognition; their reproduction of things; in its empirical gaiety. Its clear abstract refinement of presentation, has something peculiarly and paradoxically American about it. All three of these poets, might have used, as an epigraph for their poetry, that beautiful saying that it is nicer to think than to do, to feel than to think, but nicest of all to look. Williams's poems so far as their spirit is concerned, remind one of Marianne Moore's "It is not the plunder but accessibility to experience.

All three poets (Williams, Stevens, Marianne) did their first good work in an odd climate of poetic opinion. Its expectations of behaviour were imagist (the poet was supposed seeeverything to feel a great deal, and to think a to do and to make hardly anything), its material demands were minimal, and its ideals of organization were negative. The subject of poetry had changed from the action of men to the reactions of poet's reactions being defined in a way that left the poet almost 'without motor system or cerebral cortex. This easily led to a strong kind of abstraction; for what is more abstract than a fortuitous collocation of sensation? Stevens, with his passion for philosophy, order, and blank verse, was naturally least affected by the atmosphere of the time. In which he was almost a tourist, Williams found his own sort of imagism considerably hard, to modify de had a boyish delight and trust in things, there are always on his lips the familiar, pragmatic American. These are the facts for he is the most pragmatic on writers, and so American that the adjective itself seems inadequate. One almost exclaims in despire and delight. He is the America of poet. Few of his poems have that pure 'crystalline inconsequence' that the imagist poem ideally has the world and Williams himself kept breaking into them; and this was certainly their salvation.

2.4.7 Empathy and Sympathy

William's poetry is more remarkable for its empathy, sympathy. Its unsecular and emotional identification with its subjects, than any modem poetry except Rilke's. After reading 'Paterson' one realizes how natural is the identification how very hypnotic is the feel or rhythm of the poem. There is absolutely no question of disbelief Williams's knowledge of plants and animals, our brothers and sisters in the world is surprising for its range and intensity: and he sets them down in the midst of the real of the world, so that the reader is full of n innocent lyric pleasure just in being out in the open, in feeling the wind tickling his skin. The poems are full of Nature: William's has reproduced with exact and loving fidelity both the Illumination of the letter and the movement of the spirit. In these poems emotions ideals, whole attitudes re implicit in tone of voice, in the feel of his own overhead speech or are expressed in terms of plants, animals the landscape, the weather. You see from his instructions to a Solitary Disciple" that it is what the landscape does that matter to Williams and it is only as the colours and surfaces reveal this that they are important.

2.3.8 Characters

At first people were introduced into William's poems mainly as overheard or overlooked landscape: they spread. Williams has the knowledge of people one expects and often does not get, from doctors; a knowledge one does not except, and almost never gets, from contemporary poets. One believes in and remembers the people in William's poems (unlike in Eliot s 'Four Quartets which has only one real character the poet and the recurrent state of that character which we are assured is God) though they usually remain behaviouristic, sharply observed, sympathetic, and empathetic sketches and one cannot get from these sketches the knowledge of a character that one gets from some of Frost's early dramatic monologues and narratives. from' a number Hardy's poems, or from Williams's detailed and conclusive treatment of the most interesting character in the poems, himself. Some of the narrative and dramatic elements of his poetry seem to have drained off into his fictions. Williams's attitude toward his people is particularly admirable: he has neither thatcondescending impatient, pharisaical dismissal of the illiterate mass of mankind, nor that manufactured, moving awe for an equally manufactured little or common man disfigures so much contemporary writing, Williams loves blames, and yells despairingly at the Little Men naturally and legitimately because he feels not just says, that the differences between men are less important than their similarities that he and you and I together, are the Little Men.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Four Quartets is a poem written by William Carlos Williams (True /False)

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

William Carlos Williams writes in free verse (True/ False)

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

William Carlos Williams is an imagist poet (True/False)

2.5 Summing-up

To sum up the discussion: Williams, besides being outspoken, warm hearted, and generous is also, according to a critic, “fresh, sympathetic, enthusiastic, spontaneous, open impulsive, emotional. observant, curious, rash, courageous, undignified, unaffected, humanitarian, experimental, liberal empirical secular, democratic? He has the honesty that consists in writing down the way things seem to you yourself, not the way that they really must be, that they are, that everybody but a misguided idealist or shallow optimist or bourgeois sentimentalist knows they are. There is a delightful generosity and extravagance about the man in and behind the poems; one is attracted to him automatically.

Williams is one of those poets, like Hardy, who’s bad or war poems repay reading and do add to your respect for the poet.

Almost any list of Williams’s best poems would include the extremely moving completelyrealized. “The Widow’s Lament in Springtime”; the terrible poem (XVIII) in “Spring and All” which begins. “The product of America go Crazy. “The Yachts”; a poem that is a paradigm ofall the unjust beauty the necessary and unnecessary injustice of the world: cre”, a poem thatis pare deprivation; “Burning the Christmas Greens: the unimaginably delicate. “To Waken anOld Lady, the poem that begins ‘By the road to the contagious hospital: the beautiful “AUnison” in which Nature is once again both again both the ritual and myth: perhaps “The SealElephant’ and “The injury, and many more. These sharp shorter poems soaccurately put us into the heart of the thing that he has immediately seen and felt. Onewonders why after all these he really tried long poems such as “Peterson” (mixed with a gooddeal of Prose)

That Williams’s poems are exact and original; that some of them are really good poets, is obvious and undertake. But what is even more obvious is their generosity and sympathy, their moral and human attractiveness.

2.6 GLOSSARY

- **Diction:** the choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing
- **Sympathy**: an understanding of other people’s feelings, especially their problems
- **Empathy**: the ability to imagine how another person is feeling and so understand his/her mood
- **Ardor**: great warmth of feeling; fervor; passion

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. What are the various themes in William Carlos Williams?
2. What is the definition of a poem according to William Carlos Williams?

2.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS’ ANSWERS

A. False B. True C. True

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- *Interviews with Williams: Speaking Straight Ahead*, edited by Linda W. Wagner. 1976.
- *A Recognizable Image: Williams on Art and Artists*, edited by Bram Dijkstra. 1978.
- *Something to Say: Williams on Younger Poets*, edited by James E.B. Breslin. 1985.

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Block 6
Unit 1
THE POETRY OF T.S. ELIOT

Structure

1.1 Learning Objectives
1.2 Introduction
1.3 T. S. Eliot
    1.3.1 Definition Of Poetry
    1.3.2 Nature Vs. Cities
    1.3.3 Truth In Poetry
    1.3.4 Metaphysical Poetry
    1.3.5 Language
    1.3.6 Myth
    A Self-Assessment Question
1.4 T. S. Eliot: Poetic Development
    1.4.1 First Volume
    1.4.2 Second Volume
    1.4.3 "The Waste Land" 1922
    1.4.4 Journey Of Magi
    1.4.5 Ash Wednesday
    B. Self-Assessment Question
    C. Self-Assessment Question
1.5 Summing –Up
1.6 Glossary
1.7 Questions
1.8 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
1.9 Suggested Readings

1.1 Learning Objectives

In this lesson I shall tell you about the poetry of T.S. Eliot, one of the greatest poets, critics and poetic playwrights of the present century. He was an American expatriate, who settled in London and joined forces with his compatriot. Ezra Pound, to build the structure of the new English poetry, which came to full flowering during the 1920s. He was an erudite poet, well versed in the French Symbolist poets, Baudelaire and Laforgue, in the Italian poetry of Dante. In Christian theology, and modern Anthropology, with a fair knowledge of Indian scriptures and Buddhist philosophy. He wrote his poetry on principles which he formulated as a critic and all through his poetic career there is a perfect correspondence between his critical theory and his poetic practice.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Thomas Sterns Eliot (1888-1965) was poet, essayist, publisher, playwright, literary critic and editor. Considered one of the 20th century's major poets, he is a central figure in English-language Modernist poetry. Through his trials in language, writing style, and verse structure, he reinvigorated English poetry. He also dismantled outdated beliefs and established fresh ones through a collection of critical essays.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, to a prominent Boston family, he moved to England in 1914 at the age of 25 and went on to settle, work, and marry there. He became a British citizen in 1927 at the age of 39 and renounced his American citizenship.

1.3 T. S. ELIOT

He has remarked, a poet in writing himself writes his age, and his remark is fully illustrated by his own poetry, which is at once a mirror of his own individuality, and of the nature and sensibility of the age when it was produced, it is not therefore, hard to understand that what is true of his own poetry is also largely true of the poetry of the 1920's. This poetry was negatively opposed to the Romantic poetry of the preceding century, while positively, it was so designed as to be an adequate expression of the complex sensibility of the age of universal chaos and utter disintegration of the communal life in our scientific. Industrial and predominantly urban civilization. Its main characteristics may be summarized as follows:

1.3.1 Definition of Poetry

If the Romantic poetry was personnel and subjective, the new poetry was to be universal add impersonal. Eliot said, "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion, it is not an expression of personality but an escape from personality. The poet may start with his own feeling, but he must convert his personal feeling into the emotion of art. The progress of the poet is, indeed, a process of continual self-sacrifice of separating the man who suffers from the mind which creates. The best way, Eliot further says, of expression emotion in a work of art, is to find an 'objective correlative", that is, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events: which shall be the formula of that particular emotion: such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked".

The other effective way of escaping one's personality is to subject one's particular mind to the larger mind of Europe, that is, to acquire the European tradition of poetry. A modern poet should be aware not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence he should write with all the poets from Homer downwards, and within that order all the poets of England from Chaucer downwards, present in his bones. This historical consciousness should enable the poet to combine tradition with experiment.

1.3.2 Nature vs. Cities

Romantic poetry was predominantly the poetry of nature and of the simple peasants and rustics living in the rural areas: but the poetry which Eliot wished to create was to be the poetry of cities and of industrial centres, and its images were to be drawn from the urban

surroundings and raised to the point of poetic intensity. Eliot has recorded that be learnt this art of handling city images from Baudelaire. The language, too, of the industrial population was to form the base at the poetic medium and the skill of the poet was to be directed towards a blend of this living language won that associated with the educated class as well as the poetic tradition-as Eliot has put it in his Auditory imagination' and in one of his "Four Quarters:

The common word exact without vulgarity,

The formal word precise but not pedantic

The complete consort dancing together.

1.3.3 Truth in Poetry

The romantic poets were men of convictions; and they were apt to state those convictions as clearly and emphatically as possible in the hope that the readers would eventually come round to their point of view Eliot and the poets of his age had little doubt that truth itself was relative and they were writing in a period of history when convictions and values had become 'a heap of broken images' and there was no community of thought between them and their readers. Consequently, they chose to be indirect, suggestive and non-committal. This is illustrated by the practice of Eliot himself in his religious poetry where he has resorted to a method, which is patently dramatic oscillating and indirect.

1.3.4 Metaphysical Poetry

This relativity manifests itself in the structure and texture of the new poetry where opposite points of view are juxtaposed; disparate elements are sought to be amalgamated, and the resultant irony, paradox and antithesis to be the necessary devices of poetry. Eliot was attracted towards John Donne and Metaphysical poets because of this quality in their poetry the blending of intellect and of levity with gravity, of words common and colloquial with learned terms and expressions. They could apprehend thought sensuously and easily digest new thoughts and ideas and supply their emotional equivalents. Eliot is quite explicit on this point: "It was one of our tenets that should have the virtue of prose, diction should become assimilated to the cultivated contemporary speech, before aspiring to the elevation of poetry Subject-matter and imagery of poetry should be extended to topics and objects related to the modern life. We were to seek the non-poetic to seek even material refractory to transmutation into poetry and words and phrases which had not been used in poetry before. It means that Eliot and his compeers were deliberately opposed to the rich poetical diffuseness of the Romantic manner. Just as Dome was opposed to the conventional pomp and prodigality of the Elizabethan poetic diction.

1.3.5 Language

In this connection we must also recall another interesting remark of Eliot

"It appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity and this variety and complexityplaying on a refined sensibility must produce various and complex results. The

poet must become more and more comprehensive more allusive, more indirect doing violence to the syntax, in order to force to dislocate, If necessary, language into his meaning'. The aim was economy of language, the production of the maximum possible meaning or sense with barest minimum of words. It necessitated the removal of all links and connectives, and utmost compression a highly elliptical diction where each word is charged with a wealth of meaning and suggestion. Eliot himself has not distorted language as -violently as, say, Joyce or even Hopkins, vet his handling of words is as Ingenious as la is artistic and effective. We shall illustrate it when we take up the consideration of 'his "The Waste Land".

1.3.6 Myth

In order to be able to give complete expression to the complex modern sensibility the poets of the age must assimilate the various forces and thought currents which are moulding the consciousness of the age. As a matter of fact, modern poetry in experimental and technical and Innovations, based upon new discoveries are among its most glaring peculiarities. We may briefly refer to some of them at least.

In the first place, we, must refer to the new orientation given to 'Myth' by anthropologists and psychologists alike. Eliot adopted the mythical method as opposed to the narrative method and instead of moving in a straight line, he moved in curve and circle. Then, there was the concept of time, stressed by the new physics and by the philosophy of Bergson also which meant that the division of the Time into Past, Present and Future is artificial "We say was, and will be, but the truth is that is alone, can properly be used" Eliot has put the idea as follows:

Time present and time past

Are both perhaps present in time future,

And time future contained in time past.

William James, the American philosopher and brother of Henry James the great novelist, had already discovered that human consciousness was like a stream, but the effect of this discovery on the literary technique became apparent only during the post-war years in the 'stream of consciousness fiction and later in contemporary poetry. Including Eliot's,"The Waste Land".

Freudian psychology reinforced such devices as 'interior monologue: 'free association of ideas, dream technique for the exploration of the subconscious, to which Jung added archetypal symbols and imagery and the concept of death and-rebirth etc. Eliot has stressed the affinity between poetry and music and his own best poems, like the poems and novels of some contemporary writers, have musical structure. They are conceived as 'symphonic' of five movements each. This structure enabled the poet to manipulate various points of view without making any direct statement or committing himself to any definite point of view. Enough hasnow been said to explain the sources of difficulty or even obscurity which the reader has to face in the poetry of Eliot and other modern poets. The poot has not only withdrawn himself from his readers, but he has removed all, the sign posts which older posts

were want to leave in the poem for the guidance of their readers. Thus, the reader has to rely on the resources of his own wit for finding out a pattern of ideas or meanings in what appears to be verbal maze, miscalled a poem. Same poets have realized that fact and added long notes as clues for the guidance of the renders through the labyrinths they have cunningly contrived.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

T. S. Eliot was opposed to romantics (True/False)

1.4 T. S. ELIOT: POETIC DEVELOPMENT

Eliot's poetic career covers a period of about half a century in which the most important point is marked by his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927. Thus, the progress of Eliot as a post may be described as an advance from cynicism to mysticism or from the immersion in the destructive element to the elevation to spiritual height which overlooks the chaos below and makes it meaningful. In terms of Jungian psychology, we may say that it is a movement from the contemplation of the spiritual death towards an exploration of ways and means of spiritual rebirth. The early poetry in a dissection the modern city civilization, rootless and fossilized. In which the poet is concerned with the social predicament, but in his later poetry his. Interest is Increasingly engaged by the problem of individual or personal ordering of life to ensure the process of spiritual regeneration.

1.4.1 First Volume

Eliot started with a merciless dissection of the New England Society in America, where he had spent his formative years. It was a society refined beyond the point of civilization with learning congested with learning hypercritical, cramped, self-conscious and tortured with notions and problems. The first volume of his poetry, published in 1917, is occupied with the dissection and delineation of this society. The opening poem. The Love Song of 'J Alfred Prufrock' is the best struggle monument of Eliot's early preoccupation and his ironic, detached, half-cynical and half comic manner, with his sole concentration of urban landscape and Imagery like Baudelaire and Laforgue the protagonist embodies the timid, wavering non-committal attitude typical of this culture. He is a modern Hamlet, example of vigour and intensity, but tortured and paralyzed by an acute inner conflict. The description of evening at the beginning like a patient etherized on the table is an image of his own self laid on the but he himself is the surgeon for its operation. He knows his problem and his incorrigible cowardice which prevents him from facing it squarely.

Time to turn back and descend the stair

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair

..... His secret desire therefore is to have the instructive impulse of sea-animal.

I should have been a pair of ragged claws, Scatting across the floor of silent seas.

But his day dream does not last- "Till human voices wake us and we drown'

1.4.2 Second Volume

The poems in the second volume (1920) are remarkable, for the regularity of their form and the broadness of their outlook and dimension. Eliot has now shifted his gaze to the panorama of the entire European civilization, tottering on the brink of decay and death. The most complex and typical poem in the volume is 'Gerontion' the reflection of dry brain in a dry season. The old man in a dry month' waiting for rain, amid a heap of the broken limbs of the modern industrial civilization and it is no less decayed and degraded human specimens. As a fit symbol of the spiritual disintegration. Individual as; well as social, and his reminiscences centre round the meaningless Aux of history, symbolized here by the pagan luxuriance of vegetation But this spring of secular humanism is symptomatic of the isolation of man from God who is viewed as an object of terror and destruction. 'In the juvenescence of the year came Christ, the tiger/to us he devours. The loss of spiritual standard has converted history into a labyrinth of 'cunning corridors' where the mind groped blindly among ideas lying in a promiscuous heap.

Vacant shuttles weave the mind

Unnatural vites

Are fathered by our heroism Virtues

Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.

The painful meditation of the old man, reaches its climax in the apocalyptic vision of the whole dissolving into atoms.

1.4.3 "The Waste Land" 1922

The culmination of this secular phase was reached in *"The Waste Land"*, which came in 1922 almost simultaneously with the publication of James Joyce's Ulysses. It was in his critical appreciation of this novel that Eliot commended the New technique which he called the mythical method as distinguished from the narrative It is a method which manipulates a continuous parallel between contemporality and antiquity and thus imposes order upon the Immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history Eliot's aim in this poem was the exploration of the social chaos in the post-war Europe or which London was taken to be a fair sample, so that it could easily melt in any other capital of Europe. But the modern chaos is related to the Middle Ages through the myth of the Fisher King who was maimed himself and his kingdom also had become a waste land. But he was waiting for the hour of his double deliverance from the curse of sterility at the hands of pure-hearted knight who has promised to visit his kingdom for this purpose. But the introduction of Tiresias, the blind prophet of Thebes brings the myth of the classical waste land also-"The Waste Land"occasioned by the sin of king Oedipus-into the orbit of the poem: while the poet at a crucial stage glances also at the spiritual crisis in India 'when Ganga was sunken tow." In this way the poem deals with a problem at once timeless and temporal and thereby signifies the fact that it is a recurrent crisis in the history of mankind. The soul of man or of society becomes a waste land when it is, alienated from God. It is a state of spiritual torpor-the

death of the soul whenman is reduced to the plane of animal existence content with physical comforts and sexual gratifications. The first symptom of this state is the violation of the, sanctity of sex when union between man and woman becomes merely a coupling of animals and the whole society is enveloped in the fire of lust, with all its sexual abnormalities and perversions. Deliverance from this curse was once suggested by Prajapati the creator and sustainer of the universe in Indian tradition. He spoke; in thunder, to gods, men and demons, what sounded a 'Da', 'Da', 'Da', which the listeners interpreted as Datta'. Dayadhvam and 'Damyata Datta means surrender at the right moment: Damayata implies discipline of head and heart for sailing smoothly in the stormy sea of life while Dayadhvam; 'sympathise" stresses the duty of going out of one's own ego into the ego of another in order to prepare the ground for the advent of the true communal life which breeds cultural and spiritual health.

The protagonist of the poem is Tiresias, the blind prophet who is blessed old man with wrinkled female breast who is a symbol of human consciousness and can speak many languages and easily glance to the past ages and different lands in order to underline the universality of the theme and contrast between the orderly past and the chaotic present.

Among the features of the style of the poem the most striking is the device of the poetic short hand, which is illustrated by the use of fragmentary allusions to extend the scope of the ideas or the 'theme of the poem. Thus, the phrase 'unreal city' used here for London was employed by Baudelaire to explain the mystery of Paris. Thus, London has melted into Parts with the help of this method Eliot comprehends the whole human history within the compass of a poem 433 lines. "The Waste Land"is at once the culmination of the first phase and the commencement of the second which deals with the process of a new birth after the death of the old self. The new note is struck in the closing lines of the poem, but it becomes clearer in the Hollow Men, which appears to be its overflow:

Sightless, unless
The eyes re-appear
As the perpetual star,
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only! of empty men.

1.4.4 Journey of Magi

The Journey of the Magi' treats of the theme of death and rebirth in a simple and straightforward way. The Magi or the wise kings of the East undertake a journey, hard and painful, to see the new-born Christ. The journey here symbolizes a spiritual quest, which results in the death of their old-self and the birth of a new one, as the speaker in the poem confesses:

This birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us like death.

our death

We returned to our places, these kingdoms.

But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation

With an alien people clutching their gods.

1.4.5 Ash Wednesday

This brings us to Ash Wednesday (1930) the Brat Christian poem complex and lyrical and charged with all the poignant fervour of conversion. The tone is one of contrition and the prayer to the Lady of consolation is in the best tradition of church Liturgy. The old imagery of desert and death undergoes an obvious change and the bones being to sing. The steps of spiritual ascent are clearly marked and so are the agonies and vacillations involved in the endeavour, yet the -Lady herself has known suffering and la both Mother and Sister:

Lady of silence

Calm and distressed

Tom and most whole

Rose of Memory

Rose of forgetfulness

Exhausted and life-giving

Worried, reposeful

The single Rose

Is now the Garden

Where all loves end.

Terminate torment

Of love unsatisfied

The greater torment

Of love satisfied

On the more human plane the same theme is treated with equal lyrical intensity in Marina which is an adaptation of scene in Shakespeare's Pericles, Here the symbol of the new life is a daughter born out of the womb of a mother supposed to have died of the pang of labour. But the process of death is resolved in the emergence of a new life:

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog.. meaning Death

Are become unsubstantial reduced by a wind

By this grace dissolved in place.

The process of spiritual re-birth reaches its grand climax in the 'Four Quarters', four poems in one, which mark the highest achievement of Christian poetry in our godless age. Here the language itself is re-born with a moving beauty of refined surface and authentic tone, though the meanings is deep and elusive with all the glancing facets of the mystic

experience. The poems are associated with four places, deal with the four elements, the four humors, four seasons and four cardinal virtues. The theme is the balancing of opposites to transcend the flux and tension of life and the contraries are time and eternity, flux and fixity, distraction and response, the wheel and the still point, the river and the sea, words and the words and above all there is the concept of incarnation, the point of intersection of Time and Eternity.

The still point symbolized by the incarnation is the key to the understanding of the nature or order which the poet would impose on the flux of life. Then there are references to the two ways of spiritual regeneration the way up and the way down in the philosophy of Heraclitus. An important theme is the process of artistic order created out of words which are apt to slip, slide and sink, and the pattern which arrests this process a described as follows:

The common word, exact without vulgarity

The formal word, precise but not pedantic.

The complete consort dancing together

Indeed dance and music are among the key symbols in the poems.

Release from the ordinary action and motion of human multitude distracted from by distraction', lies on the philosophy of detached action, preached by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita to be still moving as a Chinese jar still moves in its stillness." The culmination is reached in the last poem. 'The Little Gidding' written during the dark days of the Blitz in the Second World War, when 'the burning, of "The Waste Land"had assumed the form of a searing actuality. The release from this hell-fire can come only from God's dove descending with Pentecostal fire' - the fire which purges the soul and makes it ready for true humility. Acceptance of suffering for spiritual purgation can change darkness into light as the poet puts it in his moving lines:

I said to my soul be still and let the darkness come upon you

Walt without thoughts for you are not ready thought

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing. The surest remedy forthe torment of the senses as me acceptance of the purgatorial flame of suffering:

The one discharge from sin and error

The only hope, or else despair

Lies in the choice of pyre of pyre

to be redeemed from are by fire:

Love is the unfamiliar name

Behind the hand that wave

The intolerable, shirt of flame

Which human power cannot remove.

Like all true Christiana Eliot has defined spiritual progress as a movement backward towards the point from which the life of the individual as well as of the race started the garden of childhood as well as the Eden of the unfallen man:

We shall not cease from explosion

And the end of our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started.

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Tiresias is a character in a. ""The Waste Land"" b. Hollow Men c. The Journey of Maggi

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

""The Waste Land"" has: a. 435 lines b. 455 lines c. 433 lines

1.5 SUMMING –UP

One can sum up many of these points in one injunction. Modern poetry addresses the modern world with modern language and images appropriate to the modern experience, unfettered by the conventions which had grown over the centuries of literary developments.

1.6 GLOSSARY

1. Metaphysical: "the essentially metaphysical question of the nature of mind"
2. Baudelaire: Charles Pierre Baudelaire 9 April 1821 – 31 August 1867) was a French poet who also produced notable work as an essayist, art critic and translator. His poems exhibit mastery of rhyme and rhythm, contain an exoticism inherited from Romantics, and are based on observations of real life.
3. Myth: a story from past times, especially one about gods and men of courage. Myths often explain natural or historical events
4. Interior monologue: interior monologue, in dramatic and nondramatic fiction, narrative technique that exhibits the thoughts passing through the minds of the protagonists.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Define poetry according to Eliot.
2. Why does Eliot favour the Metaphysical poets?
3. Why is myth important to T. S. Eliot?

