UNIT - 1:

16TH AND 17TH CENTURY LITERATURE

STRUCTURE

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss 16th and 17th Century literature

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literary works in sixteenth-century England were rarely if ever created in isolation from other currents in the social and cultural world. The boundaries that divided the texts we now regard as aesthetic from other texts were porous and constantly shifting. It is perfectly acceptable, of course, for the purposes of reading to redraw these boundaries more decisively, treating Renaissance texts as if they were islands of the autonomous literary imagination. One of the greatest writers of the period, Sir Philip Sidney, defended poetry in just such terms; the poet, Sidney writes in The Defence of Poetry (NAEL 8, 1.953–74), is not constrained by nature or history but freely ranges "only within the zodiac of his own wit." But Sidney knew well, and from painful personal experience, how much this vision of golden autonomy was contracted by the pressures, perils, and longings of the brazen

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world. And only a few pages after he imagines the poet orbiting entirely within the constellations of his own intellect, he advances a very different vision, one in which the poet's words not only imitate reality but also actively change it.

We have no way of knowing to what extent, if at all, this dream of literary power was ever realized in the world. We do know that many sixteenth-century artists, such as Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare, brooded on the magical, transforming power of art. This power could be associated with civility and virtue, as Sidney claims, but it could also have the demonic qualities manifested by the "pleasing words" of Spenser's enchanter, Archimago (NAEL 8, 1.714–902), or by the incantations of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (NAEL 8, 1.1022–1057). It is significant that Marlowe's great play was written at a time in which the possibility of sorcery was not merely a theatrical fantasy but a widely shared fear, a fear upon which the state could act — as the case of Doctor Fian vividly shows — with horrendous ferocity. Marlowe was himself the object of suspicion and hostility, as indicated by the strange report filed by a secret agent, Richard Baines, professing to list Marlowe's wildly heretical opinions, and by the gleeful (and factually inaccurate) report by the Puritan Thomas Beard of Marlowe's death.

Marlowe's tragedy emerges not only from a culture in which bargains with the devil are imaginable as real events but also from a world in which many of the most fundamental assumptions about spiritual life were being called into question by the movement known as the Reformation. Catholic and Protestant voices struggled to articulate the precise beliefs and practices thought necessary for the soul's salvation. One key site of conflict was the Bible, with Catholic authorities trying unsuccessfully to stop the circulation of the unauthorized Protestant translation of Scripture by William Tyndale, a translation in which doctrines and institutional structures central to the Roman Catholic church were directly challenged. Those doctrines and structures, above all the interpretation of the central ritual of the eucharist, or Lord's Supper, were contested with murderous ferocity, as the fates of the Protestant martyr Anne Askew and the Catholic martyr Robert Aske make painfully clear. The Reformation is closely linked to many of the texts printed in the sixteenth-century section of the Norton Anthology: Book 1 of Spenser's Faerie Queene, for example, in which a staunchly Protestant knight of Holiness struggles against the satanic forces of Roman Catholicism, or the Protestant propagandist Foxe's account of Lady Jane Grey's execution, or the Catholic Robert Southwell's moving religious lyric, "The Burning Babe".

If these windows on the Reformation offer a revealing glimpse of the inner lives of men and women in Tudor England, the subsection entitled "The Wider World" provides a glimpse of the huge world that lay beyond the boundaries of the kingdom, a world that the English were feverishly attempting to explore and exploit. Ruthless military expeditions and English settlers (including the poet Edmund Spenser) struggled to subdue and colonize nearby Ireland, but with very limited success. Farther afield, merchants from cities such as London and

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Bristol established profitable trading links to markets in North Africa, Turkey, and Russia. And daring seamen such as Drake and Cavendish commanded voyages to still more distant lands. The texts collected here, which supplement the selections from Ralegh's Discoverie of Guiana and Hariot's Brief and True Report in the Norton Anthology, are fascinating, disturbing records of intense human curiosity, greed, fear, wonder, and intelligence. And lest we imagine that the English were only the observers of the world and never the observed, "The Wider World" includes a sample of a foreign tourist's description of London. The tourist, Thomas Platter, had the good sense to go to the theater and to see, as so many thousands of visitors to England have done since, a play by Shakespeare.

On May 30, 1593, Christopher Marlowe, at twenty-nine years old perhaps England's most famous playwright and poet, went to a tavern in the London suburb of Deptford to spend the afternoon with friends. According to the coroner's inquest, there was an argument about the bill in the course of which Marlowe drew his knife and lunged at Ingram Frizer, who was seated on the opposite side of the table. In the scuffle that followed, Marlowe's knife ended up stuck in his own head, just above his eye, fatally wounding him. Frizer was briefly held, but then released without punishment. Case closed. Puritan moralists such as Thomas Beard saw the murder of Marlowe, who had a dangerous reputation for atheism, as a manifest sign of God's judgment.

Literary sleuths in the twentieth century, reopening the case, discovered that it was not so simple. At the time of his death, Marlowe was under official investigation for atheism and treason; in the search for evidence against him, his roommate, the playwright Thomas Kyd, had been arrested and tortured, and a police spy, Richard Baines, had given Queen Elizabeth's secret police, headed by Thomas Walsingham, a list of Marlowe's alleged "monstrous opinions." Moreover, it turns out that Ingram Frizer was on Walsingham's payroll, as were several of the other men who were present in the room at the tavern when Marlowe was killed. Perhaps Marlowe's death really was the consequence of an argument about the tavern "reckoning," as it was called, but it is also possible that it was a quite different reckoning that Marlowe was paying for with his life.

The records of Marlowe's life give ample evidence of a personal risk-taking shown also by many of the great characters he created for the theater. The son of a provincial cobbler, he managed, in a world with very little social mobility, to make his way to Cambridge University, then plunged into both the unstable world of spies, blackmailers, and agents provocateurs and the almost equally unstable world of actors and playwrights. He was fascinated, it seems, by extremes: ambition on a vast scale, boundless desire, a restless, reckless willingness to transgress limits. Such are the passions that drive Tamburlaine, in Marlowe's vision, to conquer the world and Faustus to sell his soul to Lucifer in exchange for knowledge and power. And such perhaps are the passions that enabled Marlowe, in the six short years between 1587, when he received his M.A. from Cambridge, and 1593, when he died, to transform the English theater.

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Nothing like Marlowe's plays had been seen or heard before. Take, for example, this clumsy expression of passionate love by the title character in Cambyses, King of Persia, a popular play written around 1560 by another Cambridge graduate, Thomas Preston:

For Cupid he, that eyeless boy, my heart hath so enflamed
With beauty, you me to content the like cannot be named;
For since I entered in this place and on you fixed mine eyes,

Most burning fits about my heart in ample wise did rise.
The heat of them such force doth yield, my corpse they scorch, alas!
And burns the same with wasting heat as Titan doth the grass.
And sith this heat is kindled so and fresh in heart of me,
There is no way but of the same the quencher you much be.

Now compare Preston's couplets, written in a metre called "fourteeners," with the lines in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (ca. 1592–93) with which Faustus greets the conjured figure of Helen of Troy:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss:
Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies!
Come Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena! (Scene 12, lines 80–86)

Marlowe has created and mastered a theatrical language — a superb, unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse — far more expressive than anything that anyone accustomed to the likes of Preston could have imagined, a language capable of remarkable intensity, intellectual rigor, and emotional complexity.

Marlowe's achievement in Doctor Faustus is both astonishing and unprecedented, but, although it seems closely linked to his unique personality, poetic gifts, and career, it cannot be understood in isolation from the larger cultural context. The story of Faustus was not Marlowe's invention but came from a German narrative about an actual historical figure. The powerful fears aroused by such a figure, and the legends associated with his name, are inseparable from widespread anxieties about sorcery and magic, anxieties violently manifested, for example, in the chilling case of Doctor Fian and skeptically challenged by Reginald Scot. Moreover, the theater is by definition a collaborative form, and in Marlowe's time the collaboration frequently extended to the text. It is not surprising, then, that Doctor Faustus has come down to us in versions in which Marlowe's own hand is conjoined with those of other playwrights and not surprising too that scholars, just as they have disagreed about the manner of

Marlowe's death, have disagreed about precisely which parts of these texts are by Marlowe himself.