1.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

A. True

B. a

C. c

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Sencourt, Robert (1971). *T.S. Eliot, A Memoir*. London: Garnstone Limited
- Bush, Ronald, *T. S. Eliot: The Modernist in History* (New York, 1991)
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Unit 2
T.S. ELIOT: "The Waste Land"

Structure

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 T. S. Eliot
2.4 The Structure Of The Poem
2.4.1 Five Important Movements Of The Poem
2.4.2 Three Phases In Eliot's Development
2.4.2.1 Preludes
2.4.3 First Phase
2.4.4 Last Phase
2.4.5 Plays
A. Self-Assessment Question
B. Self-Assessment Question
2.5 Reading Assignment
2.5.1 Dramatic Monologue
2.5.2 "The Love Song Of J Alfred Prufrock"
2.5.3 The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock And "The Waste Land"
2.6 Summing –Up
2.7 Glossary/Allusions
2.8 Questions
2.9 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
2.10 suggested Readings

2.1 Learning Objectives

The poet wrote in a first-person narrative. "Burial of the Dead" introduces us to the narrators, and we learn that this poem will be told through many different perspectives. The objective of this lesson is to discuss reasons why the poet chose to present this poem in this style of narrative.

2.2 Introduction

The year 1922 saw the publication of two important works which proved epoch-making in their respective spheres. The first was a novel called *ULYSSES* by James Joyce, and the other was the poem. "The Waste Land"by T.S. Eliot. Both of them are difficult and complex works, and both employ complex techniques and both present the modern society as a spiritual waste-land, as contrasted with the orderly social structure in the past. But the

methods employed for presenting the condition of society by the two writers are quite different. Joyce uses the expansive method, and presents the incidents in the daily life of ar Irish law for eighteen bouts in a novel of several hundred pages. But the method employed by Eliot in “The Waste Land”is compressive because in 433 lines of the poem he has presented a fair segment of the entire history of mankind.

2.3 T. S. ELIOT

The immediate idea, of Eliot in composing “The Waste Land”was to present the picture of the spiritual disintegration of the European society during the years following the end of the First World War. But in order to make this spiritual waste land significant and meaningful it was necessary to relate it to the past society, which was marked by spiritual health and order. For this purpose, he has employed what he himself has described as the mythical method. This phrase occurs in an article he wrote on Joyce’s novel *Ulysses* where the story of a Greek warrior has been used as the orderly background against which the disintegration of our present society has been presented. Eliot observed, “in using the myth. In manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which other must pursue after him. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering of giving a shape and significance to the intense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history

The myth that Eliot has used as the objective correlative for his poem is a myth connected with the Grail was the name of the holy clip in which the blood of Christ Isas held up at the time of his crucifixion. Later on, temples were built for the worship of this vessel in several countries. But a time came when the Grail disappeared, and bands of warriors started on their quest to find out the holy cap. It so happened that the Knights of King Arthur’s Round Table under the lead of Sir Percival started on a similar quest. They reached the kingdom of the Fisher King who had become maimed, and his kingdom also had been reduced to a barren waste land. But the king was promised that one day his kingdom would be visited by a Knight of pure character who would enter the Grail temple of his kingdom Chapel Perilous, and answer certain questions wash his body with holy water, which would be followed by the restoration of his health and the return of fertility to his kingdom. The maimed Fisher Kin is the symbol of modern humanity and his dry kingdom stands for the modern society which has become spiritually dead.

But Eliot has made the mythical background wide and comprehensive. As the protagonist of the poem, he has introduced the blind philosopher, Tiresias, the old man with wrinkled female breast, that is a man who has experienced life as a male as well as a female and is a fit symbol of the consciousness of the entire human race. Tiresias, you know is associated with the story of King Oceans of Thebes who unwillingly killed his father and married his mother. And this way his kingdom a waste land, ravaged by famine and plague Tiresias thus brings the association of the classical waste land. Then there is reference to the evil land described in the as a land of stony rocks where there is no trace of water. Lastly, the poem refers to a spiritual crisis in the holy land of the Hindus. when ‘Ganga was sunken low.

In this way the theme of the poem is temporal as well as timeless. It is concerned with London and other capitals of modem Europe in the post war years, but it recites this condition to the human history, which signifies that the crisis is not peculiar to any one period, but it is a recurring phenomenon of human history. By a technique of poetic, short hand which we shall explain later on. Eliot manages to extend the dimension of London, till it becomes any capital of any country in any period of history without ceasing to be the real capital of England.

2.4 The Structure of the Poem

The close examination of the structure of the poem will reveal that Eliot has adopted some of the most novel techniques in music and painting in order to build this poem. For example, the poem has five parts, which are like the five movements in a musical composition known as symphony or sonata, where themes are developed then given up and taken up again and there is contrapuntal movement, that is the movement of two opposite ideas or notes. Secondly,Eliot says that the whole poem is the vision of Tiresias, who is moving through the modern waste land but constantly thinking of the present and the past, of London and other phases in Europe as well as of the: ancient lands and remote kingdoms.

He is constantly uniting the present with the past and London with other places in the history of mankind, by a method which we generally associate' with the cinematograph. i.e. the flash back and the flash forward. Again, we know that there are two important schools of painting, which have revolutionized the techniques of composing a picture —surrealism. In the first an object is split up in various parts and then the parts are arranged in an original way to present the impression of a whole. In "The Waste Land"also bits and fragments of different cultures and as many as five languages have been scattered in the poem, but if we examine them carefully, we shall find that these fragments combine together to form a whole. In the surrealistic picture dream and reality are blended together in one and the same composition. This is what Eliot has done in the present poem also where figures and events apparently dreamy and vague are juxtaposed with figures and incidents belonging to the modern city.

It is also necessary to remember in this connection that while Eliot was planning the composition of this poem the scholarly anthropologists were busy discovering the value of oldmyths and rituals. Eliot himself fame referred to the 'Golden Bough' by Frazer and 'From Ritual to Romance' by Miss Weston. The result of those researches was the discovery of the unity of religions and cultures. The most important ritual of antiquity was known as the fertility ritual which celebrated the death and the rebirth of the year. The winter was its death the spring marked its rebirth. In winter season the fertility of the earth-was suspended, but with the advent of the spring life returned again with the germination of seeds, the birth of fooling and flowers. The basic event in the life of nature was celebrated in several ways, and one of the best known was the way of burying or drowning the effigy of the fertility god, representing his death and then the redemption of that image at a later date to celebrate the

rebirth of the God. In the life of Christ we have a similar pattern, because Christ was crucified, buried in grave best later it was discovered that he had risen from his grave, i.e.. the crucifixion of Christ followed by his resurrection.

2.4.1 Five Important Movements of the Poem

Now let us examine five important movements of the poem. The first movement is known as "The Burial of the Dead' which glances at the burial of the dead god followed by his rebirth: Modern society is examined from this point of view in the opening lines we have the picture of spring in nature where plants and flowers are springing out of the earth. But in the spiritual hfe of race there is only the winter of the soul, which means that the modern society is 'a heap of broken images' and a stony wilderness. The main cause of spiritual dryness is the Isolation of man from God. which is hinted at in the last agreement:

"He who was living in now dead

And we who were living, are now dying

With a little patience"

It meant that man is alive only so long as he has faith in his living god, but when his faith is lost, he becomes spiritually dead. Spiritual death means the reduction of human life to the plane of animal existence i.e. man becomes an animal requiring only food, sleep and sex. The spiritual health always depends upon the healthy attitude towards sexual relationship, because sexual life is closely connected with the religious life of man. If the religious life loses its significance sex becomes an appetite, and Eliot has himself said that if in the union of man and woman there is no sense of good or evil, then it is simply the coupling of animals.

This is why the two sections which follow "the Burial of the Dead" present the picture of sexual life in the modern waste land. In the second movement which is entitled 'A Game of Chess', chess is the symbol of stale-mate or dead-lock in sexual relationship, as well as a violation of the sanctity of sex. We are presented with two contrasted pictures, the picture of a rich neurotic woman, whose life has become empty and monotonous, because she has nothing to do and nothing to think about. In such a high life relationship between husband and wife has lost all significance the second picture refers to the life of poor wife who has become prematurely old through child bearing but her husband who is returning from war wants to havea good time and if his wife is not attractive be will seek satisfaction elsewhere. The problem arises from the husband's mistake in failing to distinguish between the wifehood and motherhood of a woman. i.e., a woman can have the charm of wife only for a short time.

Prajapati spoke in thunder and only one sound was repeated thrice. Da, Da, Da, whichthe gods interpreted as Damayat, the dentons as 'Dayadhvam' and men as Datta. To give (Datta) to control, (Damayat), to sympathize (Dayadhvam) may be regarded as the three-fold path of from the spiritual crisis in the life of man, because man himself is the combination of the three elements, human, godly and the demonic. In this important section Eliot introduces the symbol of Journey, which is threefold, tourney of the questing Knight and his companions through the waste kingdom of the Fisher King to Chapel Perilous: the

journey of two disciples of Christ. Who are doubtful about the resurrection of their master, to the village, named Emmaus, where Christ revealed himself to them while breaking the bread. These two successful journeys are contrasted with the aimless wandering of the modern uprooted multitude, in the post-war Europe and in Russia after the revolution of 1917. The poet describes this multitude as falling and stumbling in the mud-cracked earth. And in the background them is a vivid picture of the city dissolving in the air, of the falling towers and blackened walls, upon which bats with baby faces are crawling head downwards. But in the last section the protagonist is shown fishing in water and saying to himself if he can put his own land in order while. London bridge is falling down. Here we have the answer to the question raised by many critics and students of the poem—Does the poem end on a note of hope or despair?

When the poem was published in 1922 the first reaction of the readers was that it gave an effective expression tothe disillusionment of a generation. The question was put to the poet himself who replied evasively that the poem expresses their-Illusion of being disillusioned. But the critics persisted in believing that there is no sign of hope in the poem, and it is proved by its structure. Eliot himself observed that he was following the mythical method not the narrative method. i.e. poem does progress in a straight line from one stage to another, but it has a circular motion. We begin with the description of waste land where the rocks are breaking to pieces and broken images are lying in a heap and there is no sound of water. And as we reach the end of the poem, we find the same picture of the city dissolving in the air, the towers falling down and London Bridge itself disappearing.

But these critics have failed to notice the inner movement of the poem which is presented in terms of the changing confrontation of the two basic symbols in the poem, the rock and the water. The rock is the symbol of spiritual dryness, and water the symbol of spiritual fertility. In the opening section the rocky land is before the protagonist, who is wondering:

“What are the roots that clutch, what
branches grow,
Out of this stony rubbish?
To this the answer is:
Son of man, you cannot say or guess
For you know only a heap of broken image,
Where the sun beats and the dead tree gives no shelter
The cricket no relief, and dry stones
No sound of water.

But as we reach the middle of the poem, which is the opening of the fifth movement, we find that though water is absent a frantic desire for it is felt by the questers, who stand

for the people in search of spiritual values in a waste land. The intensity of desire for water is expressed by the movement and the music of the words uttered by them. If there were water, a pool or a stream where they bend and drink if there were only tire sound of water.

The hermit thrush singing among the pines

Drip drop, drip, drop, drop, drop, drop.

One is reminded of the great line the thirst that from the soul doth rise, doth need a drink divine". But by the time we reach the end of the poem we find that the rocky kingdom has gone behind the protagonist and water has come in front of it. He sits fishing while the city is breaking and dissolving and London Bridge is falling down. The question that is uppermost in the mind of the protagonist is the possibility of setting his own land in order. It means that when the social structure has broken down and the old values have been reduced to a heap of broken images, then the responsibility of reconstruction falls upon every enlightened individual. The protagonist has become now the mouthpiece of the poet himself, and says that he has shored these fragments against ruins. He will join together these fragments to make them the comer-stone of the new spiritual life. Referring to this idea many critics have argued that Eliot a poem is the work, of a carpenter, who makes a whole by joining together different fragments of broken cultures. But these critics forget the simple fact that the poet is thinking of the social reconstruction which is to follow a state of anarchy. In this process the constructive work for some time is bound to be the work of a carpenter. But in course of time when the foundation has been laid the process of natural growth will commence. In this connection one may recall here the words of W.B. Yeats that things decline and fall into destruction and have to be built again, and all the builders are gay.

When Eliot related the present crisis to the history of the race, he intended to stress the fact that simply because humanity has passed through similar crises in the past it is notImpossible for the present generation to break through the spiritual deadlock which is facing it. It is true that a poet who la thinking of spiritual fertility and of setting his own land in order is bound to be regarded as a mad man by society. But madness is sometimes a source of strength, and all the original thinkers, who swim against the public current must have a touch of madness. The last line of the poem leaves the hope that the days of dryness will pass away and the rain of health will fall upon the parched humanity, with the sound. "Shanth, Shanth".

Introducing you to T.S. Eliot and his work as a whole and doing it adequately is not easy. 'He impresses us as being one of the finest intellect s of modern times besides being a great poet. Indeed. He brought about such a profound change in modern poetry that we m1ghta well call it the poetry of the age of Eliot. And his literary work has a very wide range, embracing at least three important genres-poetry, Drama, criticism-in each of which he has broken new ground. Though "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" does not form the part of syllabus, it has also been analyzed along with "The Waste Land"with a view to giving you a more comprehensive idea or T.S. Eliot's poetic practice. In this Introductory lesson, I shall touch on only those aspects of Eliot the poet that might have a direct bearing on our study of them.

It would be helpful to have some idea of his writing career as a whole and of the particular phase these two poems represent in his poetic development. Eliot's earliest poems date from 1915 a year-latter the outbreak of World War I. This is rather significant, for we may mentally, connect the horror and frustration of the War years with the dominant mood of negative reflected in these poems. Not that either Prufrock or "The Waste Land"emerges directly from the War experience in a topical sense. Each is rather like an exploration is what is permanent and basic to human nature. The War experience in the background and the degenerate, society which sustained it would have given a sharper edge to the cynicism and a darker shade to the lurid vision they embody.

We may recall another significant fact of his career, namely that Eliot came to poetry from a strong academic background mainly concerned with philosophic disciplines. First at Harvard University (U.S.) and then at the Sorbonne (France), he was engaged in scholarly inquiry into problems of knowledge and experience. Investigations into metaphysics, history, anthropology, religion and culture. In fact, the thesis he worked on but never completed for the Harvard PhD was later published under the title, "Knowledge and Experience". At last, two seminal influences of the Harvard years should be noted. Eliot came under the spell of P. H. Bradley--one of whose famous philosophical works is *Appearance and Reality* and whose philosophy has a curious closeness to the Indian Philosophy tradition. i.e.Mayavada. He also came under the spell of another dynamic mind Irving Babbitt, his Harvard tutor. And Babbitt happened to be a great "Humanist" who worked out of himself a kind of religious faith (the new humanism) and a kind of ethical principle (the inner check) based on his wide and sympathetic understanding of Western and Eastern religious traditions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism.

This meant among other things that Eliot came to be deeply involved in a study of Eastern scriptures at this time. And we hear an echo of that experience when we find him quoting from the *Brihadaranaka Upanishad* or from the Buddha's First Sermon in ""The Waste Land" or referring to "What Krishna said to Arjuna" in "Dry Salvages"; the third of the "Four Quartets". Though later Eliot violently reacted against the humanism of Babbitt and this developed into something like a quarrel with this teacher-both his earlier tutelage and later rebellion are significant for his poetry. That Indianism was derived from Babbitt's broad cosmopolitan approach to man's spiritual experience and to the great "Subjective" tradition of the East especially. And these were important elements in what we generally call "Romanticism". Eliots' opposition to it therefore led him to emphasize the importance of "Tradition". It became imperative that we identify this larger life within which are framed our puny individual experiences and to live with in our bones. In literature, this meant for him a return to a new classicism after Romanticism has had its long day. Thus, he was to declare early in his career as poet that he was a Catholic in religion, a Royalist, in polities and a Classicist in literature.

Eliot's "academic background" and his "urban" experience. New York, Harvard, Paris Oxford, London have a special pertinence to our study of these poems in another way. His poetry might strike us as having a distinctive academic flavour of its own: because, of the numerous allusions and references which require considerable scholarship to track dawn. It certainly makes a strong demand as the reader's intellectual power. But this is not to say that the poetry itself is academic or scholarly: but rather that it demands a degree of mental alertness as well as capacity to respond emotionally. As to his city experience it is clear how both "Prufrock" and "The Waste Land" —the theme, the situation, the characters the incidental imagery-seem firmly set in an urban atmosphere. There is nothing surprising in this. After all contemporary civilization and contemporary man have been predominantly urban. In a large measure Eliot's is the poetry of urban life. In this he seems to have taken his clue from the French Symbolists like Baudelaire who first showed an acute awareness of this new kind of poetry of the city.

2.4.2 Three Phases in Eliot's Development

It may be useful to distinguish three phases in T.S. Eliot's development as poet. The two poems we have to study are a part of the first phase. Prufrock and other observations was published in 1917 and contained poems composed around 1915-17: with this first major work Eliot the poet may be said to have "arrived" If Prufrock composed in 1915 may by taken as the starting point. "The Waste Land" published in 1922 alongwith other poems may be regarded as the culmination of that phase. To this group also belongs the poem called "Gerontion" (the little old man) composed in 1920. What are the characteristic features of this phase of Eliot's poetry? In substance, these early poems are all in their way ironic reflection on the state of mind, the state of the soul, of modern man, set in the sordid and debilitating city environment. There is aways in them, first of all a vivid and objective presentation of thephysical and social surroundings.

2.4.2.1 Preludes

To take an example the poem with the significant title "Preludes opens with:

The winter evening settles down,
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out end of smoky days
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimneypots.

And at the corner of the street

A lonely cap-horse steams and stamps

And then the lighting of the lamps

and ends with:

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh

The worlds revolve like ancient women

Gathering fuel in vacant lots

There is this hard, acid, grasp of the factual: but this external sordidness only matches and responds to the inner futility and blankness of the characters, and the Utter meaninglessness of theirexistence and it is not merely 'the unfulfilled desires that cause frustration but rather the incapacity to see any value normal activities and impulsions, to have any real passion, meaningful aspiration or motive for living. Taken as a group these poems constitute a profound comment on the "fragmentariness" and inanity of contemporary life.

What is important is, this effect is realized in an entirely novel way. These poems are strongly lyrical in impulse but wholly dramatic in texture in a peculiar sense. A number of characters come into locus; what they and their situations signify is conveyed as much through direct description and comment as through what passes in their minds. The two elements are phased harmoniously together. In this way, the poems gain greater objectivity-what the poet feels and what passes in the consciousness of the characters present one concrete experience. Apart from the city imagery used in a novel manner (ala Baudelaire, Verlaine, Laforgue) there is this distinctive dramatic quality that is common to the poems of this early phase. Most of them take the form of monologues. We come across several other characters "Sweeney Erect","Sweeney among the Nightingales","Mr. Apollonix", the "Portrait of a Lady", "Gerontion", "Prufrock". They are like so many masks or voices, not completely realized dramatically as the manner of say, Browning's dramatic monologues, but having a certain objectivity and independent existence of their own, while at the same time they contribute to the dominant lyric impulse. We shall see that this method is put to effective use in Prufrock and "The Waste Land".

2.4.3 First Phase

So, this first phase concentrates on the immediate scene, is preoccupied with what is wrong, brings out the hollowness, the insubstantiality and the barrenness of our existence it significantly culminates in "The Waste Land"and the "Hollow Men" (We are the hollow men; we are the stuffed men……going round the prickly pear, the prickly pear. And the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper). The very titles are extremely suggestive. It may be noted that a firm grasp of the social pattern is implicit in these poems. And though there are hints as guesses of a positive direction that slight lead to a possible regeneration-as there am in Prufrock and "The Waste Land" the dominant mood and effective one of total gloom and negation.

If these earlier poems are like Eliot's "inferno" or Hell corresponding to the first part of Dante's *Divine Comedy* with its three sections (Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradise), the poems of the middle period constitute a kind of purgatory. In these the religious dimension begins to assert itself. They are characterized by mental tussling to get out of despondence and to reach out to a fulfilling spiritual experience. Again, the very names are suggestive of this gradual attainment of a religious disciplining and resolution-The Journey of the Magi ((1927) A Song for Simeon (1928). Animula (1929) Ash Wednesday (1930), Marina (1930). All these move towards' a religious faith--Anglo Catholic in Eliot's case but perhaps "Ash Wednesday" is the most characteristic of this phase. The title associates the poem with a day of humility and readiness for the spiritual life, it is the moment of turning away from the world to God, making the final commitment- "Because I think not ever to return" And the central image in the poem to the climbing stairway of the ascent of the soul step by step after many a wistful turning back it is a trial, a through many doubts and distractions of the flesh, still the soul is strengthened and readies for salvation. It is most important to note that the negative role "woman" play in "The Waste Land", as we shall see now becomes attached to that woman" who like Dante's Beatrice is the saviour and guide this, poem shows perhaps the strongest impact of Dante on Eliot in both matter and technique.

2.4.4 Last Phase

In the last phase Eliot seems to have crossed the muddled waste and has arrived on the farthest shore Four Quartets (1943) with its four long poems, "Burnt Norton". "East Coker","Dry Salvages", "Little Gidding"— all musicallyorganized as the name suggests—is undoubtedly his greatest poetic monument. Though "Four Quartets" in some way harks backto "The Waste Land" in technique, its poetry has a rarer, more abstract, pattern, it is Eliot's most philosophical poet or sequence of poem; which are like sustained meditations full of an incantatory music and prayer like mood. The central theme is the "still point at the Inter section of Time and the Timeless, the presiding mood is serenity, expressed, say what that the bird in "Burnt Norton", the first of the Quartets, said: "Human kind cannot stand very muchreality".

2.4.5 Plays

We may note how this later poetry ran parallel with his experiments and achievement in the genre of drama, how his increasing pre-occupation with the irreligious experience implicit in poems of the middle period, onwards, is also reflected in his specifically Christian plays—*The Rock* (1934) and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). The theme of the former is the Church (Upon this rock shall I build"), and that of the latter the martyrdom of Thomas Becket of Canterbury. This is a play about the purification process the saint goes through before his martyrdom; and in this way the action centres on Eliot's constant concern with Time and the Timeless. Martyrdom Itself is an "event" out of Time. And the common men immersed in the World's activity "know and do not know that action is suffering and suffering, action.

Besides these two religious plays. Eliot's contribution to drama consists of four other plays, all falling within the later period—*Family Reunion* (1939). *The Cocktail Party* (1950). *The Confidential Clerk* (1955). *The Elder Statesman* (1969). They are evidence of Eliot's hard search for a dramatic idiom which is at once new and vital in theme they are closely allied to the main burden of his later poetry, though being plays, they are set in a social world with situations and characters which are immediately recognized to be contemporary and yet retain a certain universality. The titles themselves, once again, suggest the essential importance of the social pattern, though the plays as a whole project the condition of the souls of men rather than set up to solve any immediate problems of our society. The religious interest is also dominant (as for instance, Harry of *The Family Reunion* being hunted by the Furies and Cella of *The Cocktail Party* going to her terrible martyrdom. In his dramatic productions Eliot was in a sense making good the promise implied in his early verse where we meet with dramatic, elements, characters. "voices" situations used in a lyrical context. But we should recognize two senses in which Eliot's work is "dramatic". First the commonly accepted sense of drama as theater and second, the way all poetry, at all great poetry, is for him dramatic in a sort of primary or "generic" sense.

I have tried to show how Eliot's creative work, poetry and drama takes a progressively religious direction. This does not mean that the poet loses all interest in the affairs of mundane life or his essentially human concern. It is true that his later poetry does show what may be called an achieved Christian integration. Doubts are overcome by belief and the ironic ambiguities of the earlier verse have yielded to kind of certainty and affirmation. It is necessary to realize that "Still in the humanistic tradition Eliot explores, "extends and preserves those perceptions and values that have been memorable for mankind." (Williamson).

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

"The Waste Land" was published in 1922(T/F).

B.SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

From Ritual to Romance is written by Miss Weston (T/F).

2.5 Reading Assignment:

This brief survey will, I hope, help you to see "The Waste Land"you have to study in the perspective of Eliot's total creative works. I suggest that you should try to read at least one poem from the earlier phase-other than the one prescribed-let us say. Preludes and make your acquaintance with Ash Wednesday from the middle period and at least Murder in the Cathedral from the last period if not also one of the Quarters.

Before we attempt to analyze either Prufrock or "The Waste Land"there is an initial difficulty we have to tussle with. We should know what to look for, how to approach this kind of poetry appropriately. For, there is no doubt we are in for a certain bafflement if we approach it with one habit of mind according to our reading of more "conventional verse. The final impression is one of fragmentariness, abruptness, where we should have looked for continuity and a flow of coherent 'meaning, individual fragments are, indeed vivid and

compelling our attention, but we have no ostensible clues as to how we go about somewhat blindly at least for some time. We have been used to being helped out in this respect, and now these expectations are belied. To illustrate this point in a poem like Wordsworth's I wandered lonelyas a cloud there can be on such difficulty.

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high over hills and dales,

When all at once I saw a crowd.

A host of golden daffodils

Beneath the lake, beneath trees.

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

You know when you are. We have an image of the poet out in the fields, meadows, hill- sides, and we are witness to the sudden sight of the daffodils that bursts upon him and to the surprise, pleasure and reflections the sight excites in his mind. This is followed by a lively description of the daffodils in which that comic and meaningful analogy of the galaxy-Like the stars that shine upon the Milky Way holds our attention. The daffodils are performing a dance joyous one. They are alive and conscious. (We might remember, incidentally, Wordsworth's statement: 'Every flower that blows enjoys the air that it breathes").

Nor is there any difficulty experienced when the spectacle shifts to another vision.

For off when on my couch I the

In vacant or in pensive mood

They flash upon that toward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude

We know that it is the vision now imaged in the poet's mind chastened and refined having passed through the save of time, solitude much reflection. It has become the stuff of "emotion recollected in tranquility." There are absolutely no problems how we came by it, how we should connect it with what has gone before, because a perfectly clear and natural link is provided in external event. Some later time, the poet at home lies on a couch musing and the vision flashes back into the mind.

Nor is there any difficulty in connecting the closing lines with all the rest-

And then my heart with pleasure fills

And dances with daffodils.

-that ecstatic state of the poet's mind in which his heart seems to be repeating and sharing the dance of the daffodils. It is also perhaps a cosmic kind of dance because not only the newer but the stars that shine on the milky way are a party to It; in fact, all Nature, in the larger Wordsworthian sense.

We quite see that the final impact and the kind of experience involved in Wordsworth'slyric-when the mind of the poet responds to that something basic in all Nature-

is both deep andsubtle, even complex. But we are led to it effortlessly by a sequence of external happening anda perfectly comprehensible logic of events and surface meanings such as are used to inprosaic everyday life.

2.5.1 Dramatic Monologue

The same thing is true even if be a dramatic monologue like, say, Tennyson's "Ulysses". We start with a firm, recognizable in fact a well-known situation—the story of Ulysses. Penelope Telemachus and the Homer'sheros' later life in Ithaca. The poem takes us the centre of it. The speech of Ulysses implies the story to the background. It implies what is happening around him and also Inside him to gives us Illuminating new Insights into his character with which we already have same acquaintance through legend and history do have to all us what is tell unsaid with our imaginations, but we have the aid of an external frame of reference to do this. As soon as he opens with:

"It little profits that an idle king....." we are projected into that magic circle. He begins by describing how he is bored with his tasks-to be ruling a savage race who only hears and sleep feed and have no power of understanding him, at home, matched with an ageing wife to boot how is former deeds are all forgotten.....He recalls the rich store of his past experience which has made him what he is and gives utterance to that great over mastering hunger of over more of it, the urge to essay out again, "following knowledge like a sinking star"..... The order of his thoughts and feelings as they course through his mind is marked by a certain abruptness but that only serves to bring out the agitation and uneasiness of his mind. They are all held together within the image of his mind we are, already in possession of.

Hence the sudden transitions in his speech do not cause us battlement-as when he turns to the thought of his son with: "This is my son, mine own Telemachus" to whom he can leave his work- and who would surely do it well high; or when there is a bigger gap in his musings in the last section beginning with:

"The lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail...." He has placed himself dramatically at the port of embarkation and calls upon his mariners who have been endeared to him through the fellowship of past adventure to venture out once more "to strive, to seek, to find never to yield". The point is, in such a monologue, as in Wordsworth's, lyric, we have been provided a "solid" basis of a physical reality outside to help us. Though the transitions of feeling and of thought are not strictly logical we are able to follow the movement with reference to the image of someone's we are assured of One thing leads to another association as it would in our own mind if we could put ourselves imaginatively in the place of the man speaking.

2.5.2 "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock"

Compared with this Prufrock which, too, is a monologue offers us little help. We do not know who he is except that he is a part of the social situation which we recognize as contemporary and urban. He is like the "Everyman of the modern city civilization... a representative figure who virtually seems to merge into what he represents'. The reader's normal habit of mind makes him ask, who is speaking and when. He wants to be assured of his bearing with some certainties of time, place and event. Whereas: (in the words of a critic).

Prufrock is a name and a voice. He isn't a "character"... equipped with a history and a little necessary context like the speaker of a Browning monologue... Nor is he an Everyman... Everyman's mind doesn't team with allusions to Hesiod, Hamlet, Lazarus, Flastaff, John the Baptist, mermaids... what Prufrock is, is the name of a possible zone of consciousness where these materials can maintain a vague congruity. You are, not in allowing their intermodulations to echo in your mind, deepening your apprehension of an imagined character, such as Hamlet or discerning his boundaries: Prufrock is strangely boundless, on doesn't affirm at a given point with certainty:

"Here is where his knowledge would have stopped", or

"These are subtilties to which he would not have aspired"....

"Prufrock is in all these respects the generic Eliot character".

Naturally, therefore, if we tried to relate everything that happens in the poem with the image of a hypothetical character who is speaking, we fall to perceive any coherence in the structure of the poem. The several parts seem the unity of the mind the consciousness of a whole civilization rather than that of a particular personality endowed with specific characteristics. The opening: "Let us go then, you and I. When the evening is spread out against title sky/like a patient etherized upon a table," might be the situation between any twopersons in a metropolis who pass restless nights in one-night cheap hotels and saw-dust restaurants with oyster shells, who take to streets that follow like a tedious argument leading to the overwhelming question, which they dare not face or formulate. Similarly, the vivid presentation of what happens outside and inside four walls-the fog rubs its back upon the windowpanes."/ "in the room the women come and go/ talking of Michealangelo" is not any one particular man's perception. That "there will be time to murder and create" is true of more than any particular state of mind. So is the, boredom: "For I have known them all already, known them all".

"For have known them all already known them all".

"And have known the eyes already known them all?

"And "I have known the arms already, known them all"

and the vacillations "And should I then presume?/And how should I begin?" as well as the possible results of such forcing of the issue of "squeezing the universe into a ball and rolling it towards some overwhelming question. The result, we know, is not going to be the revelation brought by Lazarus: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead./Come back to tell you all I shall tell you all..." More Likely, it will be the one who, setting a pillow by her head, would say: "That is not that I meant at all./ That is not it all. "In the same way, some of the most evocative passages in the poem are not so much figments and offspring of Prufrock's brain as an objective comment or a statement of the permanent condition of man. Thus, when Prufrock has a suddenvision of himself:

I should have been a hair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

We are made aware of the blind appetitive life which moves like a deep under-swell disturbing and falsifying our trivial idealizations. And his lament:

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

is an epitaph not on one pony man but on generations who have failed to respond to these impulses and Insights that are variously realized in the poetry, are religious traditions of all mankind.

So that is not the historical identity of Prufrock as a part of the “sold’ reality outside him that is of any avail in giving shape or meaning to the flow of his consciousness. Rather, his consciousness is itself the only “reality”. When Tennyson’s Ulysses muses or Browning’s much-married Duke of “My last Duchess” speaks to some ambassador who has come with a new proposal we notice how the central “voice” reaches out to the whole enclosing situation. The details of time and place are stated or implied in the speech and we have a clear-cutframe-work of so-called “objective” reality outside the voice. And it becomes possible for ‘our minds to mediate between the “subjective flow of consciousness and that “objective” frame— work of reality. How is it we may ask that in Eliot’s presentation of Prufrock’s voice this sense of the eternal flame-work seems to have been suddenly dissolved or rather collapsed.

The answer maybe that we have a misconception of what constitutes this construction we call the world outside us. In other words, we should realize the extent to which Eliot’s deep interest in Bradleyan philosophy has influenced his art. Bradley has is pointed out how the eternal world we construct in our minds is no less private to ourselves than our own sensations, thoughts. Every man’s experience falls within his own closed circle, a circle closed on the outside. In his works, “in brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.” The main point as for as is pertinent to our purpose is—for Eliot, the poet, presenting the private consciousness of a character, there is no real distinction to be made between the “observer” and the ‘observed” our immediate experience (Such concepts are simply late and clumsy abstractions.) “The feelings of the subject and object are one. At anytime, all that we suffer do are forms of one psychical totality. It is experienced all together as one co-existing mass.

So, the attempt to reproduce this quality of immediate experience we should naturally expect a certain blending of objects and events with the mental processes of Prufrock. Hence, we notice how the carefully etched out setting “prefigures” Prufrock. There is an unspoken between him and the evening like a patient etherized upon a table as there is between him and “the restless nights in one-night cheap hotels’ and, indeed, the ‘streets that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent”.

Do I dare

Disturb the universe?

And how should I presume?

Do I dare to eat a peach?

“smoke that rubs its muzzle upon the windowpanes”andcurls once about the house and then falls asleep quite innocently.

The point of it all, however, is that this all-inclusive focus and field of consciousness maybe in you or in any of the citizens of our civilization. In this way through Prufrock’s voice we make contact with the reality of the contemporary man’s existence as a hole. We may think of this phenomenon as a “voice” or a person or a pseudo-person a device of objectification of our subjective-objective life in the terms of art. There are other examples of this in Eliot such as in “Gerontion” the little old man but perhaps the most important and artistically significant in Tiresias of “The Waste Land”.

Tiresias although a mere spectator and not indeed a “character”, is yet the most important personage in the poem uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand, prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias, in fact, is ‘the substance of the poem.

All the events thoughts and feelings that course through the poem happen in Tiresias.” He is what he sees. We shall notice many of these pseudo-personages fleeting in and through “The Waste Land”- the Lady of the Rocks and the young man carbuncular not excepted. They are not this person or that, rather aspects and elements of a more universal entity; and together they and their situations make up, to use Eliot’s phrase, the “objective correlative” of the emotion of the poem.

This, then, is one of the important hurdles to be put out of the way when we approach poetry hike that of Prufrock or “The Waste Land”. We should realize above all that this is poetry that makes demands of the reader as well as of the poet. At first sight it may appear that the poet somewhat perversely leaves out all connectives and indulges in abrupt arbitrary transitions. But if he omits grammatical signs of connection and order he preserves and provides us poetic clues. The organizing principle is there and emerges the moment we allow the associations of words, images, utterances to sink into our minds. The Indirections, ironical juxta-positions, the metaphor- everything falls into place creating a new experience if lire are equal to the effort. And the effort called for is the same kind as is always at the basis of all poetry. And it is because people could not, make the approach needed and carried over their habitual responses to poetry that there was much incomprehension when first these poems appeared. The first Impression of “The Wast Land” was that it had no unity critics said it was rather several short poems tacked together ‘is piece of literary carpentry, scholarly work.

The massing of allusions was considered the result of the pseudo poet’s ability to look on life directly: he looked on it through the spectacle of books. Another critic called it “an anthology of assimilations” of interest only to critics. The knowing readers lamented the fact

that Eliot had sacrificed, his artistic powers on the altar of some fantastic “mumbo-jumbo” and wished that the composition had been left to sink itself. The reception ‘Prufrock had met earlier was no better. It was only afterwards that Prufrock began to be appreciated when the analogies of which it is composed have had time to sink in-an example of how poems change and grow as thought they had the qualities and vitality of a living organism.

What exactly were the causes of this profound break from past practice? Many things have gone into the shaping of the new idiom for poetry. The most important factor was perhaps the deep dissatisfaction poets began to feel—Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, the most prominent among them-with the Romantic vogue in poetry which had grown progressively effete: poetry looked upon as a sort of pouring forth of personal emotion had degenerated into somethingincreasingly out of tune with the truth of our existence. One reason for this revulsion the new poets felt was hat the poetry of the age immediately preceding theirs happened to be couched in a particularly debased from of the Romantic technique. The Georgean poets, for the most part, indulged in kind of “romanticizing. They merely offered-even the best among them, such as Rupert Brooke or Walter de la Mare—a kind of cheap delight in what was purely a poetry of escape, concerned with themes like the romance of far off lands, the magic of the sea or with the sentimentalizing of the English countryside, “Love in the country lanes, the song of birds, moonlight” these were sure draws for a poet playing for safety and his subject catalogue included “rainbows, cuckoos, daffodils and timid hares”. What was worse, this poetry aimed at providing readers an easily grasped thought in simple language thus playing to the lowest artistic responses of large audience. Dispensing with subtleties- linguistic, material, intellectual or emotional-they bred in the reader the habit of cooking for this easy pleasure so that, he would instinctively shy away from making that effort which a poetry that had not lost its vitality would demand of him. Such poetry was naturally unaffected by the changing relationship of man to his surroundings, by the faster and more complex rhythms of modern life.

What was needed was that a perception of the changing dynamic realities should enter into the essence of poetry and become integral to it. This was not merely a question of changing the fashion of Imagery, of re-placing horse-cars by the automobile introducing a few of the catchy surface features of the machine age. As a critic said. *The Lady of Shalott* would not become an expression of contemporary life if it were to replace tie lady’s barge by a motorboat. When such a substitution was in Georgean poetry it remained purely “decorative” and didn’t enter the stuff of poetry. A Rupert Brooke’s light lyricizing of the sleek beauty of “the unpassioned machine” strikes one as hardly anything but a piece of literary embroidery. While Eliot’s use of a similar image conveys exactly how the machine in central section of “The Waste Land”. “The Are Sermon,” we read:

At the violet hour, when: the eyes, and back

Turn upward from the desk. when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting

The throbbing expectancy of the human machine-at the approach of the hour of physical amorous titillation of the evening spread against the sky, a patient etherized upon the table-is an element for our intimate lives. As Eliot pointed out, the need of the hour was for poets to match their subtlety to the demands of their perception of the lives they weld living. In a celebrated passage. The Metaphysical Poets,he said:

We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists as present must be difficult. Ourcivilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility must produce various complex results the poet must become more and more comprehensive more allusive, more indirect, in order to force dislocate if necessary language into meaning.

The effort of poets like Pound and Eliot was to recover for poetry its lost vigour. They found in the verse of the metaphysical poets, in Donne especially, a secret of poetic strength they missed. Theirs was a more unified sensibility. A thought to Donne was as immediate an experience as the odour of a rose. And we notice how Donne's strength lay in a rapid alteration and antithesis of feeling. The use of metaphysical 'wit' or 'conceit' in their poetry which Johnson had criticized was in fact a warrant of the copresence of thought and feeling and their complex inter-inanimation in their verse.

While the Metaphysical poets were a dominant influence and one could also discern a close affinity between the troubled life of the Jacobean and our contemporary society-there were other forces at work too. The Fresh Symbolists had muscled with the problem of how poetry can communicate feeling. Emotion cannot be directly conveyed; it can only be aroused in the reader by indirect means. It required a sort of 'objective correlative"-a series of situations, events, objects and relationships which could evoke the particular emotion and stand for it. They had also experimented with the possibility of expressing one kind of sene impression in forms of another. A colour may have corresponding sensation in sound or a sound in an odour a visual image may be expressed precisely in terms of a, tactual image and so on. (What came: to be called "synaesthesta") A French critic who made a profound impact on T.S. Eliot was Remy do Gourmont whose whole effort was to predicate to poetry an objectivity completely removed and freed from any taint of the personal feeling of the poet. All this went into the molding of the new poetry.

But of course, the strongest single, influence was Ezra Pound. The ordering form of Eliot's verse derives from Pound's "Imagism". And it should be renumbered that the original draft of "The Waste Land"was almost twice as long and that it was Pound who pruned it to its present size making it more compact. That is the point of Eliot's dedication of the poem to Pound in the words:

As in the case of Eliot's phrase "objective correlative" Pound's "imagism" insists that every pattern of feeling has its corresponding pattern of objects and events. If these are set down concretely exactly, they will evoke the precise emotion in the reader. This was partly at least aimed against the imprecise, vague emotionalizing of a Tennyson of Sheeley. But

Imagism tended to give a mystical kind of power to the self-sufficient completely realized image". "Image" always is and must occur as an element in all poetry. Pound himself has defined the three aspects of poetry in these words:

(1) To write poetry which moves its music, whether it be a in or an aptitude for, or suggestion of, season panning music: (2) Imagism, or poetry wherein the feelings of painting and sculpture are predominant and there is thirdly poetry that is akin to nothing but language, which is a dance of intelligence among words and ideas and modifications of ideas words.

A certain blend of these elements would be present in all good poetry, but the emphasis in Imagism is on that element that Pound described as the predominance of the feelings of painting and sculpture. The hard and precise image-with sharp edges and no fuzziness is instinct with a powerful life. Pound's prescription was for a tightened form of Poetry. And he finally saw in the Chinese system of Cryptogram and Ideogram this hardness and precision superlatively realized. How did the Chinese write "Man sees horse? First man on his two legs-second his eye moves through space-a figure, running legs under an eye-modified picture of an eye, and legs-third, there stand the horse on his Chinese lyric the following:

Blue smoke war

(Blue is the smoke of war.)

White bones men

(White are the bones of men.)

No wonder that when Eliot arrived on scene with the Prufrock in 1917. Pound had the perspicacity to recognize the advent of greatness in the midst of all the sneering comment and incomprehension that overtook the critical world. What Found noted then is now common knowledge but may still severed direct attention to the true Eliot.

Mr. Eliot's two shorts of metaphor his wholly unrealizable always apt half ironicsuggestion, and his precise realizable picture his method of conveying a whole situation andhalf a character by three words of a quoted phrase his constant aliveness, missing of an observation with the unexpectedness of a very subtle backhanded cliche.

One things of the force that is packed into such hard and precise images in Prufrock'sLove Song as these:

Let us so then you and I

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table:

Let us go through certain half deserted streets

The muttering retreats

Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels

And saw dust restaurants with oyster shells:

Streets that follow like as tedious argument

Of insidious intent
To lead to an overwhelming question
Oh, do not ask. “what is it”?
Let us go and make our visit,
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michaelangelo.
The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes.
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle upon the windowpanes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening.
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains.
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys.
Slipped by the terrace made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a suit October night
Curled once about the house and felt asleep....,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons...
And have known the eyes already known them all-
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And I am formulated, sprawling upon a pen
when I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should begin
To spit out all the but-ends of my day and ways?
And how should I presume?
I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas...
I grow old.... grow old....
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled....
I have heard the mermaids singing each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me...

Perhaps never was the element of an age caught so accurately and no brilliantly in a set of Images, and no more than a more handful but each stamped with an absolute hall-mark of our days and air ways.

2.5.3 “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “The Waste Land”

This final lesson is intended to give you a few hints that might help you in your analysis of the two poems. Only a few important passages can be referred to here and a few salient points made about them. (The student is advised to read the poems with the help of one of the many commentaries: George Williamson’s *Reader’s Guide to T.S. Eliot* will prove useful).

Before analyzing"The Love Song" you might recall what I had said in an earlier lesson. We should not look upon the monologue merely as a revelation of the particular features of a character of the state of mind of a particular person, but rather as a vision of the character's world crystallized in his thoughts and feelings. Prufrock's thoughts and feelings are the images of his world. The effort is not so much to relate the words and images to a psychological complex behind them. Gaining thereby a better view of a personality called Prufrock as we are naturally inclined to do white reading a Browning monologue. We rather see the world in terms) of what is happening to him. That is one thing. Secondly, in the now of Prufrock's consciousness represented in the monologue we perceive a certain pattern, a certain consistency of mood and atmosphere. The little incidents and characters that pit through 'his mind does not easily cohere sequentially nor can we read them as parts of developing event. It is all one and the same situation and movement is rather circular, we come back to where we began. Within that general movement, however there is a sort of climbing to climax and a lapse back into the original mood.

As soon as live read the opening line "Let us go then, you and I we are projected into Prufrock's world. We know where we are: it is the familiar urban world intensified turned inside out. It is a dramatic opening and the tone is casual, conversational, deliberately low key. Our first impression is: they might be any two of the faceless, anonymous, of the city-man and woman likely-who have said this countless number of times at evenings round street comers. They are not personalized; it is just a voice that is heard of over-heard in snatches over the city's declaring hubbub of an evening. If it is such a generalized voice, might it not be a voice within Profrock himself? As we read the poem this possibility grows on us. It is as though the more conscious "I" in Prufrock is giving way to the "you" the stronger submerged self the sexual urge. The unsure conscious part of him is living conic to terms with his submerged self but falls to respond successfully.

What is more important is we are sharply pulled up by the starting way the voice describes the evening. This is not surely how a man inviting his female companion torendezvous in the evening (we already get a warning not to interpret any of these utterances too narrowly, too literally.) The Image of a patient etherized upon a table sets the tone for much that follows. Evening conventionally lyricized, suddenly appears frightfully corpse-like: the flush of health is turned "to the ghastly pallidity of disease. For one thing, they may reflect the city-dweller's perceptions: again, this image like that of the winding indecisive streets possesses a close relationship with Prufrock. It is evening seen through his mind reflecting his "proneness under either just as the winding streets are an echo of his helplessly vacillating mind. We notice that the physical surroundings throughout have a kind of relationship. The streets are like an insidious argument leading you to an overwhelming question. What is the question? "Do not ask" says Prufrock or rather the conscious part of Prufrock. It is either too frightening a question or one that doesn't matter, is not of any great moment. The real reason might be it cannot be formulated at all because we haven't given it place in our thinking and feeling.

Later, in the last passage we come across the question again, but there "it is associated with the committed lovers who squeeze the universe into a ball without hesitations and derive whatever revelation the experience offers them...unlike Prufrock who is not capable of the lovers self-assurance. Any way it seems clear than the question has a context, that of sexual love. What is the meaning of it? What is the real fulfilment of sex? At the same time. It does sound like that the most overwhelming question of all which we all live by dodging namely, "what are weliving for?" What is it all about?

The first section ends with a seemingly decisive: "Let us go and make out visit." The whole sequence is perhaps properly regarded is 'psychological drama of Prufrock's amorous life. If the first section is the decision to go the rendezvous in the next, we have already arrived inside the room. It is that kind of sophisticated place where ladies who have pretensions to culture and art-connoisseurship go about talking of Michelangelo. There is of course, a false ring about it all. Though Michelangelo might suggest to our minds a heroic approach to life or the great renaissance vitality the way the ladies mouth their appreciation and use his great time has exactly the reverse effect. And these two lines:

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo

become something like a back drop or

Outside, the yellow fog like a car rubs its back against the windowpanes and the yellow smoke earls about the home and falls asleep as though responding to "inner" vacuity and desolation.

From this point onwards we sense a rising excitement in our protagonist's mind as he tries to screw up his courage to the sticking point. The re-iterated: "There will be time, therewill be time!" expresses at once to make a decision and the escape from it by postponement. This excitement grows to a point with-the question. "Do I dare disturb the universe?" There is considerable wry mouthed self-mockery and bitterness in all this and it is lent an edge by such details as "the bald spot" in the middle of hair, the smartness of the collar mounting firmly to the Ochin and the rest of it. The long sequence that follows moves to the hunting tune of "I have known them all already, known them all. In a mood of reflection Prufrock recalls moments of social discomfiture and sexual excitation—all the time the moment of decision is drawing closer and closer the fearful diffidence and unease growing in tempo. This tense drama of passion and timidity is lit up with images of Intimacy- voices, eyes the arms, the perfume wafted from a dress which has time and again aroused him to desire. But he also recalls how he was "formulated by appraising society, pinned and wriggling or the wall-and how he has only measured out his life with coffee spoons. The pressing question: "And how should I presume?" "How should I begin?" drives him to the inexorable crisis after the tea and the cakes and the ices.....

Just at the climactic point there is a pause-the dramatist in Eliot seems to beascendant. Prufrock has a sudden vision of himself as he might have been as he should havebeen.

“I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floor of silent seas”.

This is one of those profound images that crystallize the whole situation in a flash of insight. And it stands alone, by itself poised so to say, at the heart of the drama we are witnessing. The crab with its pair of ragged claws, the only important functional part of the whole, is the image of blind brute appetite..., ravenous appetite on legs moving in darkness back and birth, grabbing. And the sea which asserts itself again at the end of the poem is the watery element suggestive of indolence, relaxation and inactivity which is also Prufrock’s element. By the time we come back to the afternoon and the evening which sleeps peacefully for malingers recalling the, etherized patient, the climax has passed. Now it is clear our protagonist has lost the battle. if-indeed it was ever in doubt, and that he hasn’t the strength to force the movement to its crisis. And now his mind vainly evokes images of heroism and sacrifice St. John and his head presented on a platter to Salome-only to dismiss them with “I am no prophet and here’s no great matter.” (Though in his: “I have wept and fasted wept and played...” he seems to be making a comical appropriation of the prophet’s role. There is only the Eternal Footman holding his coat and snickering at his object failure. Incidentally, there is significance in Prufrock’s being so dismissed by the Footman symbol of social status, because it is an indication of how the city man’s soul is racked by the want of social approval.

There is a perceptible fall in the tension from this point as we come to a gradual diminuendo. What remains is self-recrimination and vague,imaginings about what moment. Ifforced have afforded some great revelation like Lazarus coming from the dead to tell us about what lies on the other side of the grave, how our exudations here, our enterprises and our failures figure there? Or, would It not have ended up with the Lady’s settling her pillow and saying: That is not what I meant at all. Prufrock is back where he was though he has now another glimpse of his wretched condition “as a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen.” Once again images begin to gain strength, but before he yields himself up Prufrock attempts a defying stance: “I am no Hamlet.” not the tragic hero who has some idealism to guide his actions. He is no such thing. People might say he has something of Hamlet’s vacillation, but he is content not to claim any of Hamlet’s greatness. Nor is he satisfied with being only an attendant lord, or mere number to swell someone’s retinue. He is going to resume his unromantic class role-busy himself with nice questions of social decorum: whether to part his hair from behind, wear flannel trousers or eat a peach. And he would attempt to laugh away his wretchedness’ in self-mockery:

I grow old...I grow old....

I shall wear the bottoms of trousers rolled

But then, something within him still brings to the surface novel fancies, wisns of romance which he might have nursed as a younger man. His suppressed self is busy with “escapist” dreams of mermaids who will not sing to him (They only sing to heroes like

Ulysses). The sea imagery which has the effect of lulling him into passivity momentarily takes on a lyric quality and becomes vibrant for a while. The mermaids pressed in seaweeds riding the waves seaward combining the white hair of the waves blown back once again arouse the erotic sensations of the earlier sequences. But they are mythic creatures distanced, and there is no harm in indulging them in fancy. All to no purpose; even such fantasy must be short-lived: “Till human voices wake us and we drown.” Prufrock has come full circle. From dismal contact with realities to unavailing dreams, and from dreading to drowning in the same inexorable element, he is back into the inane where he belongs. The sea water is no fructifying symbol for him... because what he is afflicted with is “soul-dampness”.

We might now see the point of the title and the epigraph from Dante, it is Prufrock’s Love Song the story of his amorous adventure, the only kind of song of love he can “sing”. It is, of course more like a “dirge” or a lament. The conventional association of “Love Song” and the relation of spirit that goes with it have been totally reversed, giving rise to devastating irony. A further question is; if this be the love song of a certain character, how do we identify him? The name.... J, Alfred Prufrock.... As itself a little like a metaphor that expands in the mind of the reader; it curiously suggests the ineffectualness of the city character without your being able to say how-Who is he? What is his true identity? The epigraph juxtaposes-a similar query and answer front Dante’s Inferno: (Incidentally, here is also a kind of Inferno) it is the answer of the shade of Guide when he asked to declare himself. He says; (Dante’s Italian rendered into English)

“It I thought my answer were to one who ever could return
to the world, this flame should shake no more; but since
none did ever return alive from this depth, if what I
hear be true, without fear of infamy
I answer thee.