English men and women of the sixteenth century experienced an unprecedented increase in knowledge of the world beyond their island. Religious persecution at home compelled a substantial number of both Catholics and Protestants to live abroad; wealthy gentlemen (and, in at least a few cases, ladies) traveled in France and Italy to view the famous cultural monuments; merchants published accounts of distant lands like Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, and Russia; and military and trading ventures took English ships to still more distant shores.

In 1496, a Venetian tradesman living in Bristol, John Cabot, was granted a license by Henry VII to sail on a voyage of exploration, and with his son Sebastian discovered Newfoundland and Nova Scotia; in 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert returned to Newfoundland to try to establish a colony there. The Elizabethan age saw remarkable feats of seamanship and reconnaissance. On his ship the Golden Hinde, Sir Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe in 1579 and laid claim to California on behalf of the queen; a few years later a ship commanded by Thomas Cavendish also accomplished a circumnavigation. Sir Martin Frobisher explored bleak Baffin Island in search of a Northwest Passage to the Orient; Sir John Davis explored the west coast of Greenland and discovered the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina; Sir John Hawkins turned handsome profits for himself and his investors (including the queen) in the vicious business of privateering and slave trading; Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe led an expedition, financed by Sir Walter Ralegh, to Virginia; Ralegh himself ventured up the Orinoco Delta, in what is now Venezuela, in search of the mythical land of El Dorado. Accounts of these and other exploits were collected by a clergyman and promoter of empire, Richard Hakluyt, and published as The Principal Navigations (1589; expanded edition 1599).

1.2 RENAISSANCE—AN OVERVIEW

"To seek new worlds for gold, for praise, for glory," as Ralegh characterized such enterprises, was not for the faint of heart: Gilbert, Drake, Cavendish, Frobisher, and Hawkins all died at sea, as did large numbers of those who sailed under their command. Elizabethans who were sensible enough to stay at home could do more than read written accounts of their fellow countrymen's far-reaching voyages. From India and the Far East, merchants returned with coveted spices and fabrics; from Egypt, they imported ancient mummies, thought to have medicinal value; from the New World, explorers brought back native plants (including, most famously, tobacco), animals, cultural artifacts, and, on occasion, samples of the native peoples themselves, most often seized against their will. There were exhibitions in London of a kidnapped Eskimo with his kayak and of Algonkians from Virginia with their canoes. Most of these miserable captives, violently uprooted and vulnerable to European diseases, quickly perished, but even in death they were evidently valuable property: when the English will not

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give one small coin "to relieve a lame beggar," one of the characters in Shakespeare's Tempest wryly remarks, "they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian".

Perhaps most nations define what they are by defining what they are not. This negative self-definition is, in any case, what Elizabethans seem constantly to be doing, in travel books, sermons, political speeches, civic pageants, public exhibitions, and theatrical spectacles of otherness.

The extraordinary variety of these exercises (which include public executions and urban riots, as well as more benign activities) suggests that the boundaries of national identity were by no means clear and unequivocal. Inspired by Amerigo Vespucci's accounts of the New World discoveries, Thomas More fashioned in Utopia a searching critique of English society. Descriptions of the lands and peoples of America often invoke Ovid's vision of the Golden Age, invariably with an implied contrast to the state of affairs at home. Even peoples whom English writers routinely, viciously stigmatised as irreducibly alien — Italians, Indians, Turks, and Jews — have a surprising instability in the Elizabethan imagination and may appear for brief, intense moments as powerful models to be admired and emulated before they resume their place as emblems of despised otherness.