Prufrock, too, from his anonymity in his own inferno can claim similar immunity. He has no definite history or local habitation except that he la part of our civilization. What infamy, can he far and who is going to return from these our Inferno-like depths to narrate what he saw there? And to whom shall be narrate it? Since we are all immersed in that same gloomy element? In another sense. Prufrock is more of the imaginative world of the poem, no one can escape from the world to this in order to tell on him. He remains inviolate. One important point of appositeness of the Dante epigraph must be noted: The contrast between the assurance of spiritual realities-that underlies Dante’s great poem and the utter soullessness of modern mad world and his mental horizons should not be lost sight of Dante’s words juxtaposed with Eliot’s poem would therefore add a deeper strain to the enveloping ivory.

If Prufrock typifies a general state not peculiar to any individual. we can see what is gained by making the Love Song a monologue. There is gain in concreteness: it is at once the “objective” delineation of a scene and the projection of the inner drama of contemporary man. In order that the device may be effective enough we are provided certain marks of

Individuation. We might perhaps sum up these: Prufrock is middle-aged, oversensitive and timid yearning and procrastinating. He is fearful that life might pass him by—and yet somehow, he is resigned to the fact. A creature of the world, he is yet vaguely disturbed and dissatisfied with it. He is intelligent enough to see his own failure in a perspective. He la not even a "grand" damnation like that of a great criminal or greatly sinful man. His failure is relieved by no kind of distinction: it is just insignificant and that is the worst cut of all. What makes us recognize ourselves in the force with which his flow of consciousness swiftly draws us into his charmed circle.

I have touched on important segments of the poem in some detail hoping that such an analysis would give you the requisite acquaintance with Eliot's method so that you" will be able to read the greater poem. "The Waste Land"on your own I should like to suggest that "The Waste Land"should he read, if possible, along with some commentary. like' that of Cleanth Brooks.

Now one word about establishing a possible transition from the Love Song to "The Waste Land". As we have seen, The Love Song is concerned with man's failure to give the sexual urge anything like a fulfilling expression. Firstly, we notice that this failure is basically connected with our divorce of sex from the kind of idealization we conventionally associatedwith "Love".Consequently, sex is reduced to merely the animal urge and even that lacks expression because of modem man's soul dampness and want of even ordinary animal courage. He has too much of Hamlet's "sickness", or perhaps too much of an over- intellectualized conscience to be able to give way to that urge spontaneously even as animals de. this is further accentuated by the fact that Prufrock is very much a creature of over- refinement who cares for society and hungers for social acceptance. It may be born in mind that Eliot's earlier poems place great emphasis on the social pattern, whereas in his last great poem. In Four Quartets, the patterns are comparatively more abstract. The first phase culminates in "The Waste Land"

The theme of Prufrock is now treated in depth and given tidier meaning in "The Waste Land"."The Waste Land"in Miss Western's book From Ritual to Romance, to which Eliot has acknowledged a debt-in his notes to "The Waste Land"has significance in the Fertility ritual. The central theme of Eliot's poem is the loss of fertility caused by the degradation our sexual Instinct has suffered, and the possibility of its rehabilitation-though such a possibility is only hinted and is only to be inferred. Eliot seems to assort in the poem as a whole the prime need for control and the leadership or the spirit which alone can bring about regeneration in this sense the poem is preoccupied with sex and religion and with, the regaining of "fertility" not merely in the sense of procreation and continuation of the race but the way we can make that process meaningful. Sexual pleasure without any higher relationship reduced it to the level of the brute. In the religious context (in the context of the Buddha. St. Augustine and the Upanishads alluded to in the poem) this means that any effort to contain the body by the spirit Is Impossible. Without such effort we are doomed to sterility dryness of spirit and body both. At the heart of the poem, therefore, Eliot placed the Gral legend-the story of the Fisher King's loss of virility and his subsequent regaining it undertaking the quest of the Grail.

Alongside he has woven into the fabric of the poem, the “Hanged God” myth and various fertility rituals drawn from his knowledge of anthropology (and from Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*—like the Tarot pack with which ancient Egyptians used to foretell the coming of the Nile waters which again, meant the onset of fertility.

Thus, if the “sterile” sex experience of Prufrock treats the theme at a more social level. “The Waste Land”treats it at a deeper and more religious level. There is continuity in this respect in Eliot’s work as a whole. In fact. In many of his earlier poems we already come across symbol of fertility which gather to a focal point in “The Waste Land”. For instance, in “Sweeney Erect”, Ariadnes Goddess of vegetation: of spring, is referred to in the following verses:

Display me Aeolus above

Reviewing the insurgent gales

Which tangle Ariadne’s hair

And swell with haste and perjured sails.

Against this, the mating of Sweeney with his bed-fellow is a sterile coupling in a brothel, Always, Love” is betrayed and fertility denied. Hope of re-birth or regeneration is offered but regeneration demands sacrifice, suffering and acceptance of some principles and not merely the life of the ladies of the corridor (who come and go talking of Michelangelo). The sufferings of Philomel lead to that re-birth. And that “inviolable” voice of the Nightingale, you will be referred to in “The Waste Land”is also present in Eliot’s earlier poems.

The nightingales are singing near

The Convent of the Sacred Heart

And sang within the bloody wood

When Agamemnon cried aloud

To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud

(Sweeney Among the Nightingales)

The nightingales sign at betrayal and death, at man’s unthinking abandonment to passionless sexual pleasure.

In this way, “The Waste Land”extends the theme mooted in The Love Song and moves ittowards a religious dimension. The earlier poem is subsumed in the greater poem. We notice, for instance, how in a central section in “The Waste Land”the entire situation of The Love Song seems to be involved. In Section III “The Fire Sermon” the “violet hour” brings the young man carbuncular to the typist girl:

He the young man carbuncular, arrives.

A small house agent’s clerk with One bold stare.

One of the low on whom assurance sits

As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

The time is now propitious, as the guesses.

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired.

Endeavours to engage her in caresses

Which still are unreproved, if undesired.

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once

Exploring hands encounter nodefence;

His vanity requires no response.

And makes a welcome of indifference

Bestows one final patronizing kiss.

And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit.....

He does what Prufrock had wished to but failed. This business like young, man carbuncular is Prufrock's counterpart. And the typist girl who is partner to this denudation of sex, merely:

smoothes her hair with automatic hand,

and puts a record on the gramophone,

It is this automatic, determinized sex-life-of "human engines" that both the poems are about. In *They Waste* Land this occurs only as an episode in the life of the "unreal city. It is part of the vision of Tiresias-the blind. Tiresias who is both man and woman-or rather. It is a happening in Tiresias who is (as Eliot's note makes clear) what he sees. And all the men in it are but one man, and all the women, but one woman. This has important implications for Eliot's method of handling the "monologuizing" character. The many characters that pit through "The Waste Land"—the German of the first Section. Phlebas, the Phoenician, the merchant who sells currants, Ferdinand; Prince of Naples, out young man carbuncular and, of course, Tiresias, the blind prophet; or to take the women. the Hyacinth girl Madam Sosostris, the lady of the rocks the lady of situations, demobbed. Albert's wife Lil and the women who upbraid her.... these are all, not fully realized dramatic characters but rather parts of a lyrical design. They are certain vital aspects of the same situation—they and the episodes they are associated with can be regarded better as centres of "awareness" rather than as separate personalities. In this respect, you find that Prufrock has much greater "solidity" as a "Self or a person existing in his own right, than any of the characters of "The Waste Land". There is now greater progress towards "impersonality" as far as the technique of Eliot is concerned. This, you will observe, is related with Eliot and Eliot's famous attempt to formulate what he called "the impersonal theory of poetry" in his Tradition and the Individual Talent. As F.R. Leaves points out "The Waste Land"reaches perhaps the limit in the use of the impersonalized character.

In "The Waste Land"the development of impersonality that "Gerontion" shows in comparison with "Prufrock" reaches on extreme unit; it would be difficult to imagine a complete ascendence of the individual self, a more complete projection of awareness." (F.R. Leavis).

As I said, the vastly extended pattern of “The Waste Land”embraces both the circumstances of the present dryness and sterility and the possibility of rain and regeneration. it opens with a reversal of the normal significance of the seasons: April is the cruelest month.

Which signals the ineffectualness of the vegetation myth in our time, thus lending a toneof irony to all that follows-and ends with:

Shantih, shantih, shantih.

—the peace that passeth understanding—still preserving the enveloping tone, of irony. In between, it sweeps through. Its five Sections the Burial of the Dead, a Game of Chess. The Fire Sermon. Death by Water mid What the Thunder Said-presenting vision ‘of our present debasement of the old rituals and moves to a climax in the Fire Sermon which closes. on a glimpse: of what might save man from his waste land, in the form of Buddha-St. Augustine collocation:

To Carthage then I came U

Burning burningburning, burning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

Burning

And the last section spells out what the Thunder said giving Prajapati’s message to gods, demons, and men... Datta. Dayadhvam, Demyata, as *Brihadararwaka Upanishad* has it, though the negative mood of “The Waste Land”remains very much real at the end. We have implicit in the poem the direction that Bliot’s poetry was to take and that man might take to regenerate himself and regain his lost fertility.

2.6 SUMMING –UP

Like many modernist writers, Eliot wanted his poetry to express the fragile psychological state of humanity in the twentieth century. The passing of Victorian ideals and the trauma of World War I challenged cultural notions of masculine identity, causing artists to question the romantic literary ideal of a visionary-poet capable of changing the world through verse. Modernist writers wanted to capture their transformed world, which they perceived as fractured, alienated, and denigrated. Europe lost an entire generation of young men to the horrors of the so-called Great War, causing a general crisis of masculinity as survivors struggled to find their place in a radically altered society.

2.7 GLOSSARY/ALLUSIONS

- ***“The Waste Land”***is notable for its use of allusions and myths, which draw on a wide range of cultural and literary traditions. These references often serve to highlight the loss of cultural continuity and coherence in modern society, but they also suggest the possibility of connecting with the past and finding meaning in tradition. There are numerous examples of myths and allusions used in T.S. Eliot’s ***”The Waste Land”***. Here are some of the most prominent ones:

- **The myth of the Fisher King**: This myth is central to the structure and meaning of "The Waste Land". The Fisher King is a figure from Arthurian legend, who is wounded and unable to fulfill his role as a protector of the land. The myth serves as a metaphor for the spiritual and cultural decay of modern civilization, and the need for spiritual renewal and regeneration.
- **The allusion to Dante's Inferno**: The epigraph of "The Waste Land"is a quote from Dante's *Inferno*, which speaks to the themes of death, decay, and spiritual emptiness that pervade the poem. The quote ("I had not thought death had undone so many") suggests the extent to which death and decay have permeated modern society.
- **The allusion to the myth of Tiresias**: Tiresias is a figure from Greek mythology who was transformed into a woman for seven years as punishment for killing a pair of copulating snakes. In "The Waste Land", Tiresias appears as a blind prophet who sees the truth about human sexuality and the spiritual emptiness of modern society.
- **The allusion to the myth of Philomela**: Philomela is a figure from Greek mythology who was raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law, but was eventually transformed into a nightingale. In "The Waste Land", Philomela is a symbol of the violence and degradation that characterize human relationships in modern society.
- **The allusion to Shakespeare's The Tempest**: The section of "The Waste Land"titled "Death by Water" contains a reference to the drowned sailor from "The Tempest". The reference serves as a metaphor for the spiritual and cultural decay of modern society, and the need for renewal and regeneration.
- **The allusion to the myth of the Sibyl**: The Sibyl was a prophetess from ancient Greece who was granted eternal life but not eternal youth. In "The Waste Land", the reference to the Sibyl appears in the section titled "The Burial of the Dead," where it serves as a metaphor for the decay and futility of human existence.
- **The allusion to the myth of the Phoenix**: The Phoenix is a mythical bird that is said to be reborn from its own ashes. In "The Waste Land", the reference to the Phoenix appears in the section titled "What the Thunder Said," where it serves as a symbol of the hope for spiritual renewal and regeneration.
- **The allusion to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel**: The story of the Tower of Babel appears in the *Book of Genesis*, and tells the story of how God scattered humanity and confused their languages after they tried to build a tower to reach the heavens. In "The Waste Land", the reference to the Tower of Babel appears in the section titled "The Fire Sermon," where it serves as a metaphor for the breakdown of communication and the loss of cultural coherence in modern society.

2.8 QUESTIONS

- Why is T. S. Eliot regarded as an important poet/writer?
- Describe the term “objective correlative” as used by T. S. Eliot.
- What is Eliot’s impersonal theory of poetry?

2.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS’ ANSWERS

A. True

B. True

2.10SUGGESTED READINGS

- Brooks, Cleanthes. *“The Waste Land”: Critique of the Myth*. London: Macmillan, 1988
- Chintz, David E. *A Companion to T. S. Eliot*. Singapore: Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 2009.
- Coote, Stephen*. “The Waste Land”*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1985.
- Davidson, Harriet. “Improper Desire: Reading “The Waste Land”*.” The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*. Ed. Anthony David Moody. Cambridge: CUP, 1997: 121-231.
- Gardner, Helen. *The Dry Season: The Art of T.S. Eliot*. London: Faber and Faber, 1985.

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Block 7
Unit 1
WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN (1907-1973)

Structure

1.1 Learning Objectives
1.2 Introduction
1.3 W. H. Auden
    1.3.1 Early Life
    1.3.2 Early Publications And Travels
    1.3.3 The Poet's Life And Work
    A.Self-Assessment Question
1.4 Poetic Themes And Techniques
    1.4.1 The Age of Anxiety
    1.4.2 Later Works 1958-1973
    1.4.3 An Intrepid Traveler
    1.4.4 Auden: A Modern Poet
    B. Self-Assessment Question
    C.Self-Assessment Question
1.5 Summing –Up
1.6 Glossary
1.7 Questions
1.8 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
1.9 Suggested Readings

1.2 Learning Objectives

These lessons have been prepared specifically for the Post Graduate students of ICDEOL, H.P. University, Shimla, who are pursuing their Masters in English Literature. The thrust of the discussions contained in this and subsequent lessons should provide reasonably detailed Information on the life, works and various literary achievements of Wysten Hugh Auden. These lessons are meant to enhance your awareness regarding the poems in you course. An attempt has also been made to analyze the following four poems for your benefit:

The Unknown Citizen

September 1, 1939

The Shield of Achilles

in Memory of W.B. Yeats

These four poems are also a part of your syllabus - Course - 10 (Modern British and American Poetry).

1.1 Introduction

Auden's stature in modern literature has been contested. Probably the most common critical view from the 1930s onward ranked him as the last and least of the three major twentieth-century British and Irish poets—behind Yeats and Eliot—while a minority view, more prominent in recent years, ranks him as the highest of the three. Opinions have ranged from those of Hugh MacDiarmid, who called him "a complete wash-out"; F. R. Leavis, who wrote that Auden's ironic style was "self-defensive, self-indulgent or merely irresponsible"; and Harold Bloom, who wrote "Close thy Auden, open thy [Wallace] Stevens, "to the obituarist in *The Times*, who wrote: "W.H. Auden, for long the *enfant terrible* of English poetry… emerges as its undisputed master." Joseph Brodsky wrote that Auden had "the greatest mind of the twentieth century".

Nobel Prize winning Irish dramatist, author and poet, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

1.3 W. H. AUDEN

1.3.1 Early Life

Wystan Hugh Auden was born on February 21, 1907, in York, England. He was the last of three sons born to George and Constance Auden. His father was the medical officer for the city of Birmingham, England, and a psychologist (a person who studies the mind). His mother was a devoted Anglican (a member of the Church of England) combination of religious and scientific themes is buried throughout Auden's work. The industrial area where he grew up shows up often in his adult poetry. Like many young boys in his city, he was interested in machines, mining, and metals and wanted to be a mining engineer. With both grandfathers being Anglican ministers, Auden once commented that if he had not become a poet he might have up as an Anglican bishop.

Another influential childhood experience was his time served as a choirboy. He states in his autobiographical sketch, *A Certain World*, "it was there that I acquired sensitivity to language which could not have acquired in any other way." He was educated at St Edmund's preparatory school and at Oxford University. At Oxford fellow undergraduates Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, and Stephen Spender, with Auden, formed the group called the Oxford Group or the "Auden Generation."

At school Auden was interested in science, but at Oxford he studied English. He disliked the Romantic (nineteenth-century emotional style of writing) poets P.B. Shelley (1792- 1822) and John Keats (1795-1821), whom he was inclined to refer to as "Kelly and Sheets." This break with the English post-Romantic tradition was important for his contemporaries. It is perhaps still more important that Auden was the first poet in English to use the imagery (language that creates a specific image) and sometimes the terminology (terms that are specific to a field) of clinical psychoanalysis (analysis and treatment of emotional disorders).

1.3.2 Early publications and travels

In 1928, when Auden was twenty-one, a small volume of his poems was privately printed by a school friend. Poems was published a year later by Faber and Faber (of which T. S. Eliot [1888-1965] was a director). The Orators (1932) was a volume consisting of odes (poems focused on extreme feelings), parodies (take offs) of school speeches, and sermons that criticized England. It set the mood for a generation of public-school boys who were in revolt against the empire of Great Britain and fox hunting.

After completing school Auden traveled with friends in Germany, Iceland, and China. He then worked with them to write Letters from Iceland (1937) and Journey to A War (1939). In 1939 Auden took up residence in the United States, supporting himself by teaching at various universities. In 1946 he became a U.S. citizen, by which time his literary career had become a series of well-recognized successes. He received the Pulitzer Prize and the Bollingen Award and enjoyed his standing as one of the most distinguished poets of his generation. From 1956 to 1961 he was professor of poetry at Oxford University. He passed away in a hotel room on September 29, 1973.

1.3.3 The Poet's Life and Work

Auden was the most active of the group of young English poets who, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, saw themselves bringing new techniques and attitudes to English poetry. Stephen Spender and Cecil Day Lewis were the most prominent members of the new school, which soon afterward broke apart. Like many of his generation, Auden learned from the poetic wit and irony of T. S. Eliot, and the metrical and verbal techniques of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Wilfred Owen. His English studies at Oxford familiarized him with the rhythms and long alliterative line of Anglo-Saxon poetry as well as with the rapid and rollicking short lines (a sortof inspired doggerel) of the poet John Skelton (ca. 1460- 1529); both influenced Auden's versification. He learned, too, from the songs of the English music hall and, later, from American blues singers.

The Great Depression that shook America in 1929 hit England soon afterward, and Auden and his contemporaries looked out at an England of industrial stagnation and mass unemployment, seeing not the metaphorical Waste Land of Eliot but a more literal waste land of poverty and "depressed areas." His early poetry is much concerned with a diagnosis of the ills of his country. This diagnosis, conducted in a verse that combined deliberate irreverence and sometimes even clowning with a cunning verbal craftsmanship, drew on Freud and Marx to show England both as a nation of neurotic invalids who must learn to "throw away their rugs" and as the victim of an antiquated economic system. The liveliness and nervous force of this early poetry of Auden's made a great impression, even though an uncertainty about his audience led him to introduce purely private symbols, intelligible only to a few friends, in some of his poems.

With time, Auden's poetry showed greater clarity of imagery and less of a desire to shock; he produced, in the years around 1940, some poems (such as "Lullaby") of finely

disciplined movement, pellucid clarity, and deep yet unsentimental feeling. At the same time he was developing a more complex view of the world, moving from his earlier psychologically-based diagnosis of modern ills to a more religious view of personal responsibility and traditional value. But he never lost his ear for popular speech or his ability to combine elements from popular art with an extreme technical formality. Auden was always the experimenter, particularly in ways of bringing together high artifice and a colloquial tone.

For the first part of his career- the English and the early American phase- Auden was very much the poet of his times, first of the Depression and then of the Age of the Refugee. In the poems of this period he preferred to confront modern problems directly rather than to filter them, as Eliot did, through symbolic situations. The poems of the last phase of his career, notably those in About the House (1965) and City without Walls (1970), are increasingly personal in tone and combine an apparent air of offhand informality with remarkable technical skill.

Auden grew increasingly hostile to the modern world and skeptical of all remedies offered for modem ills; he took refuge in love and friendship (particularly the feelings of love and friendship he shared with Chester Kallman) his emotions grounded in a deepening but rarely obtrusive religious feeling. In the last year of his life he returned to England to live in Oxford, feeling the need to be part of a university community as a protection against loneliness. An uneven poet, a poet who in the opinion of some critics never quite fulfilled the enormous promise of his early work, Auden is nevertheless now generally recognized as one of the masters of twentieth-century English poetry, a thoughtful, seriously playful poet whommore than one critic has compared with Dryden in his combination of lively intelligence and immense craftsmanship.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Auden disliked the Romantic poets. (True/False)

1.4 Poetic Themes and Techniques

The English-born American poet W. H. Auden was one of the greatest posts of the twentieth century. His works center on moral issues and show strong political, social, and psychological (involving the study of the mind) orientations.

Auden's early poetry influenced by his interest in the Anglo-Saxon language as well as in psychoanalysis, was sometimes riddle-like and clinical. It also contained private references that most readers did not understand. At the same time it had a mystery that would disappear in his later poetry.

In the 1930s W. H. Auden became famous when literary journalists described him as the leader of the so-called "Oxford Group," a circle of young English poets influenced by literary Modernism, in particular by the artistic principles adopted by T. S. Eliot. Rejecting the traditional poetic forms favored by their Victorian predecessors, the Modernist poets favored concrete imagery and free verse. In his work Auden applied concepts and science to traditional verse forms and metrical (having a measured rhythm) patterns while including

the industrial countryside of his youth. Coming to the United States was seen by some as the start of a new phase of his work. World War 11 (1939-45) a war in which France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States fought against Germany, Italy, and Japan) had soured him to politics and warmed him to morality and spirituality.

Among Auden's highly regarded skills was the ability to think in terms of both symbols and reality at the same time, so that intellectual ideas were transformed. He rooted ideas through creatures of his imagining for whom the reader could often feel affection while appreciating the stern and cold outline of the ideas themselves. He nearly always language that was interesting in texture as well as brilliant verbally. He employed a great variety of intricate and extremely difficult technical forms. Throughout his career he often wrote pure lyrics of grave beauty, such as "Lay Your Sleeping Head, My Love" and "Look Stranger" His literary contributions include librettos (opera texts) and motion picture documentaries. He worked with Chester Kallmann on the librettos, the most important of which was T. S. Eliot's The Rakes Progress (1951).

Auden was well educated and intelligent, a genius of form and technique. In his poetry he realized a lifelong search for a philosophical and religious position from which to analyze and comprehend the individual life in relation to society and to the human condition in general He was able to express his dislike for a difficult government, his suspicion of science without human feeling, and his belief in a Christian God.

1.4.1 The Age of Anxiety

In 1944, In New York City, against a background of a changed and frightening world, the finest and most controversial - English poet of the day began work on a new long poem. On its publication three years later, it would gamer some of the worst reviews he ever got and leave many of his devotees cold: while TS Eliot hailed it as "his best work to date", the Times Literary Supplement deemed it "his one dull book, his one failure". It would inspire a symphony and a ballet and win the Pulitzer Prize. It was the last long poem he would write.

"The Age of Anxiety" is the strangest flower of a marvelously fertile period. The decade following WH Auden's emigration to New York in 1939 produced not only the long poems "For the Time Being", "New Year Letter" and "The Sea and the Mirror" - his sublime meditation on The Tempest - but some of the finest works of this or any 20th-century poet: "In Memory of WB Yeats", "At the Grave of Henry James", "If I Could Tell You", "The Fall of Rome", "The Quest". And the great and latterly disavowed lament for a falling world "September 1st, 1939".

There are still, remarkably, some who believe Auden's gift deserted him when he left England on the eve of the second world war, as if this perceived treachery to the motherland crippled him creatively, but another reason for this position is suggested by the words of Anthony Powell on Auden's death in 1973, as reported by Kingsley Amis, with whom Powell was breakfasting: "I'm delighted that shit has gone It should have happened years ago..... scuttling off to America in 1939 with his boyfriend like a ..... like a....." But there'll always be an England.

It is in “September 1st, 1939” that we first glimpse the setting for what would become “The Age of Anxiety”.

Faces along the bar

Cling to their average day:

The lights must never go out,

The music must always play

Lest we should see where we are,

Lost in a haunted wood,

Children afraid of the night

Who have never been happy or good.

At the outset of “The Age of Anxiety” Auden spotlights four of these faces, solitary drinkers in a wartime New York bar: Malin, a Canadian airman; Quant, a world-weary clerk; Rosetta, a buyer for a department-store; and Emble, a young naval recruit. Over six sectionsa prologue, a life-story, a dream-quest, a dirge, a masque and an epilogue - they meditate on their lives, their hopes, their losses, and on the human condition. In real terms they get talking at the bar, grab a booth together, get plastered and stagger back to Rosetta’s place. There they drink some more and dance a bit until the two older gents drift home and the younger one pledges undying love to Rosetta before crashing out on her bed.

Between these mundane characters and what Auden requires of them stretches a dizzying gulf. Each of his modern Americans speaks, most of the time, in long speeches of alliterative tetrameter, an English form so old as to suggest firelight and the mead-hall. To a mid-20th-century ear, tetrameter would always seem to have a rhyme planned ahead, but alliteration is what English used to bind ideas before it used rhyme, and that’s good enough this time for the proudly Nordic Auden: “My deuce, my double, my dear image,/Is it lively there, that land of glass”. The never-fulfilled expectation of rhyme is a suitable curse on any lonesome quartet of drinkers at any bar, a milieu that Auden calls “an unprejudiced space where nothing particular ever happens”. Unsurprisingly Malin, Quant, Rosetta and Emble all sound like Auden, who wrote some lively charades but wasn’t really a playwright. Then again, because they sound like Auden, what they say is mostly brilliant, beautiful, or both.

1.4.2 Later Works, 1958-1973

In the late 1950s Auden’s style became less rhetorical while its range of styles increased. In 1958, having moved his summer home from Italy to Austria, he wrote “Good-bye to the Mezzogiorno”; other poems from this period include “Dichtung und Wahrheit: An Unwritten Poem”, a prose poem about the relation between love and personal and poetic language, and the contrasting “Dame Kind”, about the anonymous impersonal reproductive instinct. These and other poems, including his 1955-66 poems about history, appeared in Homage to Clio (1960).

His prose book *The Dyer's Hand* (1962) gathered many of the lectures he gave in Oxford as Professor of Poetry in 1956-61, together with revised versions of essays and notes written since the mid-1940s.

While translating the haiku and other verse in Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings, Auden began using haiku for many of his poems. A sequence of fifteen poems about his house in Austria, Thanksgiving for a Habitat", appeared in About the House (1955), with other poems that included his reflections on his lecture tours, "On the Circuit." In the late 1960s he wrote some of his most vigorous poems, including "River Profile" and two poems that looked back over his life, "Prologue at Sixty" and "Forty Years On." All these appeared in *City Without Walls* (1969). His lifelong passion for Icelandic legend culminated in his verse translation of *The Elder Edda* (1969).

He was commissioned in 1963 to write lyrics for the Broadway musical Man of La Mancha, but the producer rejected them as insufficiently romantic. In 1971 Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant commissioned Audon to write the words, and Pablo Casals to compose the music, for a "Hymn to the United Nations", but the work had no official status.

A Certain Work A Commonplace Book (1970) was a kind of self-portrait made up of favorite quotations with commentary, arranged in alphabetical order by subject. His last prose book was a selection of essays and reviews, *Forewords and Afterwords* (1973). His last books of verse, *Epistle to a Godson* (1972) and the unfinished *Thank You, Fog* (published posthumously, 1974) include reflective poems about language ("Natural Linguistica") and about his own aging CA New Year Greeting". "Talking to Myself", "A Lullaby" ["The din of work in subdued His last completed poem, in haiku form, was "Archeology", about ritual and timelessness, two recurring themes in his later years;

He is now considered one of the greatest poets of the English language. His works are noted for their lexical (word and vocabulary relationship) range and humanitarian (compassionate) content. Auden's tendency to alter and discard poems has prompted publication of several anthologies (collected works) in the decades since his death on September, 28, 1973, in Vienna, Austria. The multivolume Complete Works of W. H. Auden was published in 1989. Auden is now considered one of the greatest poets of the English language

1.4.3 An Intrepid Traveler

It is easy to see that the cultural and philosophical co-ordinates of Auden's poetry range widely across space and time. But it is also very much of its own time, particularly in its restless, vagrant, sometimes harried, note of unsettlement. Nicholas Jenkins, on eminent scholar of Auden has made an attempt to follow along the trail of W.H. Auden. He writes that in 1939, in an "Ode" in praise of a Manhattan hotel where he was temporarily based, Auden wrote that "I have stayed in hotels in most places/ Where my passport permits me to go. / (Excluding the British Dominions / And Turkey and U.S.S.R.)". The tone is light, but the claim

contains a significant figurative truth, one that most critics have not taken seriously enough, or have not thought through in detail. The claim is of the kind of poet that Auden was. It points to the role of the displaced, cosmopolitan poet which history forced Auden to take on and which, when he did take it on, made him such a historically representative figure.

But just how "cosmopolitan," how "international" was Auden? What precisely were the historical conditions from which his uprooted vantage point emerged? How much traveling did he in reality do? How much of his life was spent away from his residence of the moment (whether that was in England, Germany, the United States, Italy, or Austria)? What were the joumeys and choices that produced his own complicatedly transnational literary Identity and his ideal of a sort of world, quite other, I altogether different from this one with its envies andpassports"? This note attempts to supply some basic details out of which satisfying answers to these questions might be built.

In a note to himself late in life Auden roundly declared that "Behavior that can be statistically expressed is the behavior of the enslaved (British Museum holograph notebook, used 1947-? 1964). My first impulse on reading this sentence is to agree cravenly. Striving to be more honest, though, I find that in gauging the extent of Auden's boundary-spanning cultural profile, a few figures and statistics (of a kind) are actually helpful.

They make clear that the restlessness and eclecticism of Auden's poetry emerged not just from a cerebral internationalism of the desk and study but from an existence - a career-in movement, a life with multiple foci. Auden's cosmopolitanism was not just an ethical notion but a reflection of specific cultural and social experiences during a period in which almost no-one expected life to go on unchanged, a period which one historian (Eric Hobsbawm) has called "an era of havoc."

So .... some facts. During his lifetime (1907-1973) Auden held two different passports (British and American) at different times. Although he was finally "naturalized" as an American citizen in May 1946, apparently, he did not receive an American passport until Feb 1948, shortly before he traveled to Italy. This presumably means that he traveled to Europe with the USSBS in 1945 on some kind of temporary, military-issued pass rather than an ordinary American passport.

At various points Auden had long-term homes in five countries: UK, Germany, USA,Italy, and Austria (these are places where he lived at least once for six-months or more at a stretch). He made no- or practically no-journeys abroad from the place which was at the time his de facto home during 26 years out of the 67 or so years of his life (1907'1924, 1933 [bar a few days in Germany during January 1933], 1940-44, 1946-47).

However, if we subtract his years of childhood from this total, we see that Auden made no- or practically no-journeys abroad in only eight out of his 49 adult years, and five of thoseeight years were a direct result of wartime restrictions. In other words, when Auden was anadult and could have traveled abroad, he did so during roughly 94% of the possible years,frequently for quite substantial stretches of time. For him, then, traveling was a norm.

Vaguely defined plans to travel to Australia in 1935 and Mexico in 1938 fell through, meaning that Auden visited or lived in four of the world's seven continents (Asia, Africa, Europe and North America). In all he visited 27 countries at some point in his life (leaving aside Britain, the place of his birth, which of course later, technically became a foreign country for him). Those countries (and colonies) are: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Ceylon, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel (is there any other important English-language poet with a reputation established beforeyhe Second World War who traveled to be, I wonder?) Italy, Japan, Macao, Norway, Portugal Spain Sweden Switzerland USA and Yugoslavia.

We have already seen that Auden claimed by the age of 32 he had "stayed in most places where he was allowed to go "Excluding the British Dominions | And Turkey and USSR Perhaps the most noticeable and significant places that Auden did not visit are Russia (an especially meaningful omission for a supposed poet of the 1930s Left), Central and South America have never been to Mexico or wish to go there" Auden wrote rather calmly in his 1968 introduction to John Ashbery's Some Trees (The tentative plan for Auden and Isherwood to meet Spender in Mexico in the summer 1938, after their trip to China, was apparently abandoned) Closer to "home", we note he never set foot in the country that, in his elegy for WB Yeats, he aggressively describes-based on no first-hand knowledge-as "mad Ireland."

In a manner that helps us to sharpen our sense of specificity about Auden's travel dominated Me, the extent of his movement contrasts starkly and suggestively with those of two major poets of the generations before and after his own. First, the older poet in 1946 Eliot wrote of Ezra Pound that have never known a man of any nationally, to live so long out of his native country without seeming to settle anywhere else." Yet in spite of Ezra Pound's cultivation of an intensely cosmopolitan, mobile poetic persona and in spite of his bookish fascination with the ancient cultures of Egypt and China, he seems only ever to have set foot in seven countries (the United States, Spain Gibraltar), the United Kingdom, France, Italy. Germany, and at the very end of his life, seeking medical treatment, Switzerland), all of them, bar his native land, in the heart of Western Europe

Together these were essentially the countries that produced the literature covered in his MA in Romance languages at Penn as long ago as 1905-06.

(Besides comparing Pound's mobility to Auden's, it is also interesting to compare it in passing to William Carlos Williams's Pound traveled less widely and less often than Auden. He even traveled less widely than Willams. In the 1910s and 1920s, Pound often cast his Internationalist purview against Williams's nativist stance. Yet Williams actually saw a more diverse group of cultures than Pound- he traveled at various times to France, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Holland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Austria and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

This suggests that being identified, by oneself or by others, as a rooted or deracinated artist has as much to do with the stories that writers talk about themselves as does with

actual experience. I am reminded that in A Colder Eye Hugh Kenner calculated Yeats, the poet of Irish nationalism, spent more time out of Ireland than James Joyce, the professional exile Yet in 1948, the Irish government actively sought to have the body of thenationalist Yeats returned to Ireland while discreetly rejecting the idea of repatriating Joyce's remains.)

Of course, the duration and intensity of a person's immersion in a culture counts for far more in the shaping of an identity than the number of places visited for brief holidays. The Cantos is impossible to imagine without Pound's confrontation with avant-garde ideas and poetic techniques in London and Paris during the 1910s and 1920s, or with his Immersion in Italian politics in the 1920s and 1930s. Quite why some literary historians persist in seeing Pound's poem as simply "American" and Pound as an "American" poet is a mystery to me: surely it and he are as much products of Europe as they are anything else? Still, the degree of diversity that writers experience surely matters and in this respect Williams was more widely- traveled than Pound.

But if Pound's personal experience of the world seems limited compared with Auden's, then the self-proclaimed introspective isolated ness of the most important poet of a younger generation of English poets, Philip Larkin, seems even more distinct and contrasting. In spite of Larkin's enthusiasm for the works of Isherwood (that prototypical 1930s wanderer), Larkin himself made only a tiny number of excursions away from English territory. He made trips to Germany in 1936 and 1937 with his father and to Belgium in 1939 with his school. But subsequently he seems to have traveled abroad only twice in his entire adult life in journeys that together amounted to no more a few days' duration (a short trip Paris with Bruce Montgomery in 1952, and a reluctant flying visit to Hamburg in 1976 to collect the Shakespeare Prize).

In other words, while Auden traveled abroad in 94% of the years of his adult life, Larkin traveled similarly in about 5% of the years of his maturity. And, given the brevity of Larkin's forays and the usual lengthiness of Auden's, such a stark numerical comparison actually understates the degree of disparity between their experiences of the wider world. In later years Larkin's carefully cultivated dislike of foreignness and of travel became widely known, and it was from this vantage point that the parochial weight of his sarcasm in his 1960 review of Homage to Clio can best be felt. Bemoaning Auden's disappearance from the English scene in 1939, Larkin castigated the "Individual and cosmopolitan path" that the later Auden had followed.

Clearly Auden's travels are not without cultural foci or biases: they predominantly, though not exclusively, involve journeys around and between Europe and the United States. Such intensive journeying was far less typical or easy than it is today. After he had flown on a US military plane from the United States to Britain on his way to Germany in April 1945, Auden presciently announced to friends waiting to greet him, "I'm the first major poet to fly the Atlantic." (Pound's flight to the United States in November 1945 also seems to have been made on a US military plane) But before long in the post-war period, flying writers werebecoming less anomalous. Isherwood flew to Britain in January 1947; EM Forster flew to the United States in April 1947; Eliot flew from the States to Britain in November 1948.

So Auden was not the first “major poet” to cross the Atlantic Ocean on a commercial flight when, in September 1949, when he flew TWA from Italy to the United States. Auden’s history of geographical mobility - the Christmas of 1937, the year in which he suffered a laying on of patriotic hands when the George VI personally awarded him a Gold Medal for Poetry, was the last Christmas he spent in England until the Christmas of 1972, his last - while telling and pronounced is hardly unique within the culture(s) of Auden’s place and time. And ofcourse, it does not count as one of the innumerable histories of tragic journeying involuntarily lived out around the planet in the 1930s and 1940s. But then that is the point.

During Auden’s life, travel was becoming not so much a rarefied class privilege as a more general condition. Raymond Williams identified exilic, modernist writing and experimentation as occurring within the “general processes of mobility, dislocation and Para- national communication.” Reflecting on Williams’s words and commenting on this idea of “mobility as a key to modernism both as a literary and a social formation, Michael North considers the endlessly peripatetic careers of just three British subjects, Charlie Chaplin, Claude McKay and D. H. Lawrence, and comments that they share and “experience of restless travel so relentless that citizenship ceases to have any meaning.”

Such was also Auden’s case. Auden’s status as a writer almost always “in transit” derives from a particular historical moment, and endows his work with a certain very modem cultural representative ness. These are facets of his writing which are still too infrequently analyzed, or even noticed. It was not as if Auden was unaware of this motif of displacement in his writing and his life. Some of his most telling self-definitions (whether in his poetry, prose, letters or conversations) involve ideas of dislocation or displacement. Thus, at various times after 1940, Auden refers to himself as “the Wandering Jew,” as an “alien.”

In 1941 Auden looked back to the exemplary writing of another heroic member of the first generation of modernists (just as he would do in his 1946 address to the Grolier Club on the expatriated Henry James), when he sought to define why the disaffiliated or nation less writer had become such an important symbol of the fate imposed on everyone by modernity. “Kafka is important to us,” Auden the New World émigré claimed, “because the predicament of his hero is the predicament of the contemporary man.... It was fit and proper that Kafka should have been a Jew, for the Jews have long been placed in the position in which we are all now to be, of having no home.”

The place where a person is born has a symbolic value in the story of their life. So too does the place of their death. As we noted at the start of this essay, in 1939 Auden announced that he had “stayed in hotels in most places | Where my passport permits me to go.” By 1947 he had begun to believe that he would not only keep staying in hotels. He told a friendmournfully. “I shall probably die in a hotel.” In September 1973, Auden, on his last evening as himself, gave a poetry reading and then, during the ensuing night, died alone in the Altenburgin Vienna. Chester Kallman wrote that the following morning he found Auden “Turning icy-blue on a hotel bed.”

1.4.4 Auden: A Modern Poet

To justify Auden as a great modern poet it can be said that Auden stands out among modem poets by his earnest effort to be great modern thinker. He was well versed in history philosophy and theology and had a remarkable grip on contemporary currents of thought inpolitical theory, science and psychology. Auden extraordinary style and diction make his poetrystrikingly obscure. Sometimes the style makes his poem difficult to understand. This difficultyand obscurity arise from the extreme density and epigrammatic terseness of his style.

He often writes in a telegraphic style in which connections, conjugations, articles even pronouns are often missing. Further difficulty is created by his frequent use of the terminology of modern psychology. Auden coins new words and does not hesitate to use archaic, obsolete and unfamiliar, unusual word if they suit his purpose. In a modem age man is suffering from a sense of boredom. Man is lonely even in a crowd, and is spiritually dead. Auden has used different types of landscape to symbolize the spiritual and psychological states of a modem man and so are his peoples and places. Auden has conveyed spiritual desolation of a sick industrial society by the use of desolate rocky landscape.

The final message of his poetry is that life is the blessing and it must be expected as such occurred as a sequence to his faith and universal love for the cure of human ills. The adoption of various style and technique by Auden made him to express his thought in a single way and his use of a long flowering line made his diction to grow simple and rhyme to become conversational.

He has been accepted as a leading poet and one whose influence was felt in much contemporary verse. Technically, Auden was an artist of great virtuosity, a ceaseless experimenter in verse form, with a fine ear of rhythm and music of words.

B. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

1. When and where was W.H. Auden born? How was he influenced by his family background?

   (Answers can be found in the Introduction)

C. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

2. What is the content of his early poetry? (Answers may be located in the section 2 (The poets' life and works)

1.5 SUMMING-UP

Auden's poetry differed from his contemporaries (many of whom focused on the conflict itself, sometimes glorifying this), as he also wrote about the systems of government that caused these wars. Many of Auden's war poems concentrated on totalitarianism and authoritarian governments, which he combined with allusions to Greek and Roman history. Auden's portrayal of the causes and impacts of war set him apart from many other poets for this reason.

1.6 GLOSSARY

Intrepid- without any fear of danger

Lullaby- a gentle song that you sing to help a child to go to sleep

Colloquial-(used about words, phrases, etc.) used in spoken conversation, not in formal situations

Neurotic- worried about things in a way that is not normal

Anxiety- a feeling of worry or fear, especially about the future

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the technique of Auden's' poetry.
2. What are some of the themes taken up by the poet?

   (Answers may be found in the section on 'poetic themes and technique')
3. Name some of the later works of W H. Auden.
4. Write a short note on some of the journeys which Auden undertook during hispoetic career.

   (Answer contained in the section on "intrepid traveler.")
5. Write a short note on Auden as a modern poet.
6. Explain Auden's comment that "Poetry makes nothing happen."
7. Discuss preoccupation with the social and international crises of his time.
8. How did the continuous movements across continents affect the poetry of W.H.Auden?

1.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

A. True

1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Bloomfield, B. C., and Edward Mendelson (1972). *W. H. Auden: A Bibliography 1924–1969*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Auden, W. H.; ed. by Katherine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (1990) *"The Map of All My Youth": early works, friends and influences* (Auden Studies 1). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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Unit 2

THE UNKNOWN CITIZEN

Structure

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 Some Facts About The Poem
2.4 Introduction: Unknown Citizen
2.4.1 Structure And Style
2.4.2 Text
2.4.3 Substance And Content
2.4.5 Interpretation
2.4.6 Themes And Techniques
2.4.7 Symbols
2.4.8 Bureaucracies And Investigation
2.4.9 Parodies And Irony
2.4.10the Speaker
2.4.11 Satiric Elegy In Rhyme
A. Self-Assessment Question
B. Self-Assessment Question
2.5 Summing –Up
2.6 Glossary
2.7 Questions
2.8 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
2.9 Suggested Readings

2.1 Learning Objectives

This lesson will take up a study of W.H. Auden's poem The Unknown Citizen'. It will be dedicated to analyzing his poem- The Unknown Citizen,' which is in your course.

I am certain that this discussion will help you better understand the poem. Some background detail concerning the origin of the poem has also been mentioned for your benefit.

2.2 Introduction

Wystan Hugh Auden, 1 February 1907-29 September 1973), who published as W. H. Auden, was an Anglo-American poet, born in England, later an American citizen, regarded by many critics as one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. His work is noted for its stylistic and technical achievements, its engagement with moral and political issues, and its

variety of tone, form and content. The central themes of his poetry are love, politics and citizenship, religion and morals, and the relationship between unique human beings and the anonymous, impersonal world of nature.

Auden grew up in and near Birmingham in a professional middle-class family and read English literature at Christ Church, Oxford. His early poems, written in the late 1920s and early 193ps, alternated between telegraphic modern styles and fluent traditional ones, were written in an intense and dramatic tone, and established his reputation as a left-wing political poet and prophet. He became uncomfortable in this role in the later 1930s, and abandoned it after he moved to the United States in 1939, where he became an American citizen in 1946. His poems in the 1940s explored religious and ethical themes in a less dramatic manner than his earlier works, but still combined traditional forms and styles with new forms devised by Auden himself. In the 1950s and 1960s many of his poems focused on the ways in which words revealed and concealed emotions, and he took a particular interest in writing opera librettos, a form ideally suited to direct expression of strong feelings.

He was also a prolific writer of prose essays and reviews on literary, political, psychological and religious subjects, and he worked at various times on documentary films, poetic plays and other forms of performance. Throughout his career he was both controversial and influential. After his death, some of his poems, notably “Funeral Blues” (“Stop all the clocks”), “Musee des Beaux Arts”, “Refugee Blues”, “The Unknown Citizen”, and “September 1. 1939”, became known to a much wider public than during his lifetime through films, broadcasts, and popular media.

2.3 Some facts about the poem:

- The Unknown Citizen, a poem by W. H. Auden was published in 1939 in The New Yorker, shortly after he became an American citizen.
- It was also published in book form (1940), in Auden’s collection Another Time.
- It is the epitaph of a man, identified only by a combination of letters and numbers.
- The man is described from the point of view of government organizations i.e. “Bureau of Statistics.”
- The poem satirizes bureaucracy and standardization of people (the average citizen) attheexpense of individualism.

2.4 Introduction: Unknown Citizen

In a tribute to the “Unknown Citizen”, Auden composes a poetic obituary in which he recounts the perfectly conventional life of the fictional deceased man through a subtly satirical and matter of fact tone. As Auden delves pass superficial records of the man’s official life and raises the question of his intrapersonal life, he aims to stir discussion on the subject of blind conformity and subsequent annihilation of individuality.

At first reading, the main title and the subtitle of the poem suggest potential allusion to the various monuments to unidentified soldiers who died fighting for their countries. However, the irony immediately surfaces in that the unidentified man does not unwillingly give up his identity like the mentioned soldiers. Rather he seemingly chooses to lose his identity through his complying behavior to the laws and social norms, as illustrated in the following lines, “When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went/...added five children to the population/Which our Eugenist says was the right number for his generation” (24-27). Here the word ‘Eugenist’ is worth considering beyond its regular denotation-meaning someone who believes in perfecting the human race through parenthood regulation and genetic engineering. With the notion of genetic conditioning in mind, it becomes ambiguous whether the man truly has any free will to begin with.

Though he appears to have given up his identity through deliberate actions, he may well have done so solely because society has conditioned him into abiding conventions even before his free will could develop. The idea of the unthinking automaton is further supported by the predictable end rhyme pattern and the laundry-listing structure of the poem. By utilizing these poetic devices, Auden effectively creates a pervading sense of monotony (especially when the poem is read aloud as an actual obituary) that characterizes the man’s life. Auden maintains a consistently detached, impersonal tone as he sifts through the official records of the man. Only until near the end does an abrupt shift occur: “Was he free? Was he happy?” (29), representing a fleeting attempt to delve beneath the surface, to understand the man more personally.

However, Auden goes no further than that and immediately ends on a dismissive, satirical note: “The question is absurd/...anything wrong, we should have heard” (29-30), suggesting that the identity of the unknown man is forever lost to the dust. Hence the ultimate irony of the anonymous man, whose life’s records are as accessible as an open book, yet fail to reveal anything substantial or personal about him. With clever execution in tone, form, and structure. “The unknown Citizen” functions as a fleeting snapshot of an automaton’s drab existence and as a reminder of the irretrievability of freedom once it is lost.

2.4.1 Structure and Style

As a poet, Auden is a chameleon capable of writing in many different forms and styles. He is considered a “modernist” writer, but his work is unlike that of any other poet of the past century. At a time when many poets were experimenting with obscure forms and new ways of using language, much of Auden’s poetry, had more popular appeal. He was a master, for example, of the rhyming couplet (AA, BB, etc.), the simplest rhyme scheme in English. “The Unknown Citizen’ is so accessible it almost sounds like an elaborate joke. At a time when many poets were throwing themselves fully into unrhymed free verse, Auden was happily continuing the tradition of writing in thyme. His rhymes don’t sound old-fashioned, either, although sometimes they seem ironic. When people complain that his poetry doesn’t rhyme anymore, you can point them back to Auden’s work.

However, he was far from a conventional poet, and “The Unknown Citizen” doesn’t follow a standard rhyme scheme. Instead, it alternates between a few different, simple rhyme schemes. The simplicity of Auden’s rhymes is striking, as if he had nothing to prove. Which he didn’t, considering that he was also a whiz with more complicated forms of thyme.

The poem begins with an ABAB pattern, but then switches to a rhyming couple (AA, BB, etc.), after which he starts hopping around a lot. Some of the rhymes are sandwiched between other rhymes. Check out lines 8-13, which follow the pattern ABBCCA. You think he’s not going to rhyme anything with “Inc.”, but then, five lines later, he comes at you with “drink.” These two words are so far away that you might not even realize he was rhyming, but we bet your inner ear did.

2.4.2 Text

The Unknown Citizen

W. H. Auden

To JS/07 M 378

This Marble Monument is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports on his conduct agree

That, in the modem sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

Except for the War till the day he retired

He worked in a factory and never got fired,

But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.

Yet he wasn’t a scab or odd in his views,

For his Union reports that he paid his dues.

(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)

And our Social Psychology workers found

That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day

And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.

Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,

And his Health-card shows he was once in a hospital but left it cured.

Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan

And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,

A phonograph, a radio, a car and a Frigidaire.

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;

When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.

He was married and added five children to the population,

Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.

And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

2.4.3 Substance and Content

"The Unknown Citizen" by W.H. Auden is a satiric poem. It describes an average citizen in a government-controlled state. In many big cities, there is a monument to the Unknown Soldier that stands for the thousands of unknown soldiers who die for their country. The title of Auden's poem parodies this. The citizen to whom the monument has been built has been found to be without any fault. He was a saint not because he searched for God but because he served the government perfectly. He did not get dismissed form his job He was a member of the Union and paid all his dues to the union. A report on the Union shows that it was a balance union and did not take extreme views on anything. The social psychology workers found that he was popular among his fellow workers and had a drink with them now and then. He also bought a newspaper everyday. He reached to the advertisements normally.

He had good health and although he went to hospital once, he came out quite cured. The citizen was sensible about buying things on an installment basis. He had everything a modern man needed at home. Moreover, this ideal citizen was found to be sensible in his view. When' there was peace, he supported it. But when there was war, he was ready to fight. He didn't hold his personal views on anything. He had the right number of children and he did not quarrel with the education they got. The poet now asks the important questions. Was this man free? Was he happy? No government statistics can ever answer these kinds of questions.

The person Auden calls "The Unknown Citizen" is a composite of information from every poll and survey that politicians use to figure out what the people called "swing voters" are really like Union member? Check. Served in the military? Check. Reads the morning paper? Check. Buys things on credit? Check. His life is measured in statistics. Nowadays, the speaker wouldn't even have to visit "Bureau of Statistics" or "Producers Research" to learn about the habits of "The Unknown Citizen"; he could just hop on the Internet With his completely inoffensive background, we think the Unknown Citizen would do well running for office himself. But Auden's point goes even deeper than that. He is arguing that the myth of a perfect citizen is created by those in power. The fictional monument and epitaph (inscription) that celebrate "The Unknown Citizen" are actually the means by which this power is exercised.