In the course of urging his countrymen to seize the land, rob the graves, and take the treasures of Guiana, Sir Walter Ralegh finds much to praise in the customs of the native peoples; Thomas Hariot thinks that the inhabitants of Virginia, though poor in comparison with the English, are "ingenious" and show much "excellency of wit"; "Let the cannons roar," writes Michael Drayton in his Ode. To the Virginia Voyage, even as he praises Virginia as "Earth's only paradise" (NAEL 8, 1.1000). Perhaps the most profound exploration of this instability was written not by an Englishman but by the French nobleman Montaigne, whose brilliant essay Of Cannibals, translated by the gifted Elizabethan John Florio, directly influenced Shakespeare's Tempest and no doubt worked its subversive magic on many other readers as well.

The development of the English language is linked to the consolidation and strengthening of the English state.

1.3 ELIZABETHAN LYRICS AND SONNETS

The last ten or fifteen years of the sixteenth century was a period of amazing poetic activity: there is nothing like it in the history of our literature. Never in any equal period of our history did so much intellect go to the making of verses. They had not then the same number of distracting claims: literary ambition had fewer outlets. Carlyle, Grote, Mill, Gladstone, Disraeli, had they lived in the age of Elizabeth, would all have had to make their literary reputation in verse, and all might have earned a respectable place among our poets—might, at least, like Francis Bacon, have composed some single piece of sufficient excellence to be

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thought worthy of the "Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics." Amidst a general excitement and ambition of fame the gift of song may be brought to light where in less favourable circumstances it might have been extinguished by other interests And the rivalry of men endowed with eager and powerful intellects must always act as a stimulus to the genuine poet, although all their efforts come short of the creations of genius.

Three fashions of love-poetry may be particularised as flourishing with especial vigour during those ten or fifteen years—pastoral songs and lyrics, sonnets, and tales of the same type as Venus and Adonis. Spenser did much to confirm if not to set the pastoral fashion; but perhaps still more was done by Sir Philip Sidney with his "Arcadia" and his sonnets of Astrophel to Stella. These two poets leading the way to the sweet pastoral country of craggy mountain, hill and valley, dale and field, the greater portion of the tuneful host crowded after them, transforming themselves into Damons, Dorons, and Coridons, and piping to cruel Phillises, Phillidas, and Carmelas. Out of this masquerading grew many beautiful lyrics. "England's Helicon," which was published in 1600, and which gathered the harvest of this pastoral poetry, is by many degrees the finest of the numerous miscellanies of the Elizabethan age. It contained selections from Spenser, Sidney, Greene, Lodge, J. Wootton, Bolton, Barnefield, "Shepherd Tonie," Drayton, Shakespeare, and others of less note.

Many of these pastorals took the form of sonnets, but I single out sonnet-writing as a fashion by itself, in order to draw attention to the numerous bodies of sonnets published in the last decade of the century as lasting monuments of sustained passion, real or ideal. The list is very remarkable. It opens with the publication of Sidney's sonnets to Stella in 1591, and includes—Daniel's sonnets to Delia, published in 1592; Constable's sonnets to Diana, 1592; Lodge's sonnets to Phillis, 1593; Watson's Tears of Fancy, or Love Disdained, 1593; Drayton's Idea's Mirror, "amours in quatorzains," in 1594; and Spenser's Amoretti or Sonnets in 1596.

Hardly less notable is the fancy for short mythological or historical love-tales. The way in this form of composition was led by Thomas Lodge, who published in 1589 the poem of "Glaucus and Scylla," narrating with many pretty circumstances the cruelty of Scylla to Glaucus, in punishment whereof she was transformed into a dangerous rock on the coasts of Sicily. Marlowe began and Chapman finished the tale of Hero and Leander; Shakespeare sang the love of Venus and Adonis; Drayton the love of Endymion and Phoebe; Chapman (in "Ovid's Banquet of Sense") the love of Ovid and Julia. The voluptuous descriptions of these tales could not have been expected to go on without sooner or later exciting the spirit of derisive parody: and accordingly, in 1598, Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" was rudely burlesqued by the satirical Marston in a comical version of the tale of "Pygmalion and Galatea." To prevent any undue indignation at the liberty thus taken with our great dramatist, I may here

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intimate a suspicion, for which I shall afterwards produce some grounds, that certain of Shakespeare's sonnets—those, namely, from the 127th to the 152d inclusive—were designed to ridicule the effusions of some of his seriously or feignedly love-sick predecessors. Marston's profane parody may thus assume the aspect of a Nemesis.