The manipulative “State” In Auden’s poem celebrates “The Unknown Citizen” as the ideal citizen: he never thinks about whether a war is just or not, he creates a lot of government revenue because he spends money on expensive, taxable appliances, and, most importantly, he never rocks the boat by voicing opinions that are different from those around him. He is the kind of person who says, “My country, right or wrong.” This reminds us of a quote from the writer GK Chesterton. “My country, right or wrong, is a thing that no patriot would think of saying except in a desperate case.” In Auden’s opinion, being a conformist and going with the flow all the time isn’t just mind-numbingly boring, it’s also dangerous and unpatriotic.

2.4.5 Interpretation

‘The Unknown Citizen’ is a typical Auden’s poem in that it shows the poet’s profound concern for the modem world and its problems. A keen intelligent observer of the contemporary scene, Auden was one of the first to realize that the totalitarian socialist state would be no Utopia and that man there would be reduced to the position of a cog in the wheel. A citizen will have no scope to develop his initiative or to assert his individuality. He will be made to conform to the State in all things. It is the picture of such a citizen, in a way similar to Eliot’s Hollow Man, which is ironically presented in the poem, Auden dramatizes his theme by showing the glaring disparity between the complete statistical information about the citizen compiled by the State and the sad inadequacy of the judgments made about him. The poet seems to say, statistics cannot sum up an individual and physical facts are inadequate to evaluate human happiness-for man does not live by bread alone.

In the phrase ‘The Unknown’ the word ‘unknown’ means ordinary, obscure. So the whole phrase means ‘those ordinary, obscure soldiers as citizens of the state who laid down their lives for defending their motherland wanted name and fame, but remained unknown. The title of Auden’s poem parodies this. Thus, The Unknown Citizen’ means the ordinary average citizen in the modern industrialized urban society. He has no individuality and identity. He has no desire for self-assertion. He likes to remain unknown.

At the end of the poem the poet asks two questions. Was he free? Was he happy? No government statistics can ever answer these kinds of questions. By asking these questions, the poet is drawing our attention to the question of freedom and happiness. And ironically, the poet suggests that the modern man is slaver to routine and he is incapable of understanding such concepts freedom and happiness. Therefore, such a question in this context would be ‘absurd Thus, this poem The Unknown Citizen’ is a bitter attack on modern society-its indifference towards individuality and identity.The only way for an individual to survive in a regimented society is to conform, obey and live in perpetual mental slavery. Such a creative is this ‘unknown citizen” who is utterly devoid of any urge for self-assertion. Such a modern man is a slave to the routine, is incapable of understanding such concepts as freedom and happiness.

It is easy to see that the cultural and philosophical co-ordinates of Auden's poetry range widely across space and time. But it is also very much of its own time, particularly in its restless, vagrant, sometimes harried, note of unsettlement. In 1939 in an "Ode" in praise of a Manhattan hotel where he was temporarily based, Auden wrote that: "I've stayed in hotels in most places | Where my passport permits me to go, I (Excluding the British Dominions | And Turkey and U.S.S.R.)". The tone is light, but the claim contains a significant figurative truth, one that most critics have not taken seriously enough, or have not thought through in detail. The claim goes to the heart of the kind of poet that Auden was. It points to the role of thedisplaced, cosmopolitan poet which history forced Auden to take on and which, when he did take it on, made him such a historically representative figure.

But just how "cosmopolitan," how "international" was Auden? What precisely were the historical conditions from which his uprooted vantage point emerged? How much traveling did he in reality do? How much of his life was spent away from his residence of the moment (whether that was in England, Germany, the United States, Italy, or Austriay? What were the journeys and choices that produced his own complicatedly transnational literary identity and his ideal of "a sort of world, quite other, I altogether different from this one with its envies and passport? This note attempts to supply some basic details out of which satisfying answers to these questions might be built.

In a note to himself late in life Auden roundly declared that "Behavior that can be statistically expressed is the behavior of the enslaved (British Museum holograph notebook used 1947-7 1964). My first impulse on reading this sentence is to agree cravenly. Striving to be more honest, though, I find that in gauging the extent of Auden's boundary-spanning cultural profile, a few figures and statistics (of a kind) are actually helpful. They make clear that the restlessness and eclecticism of Auden's poetry emerged not just from a cerebral internationalism of the desk and study but from an existence-a career in movement, a life with multiple foci. Auden's cosmopolitanism was not just an ethical notion but a reflection of specific cultural and social experiences during a period in which almost no-one expected life to go on unchanged, a period which one historian (Eric Hobsbawm) has called "an era of havoc At various points Auden had long-term homes in five countries: UK, Germany, USA, Italy, and Austria (these are places where he lived at least once for six-months or more at a stretch). He made no- or practically no- journeys abroad from the place which was at the time his de facto home during 26 years out of the 67 or so years of his life (1907-1924, 1933 [bar a few days in Germany during January 1933], 1940-44, 1946-47). However, if we subtract his years of childhood from this total, we see that Auden made no or practically no-journeys abroad in only eight out of his 49 adult years, and five of those eight years were a direct result of wartime restrictions. In other words, when Auden was an adult and could have traveled abroad, he did so during roughly 94% of the possible years, frequently for quite substantial stretches of time. For him, then, traveling was a norm.

2.4.6 Themes and Techniques

Auden's early poetry influenced by his interest in the Anglo-Saxon language as well as in psychoanalysis, was sometimes riddle-like, sometimes jargonish and clinical It also contained private references inaccessible to most readers. At the same time it had a clouded mysteriousness that would disappear in his later poetry. In the 1930s his poetry ceased to be mystifying, still dealing with difficult ideas, however, it could at times remain abstruse. His underlying preoccupation was a search for interpretive systems of analytic thinking and faith. Clues to the earlier poetry are to be found in the writings of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. In the later poems (after "New Year Letter," in which he turns to Christianity), home clues can be traced in the works of Soren Kierkegaard, Reinhold Niebuhr, and other theologians.

Among Auden's highly regarded attributes was the ability to think symbolically andrationally at the same time, so that intellectual ideas were transformed into a uniquelypersonal, idiosyncratic, often witty imagistic idiom. He concretized ideas through creatures ofhis imagining for whom reader could often feel affection while appreciating the austereoutline of the ideas themselves. He nearly always used language that is interesting in textureas well as brilliant verbally. He employed a great variety of intricate and extremely difficulttechnical forms. Throughout his career he often wrote pure lyrics of grave beauty, such as "LayYour Sleeping Head, My Love" and "Look Stranger."

Often Auden's poetry may seem a rather marginal criticism of life and society written from the sidelines. Yet sometimes it moves to the center of the time in history in which he and his contemporaries lived. In "The Shield of Achilles" he recreated the anguish of the modem world of totalitarian societies in a poem this holds one particular time in a mirror for all times. Auden was learned and intelligent, a virtuoso of form and technique. In his poetry he realized a lifelong search for a philosophical and religious position from which to analyze and comprehend the individual life in relation to society and to the human condition in general. He was able to express his scorn for authoritarian bureaucracy, his scorn for authoritarian bureaucracy, his suspicion of depersonalized science, and his belief in a Christian God.

Auden possessed a formidable technique and an acute ear. In her book, Auden, Barbara Everett commented on the poet's facility: "In his verse, Auden can argue, reflect, joke, gossip, sing, analyze, lecture, hector, and simply talk; he can sound, at will, like a psychologist on a political platform, like a theologian at a party, or like a geologist in love; he can give dignity and authority to nonsensical theories, and make newspaper headlines sound both true and melodious." Jeremy Robson noted in Encounter. "The influence of music on Auden's verse has always been salient: even his worst lines often 'sound' impressive." Everett found that a musical sensibility marked Auden's work from the very beginning, and she felt that when "he turned more and more, in the latter part of his career, to the kind of literary work that demands free exercise of verbal and rhythmic talent-for instance, to the writing of libretti-(he developed] that side of his artistic, nature which was from the beginning the strongest."

Auden's linguistic innovations enough to spawn the adjective "Audenesque, were described by Karl Shapiro in In Defense of Ignorance as "the modernization of diction, [and] the enlarging of fictional language to permit a more contemporary-sounding speech." As his career progressed, however, Auden was more often chastised than praised for his idiosyncratic use of language. James Fenton wrote in the NewStatesman: "For years-for over forty years-the technical experimentation started by Auden enlarged and enriched the scope of English verse. He rediscovered and invented more than any other modern poet. And yet there grew up a number of mannerisms, such as the use of nouns as verbs, or the employment of embarrassingly outdated slang, or the ransacking of the OED (Oxford English Dictionary), which became in the end a hindrance to his work.

The extent to which Auden believed in various political theories is still debated, what is clear to some critics, though, is that Auden habitually revised his writing to accommodate any shifts in faith. Hannah Arendt considered Auden's changes of heart to be a natural response to the flux of the times. Arendt wrote in the New Yorker "In the Forties, there were many who turned against their old beliefs. They simply changed trains, as it were, the train of Socialism and Communism had been wrong, and they changed to the train of Capitalism or Freudianism or some refined Marxism." Auden apparently changed trains frequently. In "Spain 1937, a denouncement of fascism in the Spanish Civil War, Auden later wrote that it would have been bad enough if I had ever held this wicked doctrine, but that I should have stated it simply because it sounded to me rhetorically effective is quite inexcusable. Although in Yale Frank Kermode acknowledged that Auden "denied that his revision and rejections had an ideological motive," Kermode asserted that "his earlier rhetoric failed later ethical tests," Robert Greacen supported the latter claim, noting in Books and Bookmen that the poems of Journey to a War were "extensively revised because Auden was 'shocked to discover how carelessly (he] had written them." Greacen reported that Auden had found his work "preachy, and had commented that "if he were to preach the same sermon today he would do it in a very different way."

2.4.7 Symbols

The Unknown Citizen

This isn't a poem that uses a lot of similes and metaphors. In fact, at times it seems deliberately un-poetic. The only metaphor we could find was the comparison between the Unknown Citizen and a saint. Then again, the entire poem is an elaborate comparison between the Unknown Citizen, whose accomplishments are ridiculously overstated, and the Unknown Soldier, which was created to honor heroic sacrifices that were never witnessed or confirmed.

- Title: The title is the only place where the term "Unknown Citizen" is used, so it is a key to the entire poem. It lets us know that the poem is an allegory, or an extended comparison to figures outside the poem. "The Unknown Citizen" is meant to recall the idea of "The Unknown Soldier," or a soldier whose remains could not be identified after a battle.

- Line 4: The word “saint” is a religious term, so the Unknown Citizen can’t actually be one, except in the modern sense, which means that we’re dealing with a metaphor. It’s also a drastic hyperbole - let’s face it, the guy wasn’t Gandhi.
- Line 20: Everything necessary? Really? What about food, water, and shelter? This lineis classic hyperbole, or exaggeration.

2.4.8 Bureaucracies and Investigation

The society depicted in the poem isn’t a real, historical place: It’s more like an Ironto prophecy of the future using present-day parallels (or at least present-day from the perspective of 1939). “The Unknown Citizen” has been investigated to an absurd degree by all kinds of bureaucracies, from his employer, Fudge Motors, to Social Psychology workers, to Public Opinion researchers. There’s a paper trail a mile long on this guy, but none of it tells us anything useful about who he is.

Epigraph: The epigraph furthers the allegory set up by the title, comparing the non-Unknown Citizen to the idea of the Unknown Soldier. The “marble monument to the Unknown Citizen makes us think of the various Tombs of the Unknown Soldier in places likeArlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

- Line 1: The “Bureau of Statistics” is a symbol representing the way bureaucracies treatpeople as mere numbers and figures.
- Line 5: The Community is a vague cliché used by bureaucracies to foster a sense of teamwork. It’s not clear what the “community refers to-his family, job, nation? Not all communities are compatible with one another, so it doesn’t make sense to speakof just one Greater Community
- Line 26: We think the ‘Eugenist” is a personification of the field of eugenics as a whole. No government would ever have a single person called a Eugenist in charge of population control.

2.4.9 Parodies and Irony

The whole idea of the “Unknown Citizen” is a parody of the serious military concept of the Unknown Soldier, which was created in order to recognize the sacrifice of soldiers who died anonymously. The poem is dripping with irony, as the speaker lists off accomplishments that aren’t accomplishments at all. At many points, the poem directly parodies existingAmerican companies or organizations.

- Line 2: It’s ironic that a poem of praise would begin on such a dull and tepid point asthelack of “official complaints.”
- Line 8: Fudge Motors, Inc. sounds to us like a parody of Ford Motors, Inc, the biggestauto company in the world at the time. But more delicious.
- Line 18: “Producers Research and High-Grade Living” are parodies of real consumerorganizations like Consumer Reports and Good Housekeeping.

- Line 19: To say that he was “fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan” is a hilarious understatement. He must have been aware at a higher level than his “senses.”
- Line 20: The phrase “everything necessary to the Modern Man” is a cliché used by advertisers to sell stuff. Today it sounds so old-fashioned that we can easily recognize it as such.

2.4.10 The Speaker

The speaker of “The Unknown Citizen” is a bureaucrat who works for the State, or government. Or at least he’s a big fan of bureaucracies. How do we know? Because he cites them...a lot. The first line, even, calls attention to the Bureau of Statistics. Bureaucrats love to gather data and statistics, because they help managers run an organization more efficiently. However, it’s a problem when living, breathing, people become mere statistics: John Doe watches 1,356 hours of television a day, runs 22 miles a week, reads 12.7 books, etc. To the speaker, the Unknown Citizen is just a collection of statistics, which is why he remains “unknown.”

The speaker doesn’t just speak for himself, though; he represents the entire apparatus of the State. Like a king during the Middle Ages, he uses the “Royal We” to make clear that his assessment of the Unknown Citizen’s character is not just one person’s opinion: it’s the official position of the State. So, he says, “our Social Psychology works” and “our Eugenist.” Clearly, he has consulted with a lot of people before writing this poem. It’s a real team effort, but also very creepy.

Seeing as the concept of “The Unknown Citizen is a parody of the idea of “The Unknown Soldier,” we see a parallel here to the process of awarding a really high military award, like the Congressional Medal of Honor, which is given out for extraordinary heroism in battle. Before such an award can be given out, the army conducts detailed research into the recipient’s background and their deeds of heroism. Although the Unknown Citizen doesn’t win any awards, he does have a marble monument in his honor, which is a big deal.

We might imagine the speaker as some guy in a grey suit sitting in a windowless office somewhere, reading reports turned in by other people and organizations. He doesn’t know the UC, and probably doesn’t care, but it’s his job to write up some flattering piece of verse, and by golly, he doesn’t want to let the State down. He stinks at delivering compliments, and he gets a bit testy at the suggestion that maybe the Unknown Citizen wasn’t free and happy. It’s like when you call up a company to tell them their product is broken and the Customer Service person gets annoyed and says, “That’s not possible our products never break - you must be using it wrong!”

The last thing to say about the speaker is that he’s not actually speaking. That is, in the fictional world of the poem, these lines are inscribed on the monument to the Unknown Citizen. It had to have been written by someone, but this “someone” is also “unknown.” Let’s call him “The Unknown Bureaucrat.”

2.4.11 Satiric Elegy in Rhyme

An “elegy is a poem about a dead person. These types of poems can be sad and depressing or grand and celebratory. “The Unknown Citizen” is of the grand and celebratory variety, but it’s also a satire, which means that it is making fun of the person it pretends to celebrate. There’s not much that’s grand about the Unknown Citizen. We know that he’s dead because the speaker refers to him in the past tense, and also because the monument for “The Unknown Citizen reminds us of “The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier,” which was created to honor soldiers who died in battle but whose remains were never identified.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The poem “The Unknown Citizen” was published in 1945. (True/False)

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The poem “The Unknown Citizen” is a dirge. (True /False)

1.5 SUMMING-UP

The poem is a satire of standardization at the expense of individualism. The poem is implicitly the work of a government agency at some point in the future, when modern bureaucratizing trends have reached the point where citizens are known by arbitrary numbers and letters, not personal names.

2.6 Glossary

15/07/M/378-the statistical records refer to a man by numbers. Auden is here ridiculing the practice by which man is reduced to a mere number.

The greater community-society or the nation.

Fudge Motors, Inc. - the name of an imaginary company where he worked.

Scab-a mean, worthless fellow.

Odd eccentric, whimsical.

Frigidaire-refrigerator.

Eugenist-scientists who study problems of population control

2.7Questions

1.Discuss W.H. Auden as a modern poet.

2.Write a critical appreciation of The Unknown Citizen.

3.Discuss Auden as a true recorder of his times.

2.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS’ ANSWERS

A. False B. False

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Buell, Frederick, *W,H,Auden As A Social Poet*. Ithaca, New York: Cornwell Univ. Press, 1973.
- Caudwell, Christopher. *Illusion and Reality: A Study of The Sources of Poetry*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937.
- Everett, Barbara. *Auden (Writers and Critics).* Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964.
- Fuller, John. *A Readers Guide to W.H.Auden*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1970.

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Unit 3
‘SEPTEMBER 1, 1939’

STRUCTURE

3.1 learning Objectives
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Structure and Style
3.3.1 Text
3.3.2 Theme And Content
3.3.3 Analysis
3.3.4 Auden’s Idea of Universal Love
A. Self-Assessment Question
3.5 Summing –Up
3.6 Glossary
3.7 Questions
3.6 Self-Assessment Questions’ Answers
3.7 Suggested Readings

3.1 Learning Objectives

Dear students.

This lesson will take up a study of W.H. Auden’s poem ‘September 1, 1939. It will be dedicated to analyzing his poem- ‘September 1, 1939,’ which is in your course. The present discussion will also deal specifically with an important topic, ‘Agape’ related to this poem and also to a general study of Auden’s poems.

I am certain that this discussion will help you better understand the poem. Some background detail concerning the origin of the poem has also been mentioned for your benefit.

3.2Introduction

Written by W. H. Auden, the poem “September 1, 1939” is a criticism of the institution of war throughout history until the outbreak of WWII, ending with a message of hope for the human race. The poem has nine eleven-lined stanzas with no set of rhymes, scheme, or a perfect meter, referring to different topics of oppression, war and inner conflict. Referring to the German invasion in Poland in 1939, Auden writes while sitting in a bar in New York City, noting the actions of those around him: people continue to carry on their normal lives in spite of the horrors of war going on abroad.

The message of September 1, 1939 is timeless. Although referring to an event more than seventy years ago, the poem gained popularity following the terrorist attacks of

September 11, 2001. The poem is a criticism of multiple things in society at the time. Auden appeals to man to reflect on themes such how German history led to the outbreak of WWII, the democratic industrialized man, and human sins concluding with a message of hope: people need to overlook their boundaries and differences and recognize that we must love each other.

The invasion of Poland by the German-Nazi forces commenced upon September 1, 1939 yet it is not the hallmark of W.H. Auden's intention in his poem "September 1, 1939." No, this work is far more than a description or criticism of the German-Nazi decision to invade an innocent country, this work, these words, this plea comes from the heart of a man who is living in a society filled with an oppressive nature towards those they deem less human or unfitting to society. Despite such risk of oppression Auden went ahead and published this gorgeous piece of poetry in 1940 with conscious thought to mask his true intentions because unbeknownst to his public Wystan Hugh Auden was "homosexual". By use of allusion, symbolism, and straightout diction Auden suggests truly mind-expanding concepts and a criticism of something rather unexpected.

"September 1, 1939" is split into nine, eleven lined, stanzas with no set rhyme scheme or exact meter. For the most part shifts occur randomly although one can group them to certain degrees though it would be best, in one's opinion, to absorb the allusion-based meanings individually for yes they are ever-so deep. The first two stanzas seem to make reference to the German invasion of Poland; the third and forth stanzas takes a shot at democratically industrialized man; stanzas five and six touch on the concept of sin; surprisingly the seventh, eighth and ninth stanzas bring out the strongest messages which are rather hopeful if not optimistic. Occasionally one meets a rhyme but they are inconsistent in one's eyes and not truly compelling if one suggested they pushed the overall meaning of the work.

Overall the poem makes a slight comparison between the fascist Nazi oppression and our own U S. oppression. The Nazis persecuted the Jews; the U.S. persecuted homosexuals. In his own time period Auden could never allow his audience to know that he was indeed a homosexual for the repercussions would not be gentle (Miller). Americans did not approve of homosexuals in this time period and if one looks closely at the text one sees that Auden is wishing people could understand or just see that their way is not necessarily the right way. By Auden's use of allusions, symbols, and phrases one sees his real message: the world is forever condemned if people cannot learn to accept and love others for their differences.

3.3 Structure and Style

Just like with many of Wystan Hugh Auden's poems, he has reference to a time period. The poet makes clear the time period he is referring to being 1st September 1939 which was also known as the start of the second world war. This poem is a historical moment in time. Below is a reference to the form and structure of the poem.

Form-

There is no recognizable form that Auden uses for this poem.

The poem echoes the stanza form of Easter, 1916 which was another poem about an important historical event.

There are no characters in the poem due to its being about a historical moment intime. For this reason, the voice is of Auden himself who lived through 1st September1939.

Due to the fact that Auden is talking is talking to himself, we are the silent listeners to this poem.

Structure-

There is no pattern to the rhyming or the rhythm.

The only structure in the poem is the 11 line stanzas.

The instability of the rhythm and rhyming could reflect the historical context where many countries felt unstable at the time too.

3.3.1Text

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

—W.H. Auden

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-second Street
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire

Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives:
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.

Accurate scholarship can
Unearth the whole offence
From Luther until now
That has driven a culture mad,
Find what occurred at Linz,

What huge imago made
A psychopathic god:
I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.

Exiled Thucydides knew
All that a speech can say
About Democracy,
And what dictators do,
The elderly rubbish they talk
To an apathetic grave;
Analysed all in his book,
The enlightenment driven away,
The habit-forming plain,
Mismanagement and grief
We must suffer them all again.
Into this neutral air
Where blind skyscrapers use
Their full height to proclaim
The strength of Collective Man,
Each language pours its vain
Competitive excuse:
But who can live for long
in an euphoric dream;
Out of the mirror they stare, Imperialism's face
And the international wrong.
Faces along the bar
Cling to their average day:
The lights must never go out,
The music must always play,
All the conventions conspire
To make this fort assume

The furniture of home;
Lest we should see where we are,
Lost in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night
Who have never been happy or good.

The windiest militant trash
Important Persons shout
Is not so crude as our wish:
What mad Nijinsky wrote
About Diaghilev
Is true of the normal heart;
For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

From the conservative dark
into the ethical life
The dense commuters come,
Repeating their morning vow;
“I will be true to the wife,
I’ll concentrate more on my work,
And helpless wake
To resume their compulsory game:
Who can release them now,
Who can reach the deaf
Who can speak for the dumb?
All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the-street
And the lie of Authority

Whose buildings grope the sky:
There is no such thing as the State

And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die.

Defenseless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages
May 1, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

3.3.2 Theme and Content

W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939" was written, as its title suggests, in the embryonic stages of World War 11, arguably the most brutal war of the 20th century. Originally from England, Auden speaks to a global community intoxicated with militarism, an ethos that would eventually lead to untold horrors in the form of fire-bombings, concentration camps, and the blinding explosions of the atomic bomb.

As a result, Auden's poem creates ample room for the citizens of empire states to reflect on the age-old maxim of Thrasymachus that "might makes right" and "justice is what is good for the stronger." These unchallenged doctrines of power are more alive than ever in a time when unilateral invasions, assassinations, torture, and international lawlessness on the part of the superpowers is met with deafening silence in virtually all respected media outlets from the New York Times to the Wall Street Journal.

Mired in the savagery of a "low dishonest decade", Auden chronicles the follies that have brought the most powerful nations in the word to this dangerous moment and more importantly what follies reveal about the existential predicament of the modern man (or woman). One noteworthy statement that Auden makes in his indictment of the "international

wrong" of the nation-state is the outright rejection of elementary moral principles of universality. This is graphically illustrated in the second stanza of the poem where he ruefully remarks how world leaders are unable to comprehend what schoolchildren easily understand: "those to whom evil is done do evil in return."

Moreover, Auden's poem conveys a deep understanding of the complex powerdynamics that have driven conflicts throughout history from the polities of ancient Greece tothe current political bodies of the so-called developed West. In a critique of the corrosiveeffects of propaganda and how it's utilized to undermine basic liberties, Auden comments thatThucydides "knew all that a speech can say about Democracy and what dictators do." Thisreference to ancient Greek historian, Thucydides-who also famously said "large nations dowhat they wish, while small nations accept what they must-exposes the rank hypocrisy that isso prevalent in places of power, particularly, in those power centers that profess a commitment to democracy.

Auden's readers should understand that the awareness of the rulers is not enough to bring about this preferred end as they continue, unimpeded, invading new countries andbombing new "enemies", invariably aided by the "folded lie" of newspapers and literature. For these reasons, Auden's poem is a prescient work for our generation, a poem that compels the "affirming flame" of ordinary people to defy the "lie of Authority, to choose the path of "Eros" before they decompose to dust.

In the first two stanzas one finds the speaker in "one of the dives on Fifty-second Street where he is both "Uncertain and afraid" (1-2). At first glance one could conclude that Auden or the speaker is merely in a small club, but with thought towards his sexual orientation it may in fact suggest that he is avoiding a crowded area where he would normally be uncomfortable (Miller). In the second stanza there is a strong reference to Germany by means of Luther (an anti-Semitic) being that which has pushed the German society to their status quo (14-15). After such Auden then makes a reference to Linz and a psychopathic god in lines 16 and 18 which seems to make an allusion to Hitler due to the fact that Hitler was born in Linz and could easily be thought of as a sort of psychopathic god (Shipon). Auden then tosses in the phrase "Those to whom evil is done do evil in return (21-22) which makes one possibly consider that this may be an allusion, though not directly, to the Treaty of Versailles which in 20/20 hindsight clearly sets those who made the treaty as doers of evil.

In stanzas three and four one is shown a more anti-American concept. Auden first makes a reference in 1.ine 23 to Thucydides who was one of the first people to suggest that history should always be recorded for what it is and not for the glory of the country that records it; because of such a statement, Thucydides was exiled from his home. Towards America this may reference things such as the old propaganda movies our military used to show which were filled with lies and stereotypes to make us think in a more pro-American way. Stanza four then takes focus upon the boasts of "The strength of Collective Man" (37)

Effectually Auden starts to write this idea that the buildings we make show our greatness as a “vain competitive excuse” (38-39) which-when considered is justifiably true. To make clear his meaning Auden adds “Out of the mirror they stare, Imperialism’s face and the international wrong” (42-44). These lines suggest a great deal much of which pushes a thought that perhaps America is imperialistic as opposed to democratic and all good. Maybe some of our policies bring about an international wrong; although one should note that this is not applied to the wars of today but to a pre-U.S. involvement with WWil.

Stanzas five and six bring about evoking thoughts. Five suggests that the average person never wants to escape their norm; instead, everything must always be same. If things changed those people would finally see what’s going on around them. They would be “lost in a haunted wood, children afraid of the night who have never been happy or good” (53-55) which symbolizes that they are stuck in a bad or unjust place where they’ve never really been right or happy. The sixth stanza takes a shot at the unimportant things important people shout. There is then an allusion to Nijinsky, a dance student to Diaghilev, who was driven insane by histeacher’s pressure (Miller). Auden then makes a reference to natural sin in line 62 and follows it by the concept that the sinful heart wants “not universal love but to be loved alone” which deeply suggests it that people are exceedingly selfish.

The last three stanzas set each other up to deliver the message Auden intends to give. Stanza seven focuses upon the concept of not being able to reach the average person for they are deaf and dumb to the message. Specifically, Auden sets up the deaf-dumb bit in lines 75-77 with a keen literary device known as a parallel which adds a more dramatic push by means of repetition. In stanza eight Auden goes on to suggest that the speaker is one person set to tell the truth about authority and its corruption.

Auden even dares to say that “there is no such thing as the state” (84) and that people are controlled by human necessity. More importantly this stanza ends with a beautiful phrase: “We must love one another or die” (88). The final stanza encapsulates a real sense of hope. It stands that though our world does not always understand or right there is still hope. Hope can be found in those who believe in goodness. Auden then alludes that he is composed “of Eros and of dust in line 96 which suggests that he is made of love, for Eros is the god of love, and dust which references the creation of man according to scripture. Though Auden feels the same “negation and despair” (98) as others, he still hopes to stand true to his good ideals.

3.3.3 Analysis

The poem begins, “I sit in one of the dives / On Fifty-second Street....” That would be a gay bar, probably the Dizzy Club, to which Auden had been introduced by his American lover Chester Kallman. But “1” implies that the writer sits alone. There’s a gay couple in stanza 6, Nijinsky and Diaghilev, who are introduced in contrast to the “normal heart.” Auden is asking whether his own love is “normal”-and also whether human love (in general) is a source of evil or a solution to it.

A “dive” is a place for solitary drinking or for secretive, sometimes shameful encounters. In that sense, it is private: a place one goes not to be seen. At the same time, it’s public in that it’s no one’s home and anyone can walk in: in fact, the British might call it a public house (a “pub”). Throughout the poem, Auden wants us to consider the relationship between private and public.

A related question is the role of lyric poetry, which can be private, subtle, and confessional, or transparent, impersonal, and political-or both. Auden later repudiated “September 1, 1939,” along with four other political poems, requiring that a note be added whenever they were anthologized: “Mr. W. H. Auden considers these five poems to be trash which he is ashamed to have written.” I think that’s because he later decided that the explicit, public slogans of these poems (for instance, “We must love one another or die”)were false to his own experience. But to communicate effectively in the public sphere requires a degree of simplification and even falsification.

The war, Auden observes, “Obsesses our private lives” and brings “the unmistakable odor of death.” Here the causal arrow points from a vast public act of the German state toward private lives of men sitting at a Midtown bar. In subsequent stanzas, Auden will reverse the direction, exploring how private desires and sins influence public evils. The whole poem alludes to Yeats’ “Easter, 1016,”in which a major theme is the power of heroic political acts to erase petty human sins and entanglements (“the casual comedy”).

Yeats even forgives “A drunken, vainglorious lout” who “had done most bitter wrong/ to some who are near my heart,” because that man was a martyr in the Irish uprising. But theevents of September, 1939 are vicious rather than heroic, and they mirror-rather than erase-the private sins of the “sensual man-in-the-street.”

Auden pictures himself in the dive when the first day of World War 11 was ending inEurope, which is 6-8 hours ahead of New York. I mention the time lag because he views thatinfamous day in global perspective: “Waves of anger and fear/ Circulate over the bright/ Anddarkened lands of the earth.” As he sits at the bar, Poland is literally dark because night has fallen there; it is also figuratively blackened by the Nazis’ assault.

The second stanza introduces an explanation for the day’s events, the kind of story that “accurate scholarship” might provide. Martin Luther’s ideas ultimately drove a whole culture mad, until a child growing up in Linz-Adolf Hitler-inherited a fundamental worldview (an “imago”, in Jungian jargon) that turned him into a “psychopathic god.” I do not know whatprecise intellectual history Auden has in mind. Perhaps he, believes that Martin Luther’s anti-Semitism was the root of modern German anti-Semitism, or perhaps he is thinking of another aspect of Luther’s thought, such as his deference to “princes.

It doesn’t matter much, because what the poem introduces here is a general style of analysis: grand political events are traced to the high, theoretical concepts of long-dead authors. It’s a style that Auden himself used in his prose writing and that his friends, like Hannah Arendt, practiced with great sophistication.

So maybe we are to imagine Auden brooding over German Intellectual history at Dizzy's on Sept. 1. But the last four lines of the stanza offer a completely different explanation:

I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.

No logical connective links this quatrain to the previous seven lines: no "and," "but," or "on the other hand" -just a colon. So it's ambiguous whether the fancy intellectual explanation of Hitler's ideas is wrong and "the public" is right, or whether both are saying the same thing. This quatrain is problematic because it suggests that the wrong of invading Poland is somehow justified by sins the aggressors had sustained.

Is that a reference to Versailles? To Hitler's personal childhood traumas? To the plight of the German working class? An alternative reading might be wronged by Hitler will inevitably strike back later, perpetuating the tragic cycle. In any case, the broader argument is that people are cruel to each other, and the massive cruelty of Blitzkrieg is just a manifestation of our everyday sin.

The third stanza suddenly takes us back to ancient Greece, perhaps enacting the way that an educated person would turn from one topic to another over a solitary alcoholic drink on a terrible night. It begins:

Exiled Thucydides knew
All that a speech can say
And what dictators do,
About Democracy,
The elderly rubbish they talk
To an apathetic grave.

Thucydides was unjustly exiled from democratic Athens for a military failure, at which point he wrote his great history of the Peloponnesian War that contains Pericles' paean to democracy (the strongest pro-democratic statement of ancient times). Thucydides probably presents. Pericles speech ironically. He implies that it is propaganda; in fact, self-interest explains all politics, Thucydides, Auden thinks, "analyzed all in his book .../The habit- forming pain/Mismanagement and grief.

In stanza 4, we are back in New York, where blind skyscrapers" reach into the "neutral air. One sense of "neutral" may be political: the United States is neutral in the war, hence at peace, but also complicit because we do nothing to stop Hitler. Auden is a citizen of a combatant nation who is guiltily safe in neutral Manhattan. Neutrality had been a characteristic failure of the "low dishonest decade" that Auden invoked in the first stanza. The Western democracies chose to be neutral in the Spanish Civil War, which made them complicit to fascist rule. Most of New York's "blind skyscrapers" house private enterprises,

ostensibly free and private, but Auden compares them to the grandiose structures of Berlin and Moscow. New York's buildings, too, "use / their full height to proclaim / The strength of Collective Man." The ideology that drives them is presumably "imperialism," a mirror for the ideologies of Europe.

With stanza 5, we return again to the bar, where the men "cling to their average day," trying to ignore the world-altering events of Sept. 1, 1939. The homelike decorations of a "dive" are always fake; but never more so than on a day when everyone should face history and its evils:

All the conventions conspire

To make this fort assume

The furniture of home;

Lest we should see where we are,

Lost in a haunted wood,

Children afraid of the night

Who have never been happy or good.

Stanza 6 pulls the public and the private together. The propaganda of political leaders (The windiest militant trash/Important persons shout") is no different from the passionate exclamations of lovers in troubled affairs. "Mad," histrionic, brilliant (and gay) lovers like Nijioksy are really no different from everyone else. The root cause is always the same:

For the error bred in the bone

Of each woman and each man

Craves what it cannot have,

Not universal love

But to be loved alone.

Each human being wants the benefits of romance (sex, and the exclusive concern of another person) without the ethical requirements of loving back and loving everyone.

Stanza 7 depicts "dense commuters" coming out of the "conservative dark" (the bedroom? The subway?) into the "ethical life of public behavior and speech, exhorting themselves to be better husbands and workers. They are like the commuters in Eliot's "The Waste Land," who (in turn) come straight from the Inferno: "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, had not thought death had undone so many./Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,/And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

By now, we need to know where Auden stands, what he intends to do, and what he asks of us. Stanza 8 explains that he will describe both private sin and public tyranny accurately and critically and will call on us to be better to one another.

All I have is a voice

To undo the folded le,

The romantic lie in the brain

Of the sensual man-in-the-street

And the lie of Authority

Whose buildings grope the sky

There is no such thing as the State

And no one exists alone;

Hunger allows no choice

To the citizen or the police;

We must love one another or die.

Auden later hated the last of these lines. As he noted, it's false, since we will die even if we do love one another. It's also false that Auden had nothing but a voice; he had a vote, money, the ability to carry a gun. In any case, It's perilous to insert into a modern, Jyric poem such bold, declarative propositions as "There is no such thing as the State" or "We must love one another or die." What gives Mr. Auden the license to say such things?

In the eighth and final stanza, he pledges to "show an affirming flame" to the other"Ironic points of light" that are "dotted everywhere" across the world. The beleaguered "Just"who exchange messages like wireless operators are independent human beings, committed totruth and love despite "Negation and despair. But the signals that Auden transmits into thatether are pronouncements that he does not actually believe, such as "We must love oneanother or die.

Auden wrote, "We must love one another or die" not because it expressed the most accurate moral or social theory. He said it because he wanted to grab the stranger who read his verse and communicate a disinterested, ethical love as the world was engulfed by hatred. It was an impartial love that extended to anyone, Jew or German, gay or straight, who was "composed.../Of Eros and of dust." To put that down on paper took courage, and maybe theright response is assent.

3.3.4 Auden's idea of Universal Love

'In September 1, 1939' Auden says, "We must love one another or die." The perils of selfish love are the theme of several poems in Another Time. But Auden begins to realize that human love is bound to be imperfect. Therefore, his ideal of love becomes more human and a way of living in the lyric, "Lay your sleeping head my love" Auden writes:

But in my arms till break of day

Let the living creature lie

Mortal, guilty, but to me

The entirely beautiful.

This acceptance of love with all its imperfections paves the way for acceptance of religious faith. Auden feels a total surrender to love can enable man to achieve the ultimate objective- redemption from anxiety and sin. Yet the self need not lose its identity by being merged into a larger unit; the new relationship includes and transcends the old:

Every eye must weep alone
Till T will be overthrown

Then all I's can meet and grow
I am become love.

By 1940, Auden's concept of love became profounder and wider than anything he could find in Freud and Marx. It became Agape, or universal love. He felt love becomes all-embracing and transcends all limitations. In the poem, The Dyer's Hand' Auden says, "that we love our enemies, do good to those who hate us and forgive those who injure us, and this command is unconditional."

Agape is the highest kind of love which purifies our soul. This is also the theme ofSeptember 1, 1939.

For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

We should rise above Eros and find Agape which is described as "an affirming flame." Since, Agape is a Christian concept, Auden feels irresistibly drawn towards Christianity, he emphasizes the need for universal love in his "New Year Letter."

We need to love all since we are
Each a unique particular
That is no giant, god or dwarf,
But one odd human isomorph;
We can love each other because we know
All, all of us, that this is so.

Though Auden continues to explore new meanings of love; his belief in love as a healer does not change. The true form of love is extremely difficult for we have to learn to love in spite of our personal wish:

..... We are required to love
All homeless objects that require a world

And immediately after this lesson, Auden feels blessed that by grace love is possible, for only love can redeem us in this "modern void." The moment of true love is the moment of being "whose form is truth, whose content is love.

In the last poems of Auden, love as a theme ceases to be his major concern theacceptance of Christianity, his quest for the meaning of love has come to an end. An eminentcritic Richard Hoggart says that love for Auden always was a form of mental therapy, agloriously effective psychoanalysis, a liberator, a cleanser, a releasing and enlarging power."

Agape, in the Christian sense of the word, is a love which longs for suffering andsacrifice and not for self-fulfillment Auden has traveled a long way from his earlier concept oflove as Eros.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

"September 1, 1939" is broken into nine 11-line stanzas (T/F)

3.5 SUMMING –UP

In 2001, immediately after the 11 September 2001 attacks, the poem was read (with many lines omitted) on National Public Radio and was widely circulated and discussed for its relevance to recent events. Charles T. Matthews from the University of Virginia commented on the prescience of the 1939 poem reflecting the cultural sorrow experienced in response to 11 September by quotingthe last two couplets of Auden's third stanza of the poem:

3.6 Glossary

Dives-bar.

Unearth-reveal

Luther-the father of Protestantism (15thC)

Linz-the place where Hitler grew up without a father.

Imago - a term from psychoanalysis. It is the idealized or fantasized figure, often a father, especially in the absence of a real father, from a person's early childhood whose standards then become a model for his behavior in adult life.

Thucydides - a Greek historian.

Collective Man- the society, state.

Euphoric dream-false promises of a better, healthier life.

The mirror-skyscrapers and other signs of collective power.

Nijinsky-a Russian dancer (1890-1950)

Diaghilev-a Russian organizer of dances.

Universal love - agape, love for all, which is the only cure for the ills of mankind.

Commuters-common people.

Agape - unselfish love of one person for another without sexual implications.

3.7 Questions for further study

1.Explain the essence of the poem ‘September 1, 1939.

2.Discuss the significance of the title.

3.Discuss Auden’s concept of love.

3.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS’ ANSWERS

True

3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Blair, John G. *The Poetic Art of W. H. Auden*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Bozorth, Richard R. “’But Who Would Get It?’: Auden and the Codes of Poetry and Desire.” *English Literary History* 62.3 (1995): 709-727.
- Bucknell, Katherine. “The Boys in Berlin: Auden’s Secret Poems.” *New York Times Book Review* (1990): Academic Search EliteFarnan, Dorothy J. *Auden in Love*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

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Unit 4
THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES

Structure

4.1 Learning Objectives
4.2 Introduction
4.3 Structure And Style
4.3.1 Text
4.3.2 Theme And Content
4.3.3 Analysis
4.3.4 Myth And Modernity In The Poem
A. Self-Assessment Question
4.4 Glossary
4.5 Summing –Up
4.6 Questions
4.7 Self-Assessment Questions' Answers
4.8 Suggested Readings

4.1 Learning Objectives

Dear students,

This lesson is in two parts. The first part of this lesson will take up a study of W.H. Auden poem "The shield of Achilles'. The second partof this lesson will be dedicated to analyzing another of his poems -"In Memory of W.B. Yeats".

I am certain that these analyses will help you better understand the poems and equip you to better attempt your examination

4.2 Introduction

The Shield of Achilles was a poem written by W. H. Auden, first published in 1953, although it also shares this name with a book he had published in 1955. The poem is composed of nine stanzas, with four stanzas composed of eight lines each and the rest made up of seven lines each. The poem can be interpreted as a critique of the perception some people might hold for the glory of war, when in reality it is anything but glorious.

One of the primary devices used in the poem is the use of Contrast, and by extension Duality and Parallelism. This can be easily seen through the two obviously different stanza lengths and metrical measures, but also in the temporal settings and themes-the poem alternates between a scene from the Illiad, set during Classical times, to what could be interpreted as images of the Modern era. Each 'classical scene utilizes the eight-stanza pattern, with the second line rhyming with the fourth and the sixth with the eight, while each scene ostensibly set in the 'modern' era use a seven-line form called a rime royal. Another

device used is Irony, and although it is not as obvious at first, there is something bitterly ironic about the expectation of one of the poem's characters for the eponymous Shield compared to the purpose why it was wrought.

4.3 Structure and Style

WH. Auden's "The Shield of Achilles" is thematically quite similar to Eliot's "Wasteland" in its-representation of a world devoid of principles and ethics that in its march for success has lost the true meaning of life as echoed in phrases like "an unintelligible multitude", "column by column in a cloud of dust etc. An analysis exemplifies how the Homeric myth is rendered into an allegory of the contemporary times. A conceptual construct drives us from myth to reality, where reality is supposed to demystify myths.

It is Auden's disgust at the totalitarian regime of the modem world where the Individual is relegated. The Achillean world serves as his to comment on the of the modern world. The classical world is set against modernity, Monroe.K.Spears asserts that the shield symbolizes images of the human condition. The poem portrays the insignificance of a life devoid of conviction. It is Auden's response to the detailed description in Homer's epic poem the Iliad of the shield borne by the hero Achilles, illustrated with scenes from daily life.

Auden's poem is written in two different stanza forms, one form with shorter lines, the other with longer lines. The stanzas with shorter lines describe the making of the shield by the god Hephaestus, and report the scenes that Achilles' mother, the Nereld Thetis, expects to find on the shield and which Hephaestus, in Auden's version, does not make. Thetis expects to find scenes of happiness and peace like those described by Homer.

The stanzas with longer lines describe the scenes that Hephaestus creates in Auden's version, scenes of a barren and impersonal modern world. In the first, an anonymous, dispassionate army listens as a crowd of ordinary people watch passively. In the third scene, a "ragged urchin" throws a stone at a bird; he takes it for granted "that girls are raped, that two boys knife a third," and "has never heard of any world where promises are kept /Or one could weep because another wept."

In the closing stanza in short lines, Thetis cries out in dismay at what Hephaestus has made for her son, who would not live long."

The poem is frequently cited as an antiwar poem, but it is also a study in languageand responsibility: both Thetis and Hephaestus act on behalf of someone else, Achilles, andthey take no personal responsibility for the results. And the result of their passive, impersonalstance is the passive, impersonal world portrayed on the shield.

An alternative reading: Auden reflects bitterly on the differences between the Achaean world as described by Homer-a world where, even amid warfare, imagination naturally ran to scenes of peace-and the world of totalitarian horror Auden himself imagine. At the same time, Auden criticizes Homer for attributing glory to warriors.

Auden's moral condemnation is directed, not at Thetis or Hephaestus, but at "the strong iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles." The shield described by Auden is made by the god to please Achilles: the horrid world depicted there (and not the delightful world depicted in the shield described by Homer) is the natural result of the sort of iron-hearted manslaughter Achilles, and his comrades and rivals, practice.

Auden was disillusioned by the totalitarian state of the modern world which completely buried the growth of the individual. He felt that people existed as the 'State' and not as the "Individual. He therefore reflects the contrast between the modern world and the Achilleanworld. Auden deliberately interprets the images drawn on the shield to speak of the ills of the modern world.

4.3.1 Text

The Shield of Achilles

W. H. Auden

She looked over his shoulder
For vines and olive trees,
Marble well-governed cities
And ships upon untamed seas,
But there on the shining metal
His hands had put instead
An artificial wilderness
And a sky like lead.
A plain without a feature, bare and brown,
No blade of grass, no sign of neighborhood,
Nothing to eat and nowhere to sit down,
Yet, congregated on its blankness, stood
An unintelligible multitude
A million eyes, a million boots in line,
Without expression, waiting for a sign.

Out of the air a voice without a face
Proved by statistics that some cause was just
In tones as dry and level as the place:
No one was cheered and nothing was discussed;
Column by column in a cloud of dust
They marched away enduring a belief
Whose logic brought them, somewhere else, to grief.

She looked over his shoulder
For ritual pieties,
White flower-garlanded heifers,
Libation and sacrifice,
But there on the shining metal
Where the altar should have been,
She saw by his flickering forge-light
Quite another scene.

Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot
Where bored officials lounged (one cracked a joke)
And sentries sweated for the day was hot:
A crowd of ordinary decent folk
Watched from without and neither moved nor spoke
As three pale figures were led forth and bound
To three posts driven upright in the ground.

The mass and majesty of this world, all
That carries weight and always weighs the same
Lay in the hands of others; they were small
And could not hope for help and no help came:
What their foes like to do was done, their shame:
Was all the worst could wish; they lost their pride
And died as men before their bodies died.

She looked over his shoulder
For athletes at their games,
Men and women in a dance
Moving their sweet limbs
Quick, quick, to music,
But there on the shining shield
His hands had set no dancing-floor
But a weed-choked field.

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,
Loitered about that vacancy; a bird
Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,
Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
Of any world where promises were kept,
Or one could weep because another wept.

The thin-lipped armorer,
Hephaestos, hobbled away,
Thetis of the shining breasts
Cried out in dismay
At what the god had wrought
To please her son, the strong
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles
Who would not live long.

4.3.2 Theme and Content

The theme of "The Shield of Achilles" gives us a glimpse of the great mythology which involves the classic Trojan War. The lines of the poem itself are dipped in the mood of the Greek classic, Legos vs. Pathos who are the two main characters who dissent each other views and one's triumph over the other paints a picture of humanity and its everlasting plight.

Achilles happens to be the most celebrated Greek warrior who was an important member of the Trojan War. Achilles mother Thetis, takes a look at the shield of his son that hangs from his shoulder and stands as an emblem of valor and courage which reflects the aspects of Greek civilization and was made especially for Achilles by the blacksmith of Gods; Haphaestous, the blacksmith of the Gods. The poignancy of the poem is revealed though the lines where the Mother looks out;

For vines and olive trees,
Marble well-governed cities
And ships upon untamed seas,
But there on the shining metal His hands had put instead
An artificial wilderness
And a sky like lead.

Through the very lines, the theme of meditation poetry, i e. life and its hollowness and futility is justly reflected. The very word, "artificial" is used to denote the superficial factor of life. The sky like "lead" is an echo of the frigid, metal like behavior that human beings have

adapted to. Thetis, who is the mother of Achilles, personifies Hope because she acts in utmost and wants to save her son before he plunges into the war of death. She also looks at his shield that Hephaestus has forged for protection and hopes to find a sign of strength that she thinks will protect her son from his impending death.

On the other hand, Hephaestus, the blacksmith is projected as an epitome of pragmatism. In the classical tale, he had been depicted as a “thin-lipped armorer” who “hobbled”. Thetis, the mother is a beautiful nymph in the classic tale now seeks “vines and olive trees, marble well-governed cities and ships upon untamed seas”, symbols of peace and Amidst all this, it is Hephaestus who gives her “ah artificial wilderness and a sky like lead congregated [by] an unintelligible multitude, ‘a million eyes, a million boots in line, without expression, waiting for a sign” which rings the knell that heralds a furious war.

Thetis then goes on to seek “ritual pieties”, “libation and sacrifice”, which is nothing but an appeal to the ancient deities for guidance and protection of her son. Hephaestus, the shield maker is the one who offers “an arbitrary spot where bored officials lounged (one cracked a joke)” seemingly in mockery of Thetis’ hope and “three pale figures [whom] were led forth and bound to three posts driven upright in the ground”. “The Shield of Achilles’ meaning changes continually with the introduction of an ironic element that serves to conjure a biblical image that draws a tangent to all attempts of assassination.

WH Auden’s work is also a sharp contrast between a mothers’ vision and what is embossed on her sons shield by the blacksmith. (She looks for “vines and olive trees,” “cities,”ships ritual pieties,” “athletes,” “Men and women in a dance,” etc.). Here, Auden attempts to reverse the narration order of Homer, where he describes the war (a million boots in line, / without expression, waiting for a sign.”). Then, when he mentions, “a voice without a face” in order to portray the very idea that the cause for the war is justified, there is also a sharp resemblance to Christ’s death as conveyed through the lines; “As three pale figures were led forth and bound/To three posts driven upright in the ground.” They “died as men before their bodies died.”

Auden continues his wordplay to depict and pen picture a harsh reality where the tormentors are themselves tormented (A ragged urchin, aimless and alone, loitered about that vacancy: a bird Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone/That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third, were axioms to him, who’d never heard of any world where promises were kept, Or one could weep because another wept.) “To please her son, the strong/tron-hearted man-slaying Achilles/who would not live long” is perhaps the zenith of all emotions that tears away the magnitude of war that bodes ill and off for one end all.

4.3.3 Analysis

The poem begins with a scene from the past. Although it is not directly mentioned at first, it is a scene from the Iliad, where Thetis, the mother of Achilles, watches expectantly as Hephaestus, God of the Forge, makes a shield for her son. In particular, she seems to be anticipating how the shield would be decorated, and given the level of craftsmanship

involved, expects a thing of beauty, and as such idyllic scenes spring to her mind (For vines and olive trees/Marble well-governed cities /and ships upon untamed seas). This is where the irony makes itself first apparent, as she seems to fail to realize the fact that such decorations would seem awfully out of place on an implement of war, however when she glances over the shoulder of Hephaestus she doesn't see these, and beholds an altogether different scene (an artificial wilderness/And a sky Ike lead") instead; her expectations were grand in scope, but misplaced.