The enthusiasm of beauty was strong in the Elizabethan poets. With many of them it was a fierce and earnest thirst. Their lives were hot, turbulent, precarious: they turned often to the bloom of fair cheeks and the lustre of bright hair as a passionate relief from desperate fortunes. Beauty was pursued by Greene and Marlowe not as a luxury but as a fierce necessity—as the only thing that could make life tolerable. Such visions as Hero and fair Samela filled them with mad ecstasy in the height of their intemperate orgies, and were called back for soothing worship in their after-fits of exhaustion and savage despondency. In many others of calmer and more temperate lives, beauty excited less ardent transports, and yet was a powerful influence. Beauty was a very prevailing religion; the perfections of woman, excellence of eye, of lip, of brow, were meditated on and adored with devout rapture; and though the votary's enthusiasm in some cases travelled into licentious delirium, in gentler natures it bred soft and delicate fancies, of the most exquisite tenderness. Beauty was part of all their lives, and shaped itself in each mind according to the soil. A very surprising number of different soils it found to grow in, and very remarkable were the products. One meets the same flowers again and again, but always with some individual grace. Even third-rate and fourth-rate poets do not seem to be weaving garlands of flowers plucked from the verses of the masters: they develop the common seeds in their own way. Consider, for example, the following madrigal by John Wootton, a name now utterly forgotten by the generality, and a poet of whose personality nothing survives but his name and his contributions to "England's Helicon":—

Her eyes like shining lamps in midst of night,
Night dark and dead:
Or as the stars that give the seamen light,
Light for to lead
Their wandering ships.
Amidst her cheeks the rose and lily strive,
Lily snow-white:
When their contend doth make their colour thrive,
Colour too bright
For shepherd's eyes.
Her lips like scarlet of the finest dye,
Scarlet blood-red:

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Teeth white as snow, which on the hills doth lie,
Hills overspread
By Winter's force.
Her skin as soft as is the finest silk,
Silk soft and fine:
Of colour like unto the whitest milk,
Milk of the kine
Of Daphnis' herd.
As swift of foot as is the pretty roe,
Roe swift of pace:
When yelping hounds pursue her to and fro,
Hounds fierce in chase
To reave her life.

1.3.1 Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586).

In 1591 a volume of sonnets was issued under the editorship of Thomas Nash, containing Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella," twenty-eight sonnets by Samuel Daniel, and other poems by "Divers Noblemen and Gentlemen." The publication was most probably surreptitious: Daniel, who published his "Sonnets to Delia" in the following year, complained that "a greedy printer had published some of his sonnets along with those of Sir Philip Sidney"; and a corrected and authentic edition of Sidney's sonnets was issued before the close of 1591.

The main attraction of Nash's volume was the "Astrophel and Stella" series of sonnets; this was the title of the work, the other poems being merely appended. The editor extolled Sidney with characteristic eloquence and extravagance. He apologises for commending a poet "the least syllable of whose name, sounded in the ears of judgment, is able to give the meanest line he writes a dowry of immortality." He deplores the long absence of England's Sun, and ridicules the gross fatty flames that have wandered abroad like hobgoblins with a wisp of paper at their tails in the middest eclipse of his shining perfections. "Put out your rush candles, you poets and rhymers," he cries; "and bequeath your crazed quatorzains to the chandlers; for lo! here he cometh that hath broken your legs."