It is here where the poem first shifts temporally and structurally, juxtaposing the classical scene with a vision of a decidedly bleak image. The scene? A ravaged landscape (a plain without a feature, bare and brown/No blade of grass, no sign of neighborhood/ Nothing to eat and nowhere to sit down) bringing to mind the trampled and barren moonscapes one would expect in those old pictures from World War I or II... Indeed, it could very well be during one of the many confrontations during those conflicts, from Marne to Verdun (the scenes of some of the bloodiest trench warfare during World War I), where armies stared at each other (An unintelligible multitude/A million eyes, a million boots in line without expression waiting for a sign) over endless plains of barbed wire-lined trenches, tank traps, and mine fields, waiting in dugouts for the sign to go 'over the top' and rush across the no-man's land amidst a hail of bullets and artillery just to come to grips with. their enemy. The atmosphere is heavy andcheerless (without expression), as no glory awaited the soldiers, no battle with a worthy adversary, just an ignominious death from a bullet fired from an opponent whose face they would never see.

And the order does come (Out of the air a voice without a face), from voice far from the front lines espousing justice of their side of the conflict (Proved by statistics that some cause was just), which reveals the inherent hypocrisy of some systems of government, where leaders force their countrymen to war yet have never really been exposed to its horrors... But the soldiers do, and yet they're the ones that can't do anything about their situation, as being part of the military means that they have to follow the senseless orders (In tones as dry and level as the place: No one was cheered and nothing was discussed) from the leaders of the government they serve. The only sense it made was it was going to, in one way or another, lead to their deaths in a place far from home, but it was an order (They marched away enduring a belief/Whose logic brought them, somewhere else, to grief) and thus had to be followed; a soldier followed their commanders, this much has remained true from the time of Homer.

The poem once more returns to Hephaestus' workshop, and Thetis still struggling to get a glimpse of the decorations being placed upon the shield. The scope of her imaginings contracts once more, and while less idyllic, they still hold a positive tone, with scenes of piety and worship (White-flower garlanded heifers/Libation and sacrifice). However, through the flickering torchlight of the workshop (which could easily signify the limited perceptions of a person), instead of the altar of worship, another scene unfolds, something decidedly more profane in nature, a clear contrast to what she was hoping for.

The setting once more returns to the present. It's not entirely clear, but the speaker seems to be describing a place of execution (Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot/where bored officials lounged/And sentries sweated for the day was hot), complete with wordless crowds (watched from without and neither moved nor spoke) and a trio of prisoners being marched to the place where they are to meet their fate. There is a faint echo of the Crucifixion of Christ, with the triumvirate of convicts and the three upright poles that awaited them, but it's a twisted one, a profane echo of the scene from the Bible, as instead of an inkling of hope, of a possible rebirth, there is none; their lives quite literally lay in the "hands of others (Lay in the hands of others; they were small/and could not hope for help and no help came), and one is given the impression that the owners aren't exactly in the mood to be lenient...or that those at the gallows had any leeway in changing their destiny. The oppressive atmosphere doesn't help matters, and with the absence of hope there's no dignity to the spectacle (...they lost their pride/And died as men before their bodies died); one imagines cries and pleas falling upon deaf ears before the end came, and even then there was no guarantee that end was a quick or painless one.

The viewpoint once more returns to Thetis and Hephaestus. Still, she expects wondrous things, and again her imaginings lesson in scope, to events more personal, more kinetic, more lively: men and women dancing to a lively tune perhaps, and athletes performing on the field. But yet again her expectations are way off the mark.

Well moved lawns where competitors perform are not part of the scenes the God of the Forge embosses upon the shield, and instead in the next stanza we are treated to another barren landscape, where weeds are overgrown, and the only soul in sight is an urchin. Far from the symbol of strength and vitality that the athletes represent, he is malnourished, not only in body, but also in spirit (who'd never heard of any world were promises were keptfor one could weep because another wept); upon seeing a bird, traditionally a symbol of freedom of ideas, and the drive to reach or learn what's over the horizon, his first impulse is to stone it, for he was obviously not born from a world that encouraged idealism (That girls were raped, that two boys knife a third), or dreamers.

Eventually, Hephaestus finishes his work, and hobbles away, leaving Thetis to admire his work. It is no surprise that she is dismayed to find that, instead of the idyllic or even idealistic scenes of peacetime activity she had expected, she instead finds scenes of despair. Once more Irony rears its head at her reaction: what better decoration for an implement of war than scenes of war, as well as the results that follow? That she herself doesn't realize this, that she is more horrified at the decoration on the shield instead of the shield itself, and all the consequences of its use. An even greater Irony succeeds this one: the fact that, the recipient of the shield, Achilles, won't live much longer after receiving it, a victim of the war that his mother could not comprehend.

As mentioned in the beginning, it is easy to see why many view the poem as anti-war work. Scenes of peace (what Thetis expects) and war clash in an interesting milieu, in some instances examining the meaning of responsibility, as well as moral hypocrisy, during times

of war. Take Thetis for example. The fact that she had a shield, an implement of warfare, made makes her complicit in the slaughter that her son could and would commit on the battlefield, and yet she expects scenes of peace to be embellished upon its surface, where in most instances it would be covered in blood. Much like the politicians that hide behind their rhetoric and political diatribes, espousing concepts like justice or honor and pushing others to war because of those ideals, all the while remaining safe far from the front lines... They are as much responsible for the slaughter that commences as the soldiers pulling the trigger, virtually faceless and innumerable masses whose individualism were suppressed for dubious ends.

4.3.4 Myth and Modernity in the poem

In an illuminating write-up on this poem, M.K. Rukhaya explains the use of mythology vis-à-vis the modern times. This essay explains that Achilles is the celebrated Greek warrior of the Trojan War. Thetis, the mother of Achilles looks at the shield of Achilles that was hangingover his shoulder. The shield at once acts as an emblem of art and a historian, in that it reflects the civilization of a certain time. It was specially made for Achilles by Haphaestos, the blacksmith of the Gods. The mother searches the shield for:

For vines and olive trees,

Marble well-governed cities

And ships upon untamed seas,

But there on the shining metal His hands had put instead

An artificial wilderness

And a sky like lead.

It reflects the hollowness and futility of a life that verges on nothingness. The word ‘artificial points to the superficiality of this sort of life. The sky like ‘lead’ echoes the metallic, frigid and cold human behavior.

The plain is without any feature; it has no individuality. There is no blade of grass, no vegetation and therefore, it is barren. There is no sign of neighborhood and no communion. In an era of competition, people have a shortage of the basic amenities of living. What foregrounds the background to Thetis is a multitude of soldiers. The soldiers wait for the command of their leader. They are an “unintelligible multitude”, just like a herd of cattle with no ability to rationally think or speculate. They are “without expression”: without the power to communicate.

The modern life is one that is based on logic and reasoning. It is characterized by a lack of sentiment. Just as the tone was dry and level. The issue for war was not discussed with the multitudes; it was an authoritarian assessment. Statistics were enough to prove that the cause was just. The face ordering the same is not visible either, he has no identity, and is therefore, a construct by himself. The line: “No one was cheered and nothing was discussed,” echoes Tennyson’s “The Charge of the Light Brigade”.

Theirs not to make a reply

Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs but to do and die.

Thetis searched the shield for scenes pertaining to Greek life (as depicted on Keats' Grecian um). The phrase 'white flower garlanded heifer" echoes the same. The term 'ritual pities' also reflects the same. The 'libation' refers to the pouring forth of wine in honor of a God.

In the flickering forge light in the dim light of the blacksmith's workshop, she observes yet another scene. The scene is of a concentration camp where prisoners of war are kept.Officers cracked jokes to while away their time. The enemy soldiers amidst such callousness are captured and tied to three stakes and killed. The irreverence of the picture is a reminder to the crucifixion of Christ filled with overwhelming reverence.

The modern society with the loss of religious conviction is juxtaposed against an act that is emblematic of the redemption of mankind. The image depicted here is a travesty of Christ's ordeal. The claustrophobia of confinement and enslavement is referred to in the line:"Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot."

The people of the world are cheated by the so-called commander into the logic of their reason. Little did the common people comprehend that though they were small in comparison, nothing could be done without their acceptance. They could not hope for help, and therefore, no help care. Nevertheless, redemption lay in their own hands. They die before their bodies as their self-respect is crushed under the totalitarian forces.

She looks for athletes at their games, and men and women in dance rhythmicallyswaying their limbs to the beat of the music. However, in the reflective shield that she heldthere were no such 'healthy' images but only those of decay and decomposition - "a weed-choked field".

What one is finally left with are aimless, impulsive people out to hurt each other for no reason at all just as the 'ragged urchin' mentioned. People regress into primitivism and develop animal instincts. Unwarranted violence, rape, broken promises and lack of humanity was the order of the day.

Hephaestos is the God of fire and the metal smith who made the shield of Achilles.Thetis, the mother of Achilles cries out in despair at the thought of the inevitability of death andat the idea of the death of her son. "The strong/ Iron-hearted man" referred to in the poem isAchilles. War, in such an instance, poses as a metaphor of life where people are caught in therat race of survival of the fittest. One eventually succumbs to the same.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

W H Auden's 'The Shield of Achilles' was written in 1952 (T/F).

4.4 Glossary

She the mother of Achilles.

Achilles - one of the Greek heroes of the Trojan War.

Skies like lead this symbolizes the ugliness and murkiness of contemporary urban industrial civilization.

Congregated-crowded.

Ritual pieties-scenes of religious rites and ceremonies engraved on the shield.

Heifers cows.

Libation distribution of sweets after a religious ceremony.

Barbed wire-refers to a concentration camp where prisoners of war are kept.

Weed choked field-it symbolizes the spiritual desolation of modern age.

Those girls are...a third-symbolic of the sex and violence so characteristic of modern age.

Axioms - some well-known truth.

Armourer- the maker of armour, the blacksmith.

Hephaestus - blacksmith of the gods, symbolic of artists in the past as well as in the present.

4.5 SUMMING –UP

The major literary devices used throughout the poem are allusion, ekphrasis, and juxtaposition, which create the central tension between the romanticized view of war and the harsh reality of warfare. The more subtle devices like metaphor, simile, and repetition help to convey the poem's main themes.

4.6 Questions

1. Do you agree with the view that Auden lived in the age of anxiety and wrote about it?
2. Write a note on the mythical technique The Shield of Achilles.
3. Discuss the juxtaposition of myth and modernity in the poem.

4.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWER

True

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Unit 5
IN MEMORY OF W. B. YEATS

Structure

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Learning Objectives
5.2.1 Style And Structure
5.2.2 Text
5.2.3 Substance
5.2.4 Interpretation
5.2.5 Symbolism, Imagery And Wordplay
5.5.5.1 Water
5.5.5.2 Frozenness And Immobility
5.5.5.3 Impending Doom
5.5.5.4 Suffering
A. Self-Assessment Question
5.3 Glossary
5.4 Summing -Up
5.5 Questions
5.6 Self-Assessment Questions' Answer
5.7 Suggested Readings

5.1Learning Objectives

Students! We are going to study W.H. Auden's poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats". It was written in 1939 when William Butler Yeats, the famous Irish poet and dramatist died.

5.2Introduction

W.H. Auden's poem 'In memory of W.B Yeats' was written at an important moment in Auden's career. It was the first poem he wrote after moving to America in the year that all of Europe would be plunged into the Second World War, 'all the dogs of Europe bark". The bleakness of the landscape inside the poem reflects the bleak lookout for Europe. Auden's left-wing views made him particularly opposed to the rise of fascism and he had worked against it during the Spanish civil war. The poem says something about the political situation but it is also about a man, a poet about whom Auden had very mixed feelings. Auden disagreed with Yeats on many points but ultimately his respect for his poetic gift wins through in the poem.

5.1.1 Style and Structure

Auden is using the poem to state his view on what the relationship between poetry and politics should be. Yeats inherited the romantic idea of a poet as a sort of prophet. A symbolic figure who should try and influence people, whose poetry should change their outlook. In 'In memory of W.B. Yeats' Auden inverts this, "the words of dead men are altered in the guts of the living' the people are changing the poetry. Auden is deliberately denying Yeats the bardic status he desired; his death will be remembered by, 'a few thousand' as an 'unusual day. Indeed the fifth stanza is largely given over to describing the way in which life goes on. The man disappears behind his work, 'scattered among a hundred cities, "he became his admirers'.

Auden doesn't seem to feel that Yeats changed anything, "Mad Ireland hurt you into pobtry, is immediately followed by, 'Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,' the repetition of 'mad' and 'madness' with 'Ireland' emphasizes the sameness.

In the different sections of the poem Auden treats both Yeats' poems and the manbehind them before laying him to rest and making a larger address to other poets.

It is a strange sort of memorial that seeks to give the dead a dressing down and comments, you were silly like us', taking Yeats and pulling him into the fold of common humanity. The 'silliness' may refer to Yeats' interest in the occult of which Auden disapproved, or maybe just suggests that even mythic bards cannot help being silly so long as they are human.

There is a preoccupation with weather within the poem, "the day of his death was a dark cold day', 'the brooks were frozen', 'now Ireland has her madness and her weather still, the 'dark cold day,' seems to suggest the sense of something lost, or possibly Auden was just missing the mist and damp of lovely England. Of course no memorial to Yeats would be complete without mentioning Ireland, he is probably the. dominant Irish literary figure of the twentieth century and was closely involved in the independence movement; This makes it strange that Ireland is only mentioned in two lines of the poem, perhaps Auden is again denying Yeats status as a central figure in Irish politics.

There are many references to voices and mouths in the poem which highlight Auden's concern with the poetic voice. Similarly the poem uses a variety of forms in keeping with the different addresses in the different sections of the poem. The final section of the poem begins by literally burying Yeats so Auden can move on to addressing a larger audience. His words follow, poet, follow right' seem to suggest that instead of trying to influence events a poet should attempt to report them faithfully.

The lines, 'still persuade us to rejoice', and, "teach the free men how to praise' seem to foreshadow the darkness coming over Europe. The words, 'persuade us to rejoice', might seem at odds the imperative at the end of the next stanza, 'sing of human unsuccess in a rapture of distress' The phrase, 'rapture of distress', is in itself something of an oxymoron. The idea seems to be that poets shouldn't shy away from telling the truth in their work and that good poetry has a value to heal, 'let the healing fountain start,' even when speaking of 'human unsuccess'.

The Interest ng point is that his, ‘Gift survived it all. And in the end Auden paid Yeats the ultimate tribute, that of imitation. He uses very Yeatsian diction in the first section and in the third the stanza pattern echoes the meter and rhyme of Yeats’ late poem “Under Ben Bulben’ the final lines of which were inscribed on Yeats’ tombstone. Auden’s conclusion seems to be that whatever he and Yeats may have disagreed on; you could not fault the man’s poetry.

5.2.2 Text

In Memory of W. B. Yeats

W. H. Auden

I

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.
But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,

Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed; he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections,
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the Bourse,
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed,
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom,
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual.

What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II
You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:
The parish of rich women, physical decay,
Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to temper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III
Earth, receive an honoured guest:
William Yeats is laid to rest.
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;
With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

5.2.3Substance

The poem In Memory of W.B. Yeats by W.H. Auden is divided into three sections of varying lengths which form separate poetic units within the poem. The relationship among these units is not very close and organic, as each section is based on somewhat independent strains of thought.

The poem, as its title indicates is an elegy written to mourn the death of W.B. Yeats, but it is different from the conventional elegy: Traditionally, in an elegy all nature is represented as mourning the death, here nature is represented as going on its course indifferent and unaffected. The great poet's death goes unnoticed both by man and nature: human life goes on as usual, and so does nature. Secondly, in the traditional elegy the dead is glorified and his death is said to be a great loss for mankind at large. But Auden does not glorify Yeats,

He goes to the extent of calling him 'silly' and further that his poetry could make nothing happen. "Ireland has her madness and her weather still." Thus, Auden reverses the traditional elegiac values and treats them ironically. Although, apparently the poem is an elegy. Auden reverses and departs from the known traditions of elegy. He does not idealize Yeats as a poet or sentimentalize his fate. He proceeds to embody certain general reflections on the art of a poet and the place of poetry in the flux of events, which constitute human history. So the death of Yeats remains in the focus of the poem only to support the peripheral reflections in the poem.

5.2.4 Interpretation

Section I of the poem describes, in the dramatic setting, the death of Yeats. Yeats died on a day when it was bitter cold, brooks were frozen and airports were deserted. Auden looks upon the death of Yeats as an ordinary occurrence. His death did not affect the order of things. And here Auden introduces an idea which is central to the theme of the poem; a poet's work ultimately becomes independent of him because he had no control over the interpretation which posterity will give it. He becomes what his readers make him.

Section II introduces another strand of thought. Here, Auden's expression becomes changed with psychological overtones. From the description of the mere physical death of Yeats, Auden proceeds to examine the psychological implications of the work of a poet and assesses the worth of poetry in terms of modern psychology. Despite the great poetry of Yeats, Ireland had remained the same. Poetry fails to produce any revolutions or to make changes in society. What lives after a poet in his style; his manner of saying rather than the subject or the content of his poetry. And this style, manner and language of the poet come to dwell in the subliminal depth of the human psyche, where executives would never want to temper it. The uniqueness of poetry lies in the manner in which it objectifies the human condition.

In section-Ill, the poet universalizes the tragedy of Yeats by relating it to the wider theme of the artist in society. Time, which is indifferent to the faults of character or physical charm worships language'. Time does not care for what the poet said but for something about the way he said it. The language of a poet redeems his views and oddity of character. The second half of section- Ill deals with imminence of world war-II. The time of Yeats' death was at terrible one. "It was a time of 'intellectual disgrace' sans pity and compassion.

Auden begins this ode with an archetypal image cluster that links winter and death. The setting is desolate and filled with winter, death and negative words, which often are linked by alliteration of d sounds. Alliterating negative words and phrase include: 'disappeared' and 'dad' (line1), 'deserted' (line 2), 'disfigured' (line3), 'dying day' (line 4), and 'day', 'death' (line 6). This repetition creates a powerful scene of desolation in which the world's dead time seems to mirror the poet Yeats' death. In an extended form of personification, the wintering earth itself seems to mourn the loss of the poet.

In addition, Auden makes good use of other extended metaphors by establishing a different central metaphor for almost each stanza in part 1. He compares death to an invading army that takes over Yeats' whole being in stanza 4. The 'invasion' is preceded by 'rumours" then 'revolt' in the provinces of his body; then the 'squares of his mind' are emptied, silence pervades the 'suburbs' of his existence, and lights go out when the 'current of his feeling failed.' Auden uses a cluster of geographic terms (provinces, squares and suburbs) to illustrate the personal world of Yeats being shut down. These linked geographical comparisons metaphorically make Yeats a whole country unto himself, which magnifies the gravity of the loss.

Auden also uses individual metaphors with great cleverness. One example is his use of ‘mouth’ at the end of part 2 to talk about poetry and the poet simultaneously. Poetry is a ‘mouth’ in that it metaphorically speaks to the reader. Since the ‘mouth’ is also the organ of speech, the word is used as a form of metonymy to refer to the poet himself. Like a mouth, poetry is an open potential from which words can issue. Mouths, like poems, are eternalfeatures of humankind - one, the mouth, is a permanent physical feature, while the other, the poem, is an imaginative creation that endures beyond the poet’s death.

Auden shows considerable ingenuity in employing blank verse, lambic lines of unequal length, half rhymes and feminine endings. The seven syllable lines of the last section seem by contrast to move formally, like a funeral march, with a balance in each line between two major and two minor stresses the rise and fall of the slow-marching soldiers (feat): and with formal movement, the grand last section makes a formal statement. The form of odd is traditionally reserved for important and serous subjects and is written in an elevated style, so Auden gave Yeats great value and dignity by using the genre.

5.2.5Symbolism, Imagery and Wordplay

5.2.5.1 Water

Moving and flowing and churning things up, water is the quintessential symbolic image for motion and change. That’s a good thing, folks. Change can be difficult, but it’s natural, just like water. It’s immobility that’s actually strange and uncomfortable. Auden builds up a dense network of water metaphors to help him describe the way poetry can function in our sad, sorry lives.

5.2.5.2 Frozenness and Immobility

If water’s all about motion, then people are all about anti-motion. In this poem, at least, people are stiff and lonely and locked in their own worlds and delusions. Even Yeats is no exception to the rule. There doesn’t seem to be any immediate way out of this fix, especially in 1939, when everybody with two brain cells to rub together knows that war is on the horizon (World War II, in fact). Ever feel helpless in the face of seemingly unchangeable world events? That’s what the speaker feels and he’s pretty sure that others feel the same way.

5.2.5.3 Impending Doom

Death Destruction Doom. What else would you expect from an elegy? After all, the very fact that it’s an elegy means somebody has died. But that’s not the only dark and nasty thing lurking around the corner. As it turns out, the whole world is about to implode. Orexplode. This poem is as acutely aware of the future as it is of the past- and frankly, neither is looking all that great at the moment. In a response to the death of W.B. Yeats Auden addresses him personally as well as other artists, aesthetes and the general public as a commemorative gesture.

5.2.5.4 Suffering

Suffering may be universal and significant; however it takes place in very ordinary conditions and in unprepossessing circumstances. Yeats believed that in the midst of tragedy, the artist will transfigure it into something (useful), edifying. He expressed this thought thus:

Sing of human unsuccess

in a rapture of distress

The artist transfigures the most ordinary situations and human suffering throughlanguage and still makes life worth living and praising.

Time

Worships language

Still persuade us to rejoice.

Teach the free man how to praise.

Despite imminent war, intellectual disgrace, impotence, the poet is invoked to celebrate life through language.

The curse of Adam (isolation, displacement) can be transformed by the farming of a verse' to a 'vineyard'

The angst (alienation) 'deserts of the heart' can be counteracted by exploring andcelebrating community, love, kindness so that we 'Teach the free man how to praise.

Though 'Poetry makes nothing happen' appears despairing, Auden clearly suggests this may be so only in the political and collective spheres;

In the personal, art is significant and enduring, involved with subtle influences.

Immortality of Art: The death of the poet was kept from his poems'. Though Yeats has died, his poetry will live on forever and continue to inspire people throughout the ages.

A. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

"In Memory of W. B. Yeats" is an ode (T/F).

5.3Glossary

He-W.B. Yeats,

Quays-wharfs or harbours.

The province of his body- the dying poet is compared to an emperor. Different parts of his body are the provinces of his empire which refuse to follow his will, or different parts of his mind become empty, lose their power of thinking.

Bourse-business exchange.

Mad-wild easily excited.

Ranches of isolation - isolated corners in the human psyche.

Honoured guest - the body of Yeats.

Kipling-the great Edwardian novelist and poet.

Paul Claudel - poet who supported the Fascist cause during the Spanish Civil War.

The dogs of Europe - selfish, blood-thirsty leaders of Europe.

Sequestered separated and isolated from others.

Deserts of the heart-hearts dry of sympathy and fellow-feeling.

5.4 SUMMING -UP

In Auden's poem In Memory of W.B. Yeats the imminence of World War II has been dealt in the second half of section III. In comparison to section III the sections I & II are quite relaxed in structure. The mystery and drama of Yeats' death is now set against a world overhung with the clouds of war.

5.5 Questions

1. How does Auden want Yeats to be remembered? What details in the poem give you this impression?
2. What do you think makes the speaker the saddest - the loss of Yeats as a person or as a poet? How would you justify your answer?
3. How would you explain the lines "poetry makes nothing happen"? Do you agree? Why or why not?

5.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS' ANSWER

False

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- Smith, Stan, ed., The Cambridge Companion to W. H. Auden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Spender, Stephen, ed., WH. Auden: A Tribute. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975.

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M. A. Examination

English

(Modern British & American Poetry)

Paper - X

(New Syllabus)

Time Allowed: 3 Hours **Maximum Marks: 80**

The candidates shall limit their answers precisely within the answer-book (40 pages) issued to them and no supplementary/continuation sheet will be issued.

1. Answer any six of the following in about 100 words each:

   a) Write a critical note on Eliot's imagery in "The Waste Land""

   b) Write a note on Christian elements in The Second Coming'.

   c) Why is Byzantium significant for Yeats?

   d) Write a note on the projection of the oriental thought in "The Waste Land"".

   e) Write a note on mythical technique in The Shield of Achilles'.

   f) Explain: "You were silly like us: your gift survived it all".

   g) Can Whitman be described as Wordsworth of American Poetry?

   h) *'Passage to India'*eulogizes the concept of colonization. Comment.

   i) Write anote on one metaphor in Birches'.

   j) Analyze one simile in'Mending Wall'

   k) Analyze one image in 'January Morning'.

   l) Analyze the syntax of a prescribed poem by William Carlos Williams.

2. "Eliot's "The Waste Land"' projects the vision of modem humanity. Examine and illustrate.

OR

Do youagree with Edmund Wilson that the whole ofYeats' poetry is a perpetual effort to escape reality? Give your reasons.

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M.A. IIIrd Semester
English

Course Code : DSC- MENG 302
(Compulsory)

MODERN BRITISH AND AMERICAN POETRY

Blocks: 1-7

Dr. Ashwani Rana

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CONTENTS

Unit	Topics	Page No.
	Block1	
Unit 1	Modern British and American Poetry	3
Unit 2	Modernist English Poetry	7
	Block 2	
Unit 1	W.B. Yeats	10
Unit 2	The Second Coming	27
Unit 3	A Prayer for My Daughter	36
Unit 4	Leda and the Swan	45
Unit 5	Sailing to Byzantium	53
Unit 6	Among School Children	61
	Block 3	
Unit 1	Walt Whitman: American Literature	74
Unit 2	Walt Whitman: Poetry	89
	Block 4	
Unit 1	Robert Frost: Background	106
Unit 2	Robert Frost: Poetry	116
	Block 5	
Unit 1	William Carlos Williams	132
Unit 2	William Carlos Williams	144
	Block 6	
Unit 1	T. S. Eliot: Poetry	151
Unit 2	T. S. Eliot: “The Waste Land”	162
	Block 7	
Unit 1	W. H. Auden (1907-1973)	192
Unit 2	The Unknown Citizen	205
Unit 3	September 1, 1939	218
Unit 4	The Shield of Achilles	233
Unit 5	In Memory of W. B. Yeats	244