The story of the romantic passion between Sidney and Penelope Devereux, Astrophel and Stella, is well known to readers of literary history. Lady Penelope, sister of the unfortunate Earl of Essex, was some nine years younger than her distinguished lover. Her father had formed a high opinion of Sir Philip's promise, and on his deathbed expressed a wish for their union: but her guardians were in favour of a wealthier match, and two or three years after the old Earl's death, she was married at the age of seventeen, much against her own wishes, to an unattractive young nobleman, Lord Rich. This event may have been hastened by Sidney's attitude before the marriage. If his self-reproaches in the sonnets were

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well founded, he would seem to have been undecided and vacillating in his addresses, his natural impulses being obstructed by a pedantic fancy that love was unworthy of a great thinker like himself—perhaps a temporary result of his correspondence with Languet: but when the lady was married out of his reach, his love became most ardent, and he courted her favours in a long series of passionate sonnets. Seeing that he very soon after married another lady—a daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham—it might with some reason be inferred that there was in Sidney's as in other sonnets not a little make-believe passion, and that his delight as an ambitious young poet at finding such an amount of literary capital was quite as strong as the pain of the disappointment. Certainly, however, Lady Rich, whose rare charms of beauty and wit were the theme of many celebrated Elizabethan pens, was likely enough to be the object of a genuine passion. As the wife of a man whom she disliked and kept in thorough fear and subjection, and as the sister of an ambitious nobleman nearly related to the throne, she led as she advanced in years a brilliant and a troubled life, and was in the Court of England the most conspicuous and fascinating woman of her generation. When Sidney wrote his sonnets she was in the prime of her beauty, and he may well have been sincere in deploring the loss of such a prize, and praying in wailful sonnets that he might continue to have a place in her affections.

In the choice of ideas for his sonnets Sidney prided himself on being original. This was a natural reaction from the long line of imitators between Surrey and himself. In Watson's "Hecatompathia, or Passionate Century of Love," published in 1582, about the time when Sidney was composing his sonnets, the imitative and artificial character of the fashionable English love-poetry was specially illustrated by the candid acknowledgments of the accompanying notes. The poet makes no pretence to spontaneous effusion. Prefixed to the many ingenious praises of his lady's beauty, and allegations of her cruelty, and his own varied professions of unalterable love and consuming pangs of despair, are full references to the literary sources of his inspiration. Before depicting the pangs of Cupid's deadly dart and praying for its withdrawal, the commentary informs us that "the author hath wrought this passion out of Stephanus Forcatulus."

Before a dire lament that Neptune's waves might be renewed from the poet's weeping eyes, Vulcan's forge from the flames within his breast, and the windbags of AEolus from his sobbing sighs, we are candidly informed that "the invention of this Passion is borrowed for the most part from Seraphine, Son. 125."

A praise of his lady is imitated from Petrarch: a sweet fancy about the capture of Love by the Muses, from Ronsard: a vision of his lady in sleep from Hercules Strozza. Another commendation of the most rare excellencies of his mistress is imitated from a famous sonnet by Fiorenzuola the Florentine, which was imitated also by Surrey and by two other writers in Tottel's Miscellany.

So with the majority of Watson's "passions," as he called his poems; very few of them professed to be wholly original, and the adaptation was generally very slight. Now Sidney revolted from this habit of adopting the praises, vows,

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and "deploring dumps" of other amorous singers. He swore "by blackest brook of hell," that he was "no pick-purse of another's wit." His eloquence came from a different source: "his lips were sweet, inspired with Stella's kiss." He had tried the old plan—

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe

Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain;

Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow

Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.

But Invention, the child of Nature, fled from the blows of Study. He sat biting his pen, and beating himself for spite, till at last—

Fool! said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write.

His success was such that be could not refrain from boastful tirades against the old imitators—

You that do Dictionary's method bring

Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows

You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes

With new-born sighs and denizened wit do sing,

You take wrong ways, those far-fetched helps be such

As do betray a want of inward touch.

This and many other passages in Sidney illustrate the almost Homeric complacency of self-estimate among the Elizabethans.

Most of the conceptions and conceits in Sidney's sonnets are really his own; and they display very exquisite subtlety and tenderness of fancy. In these respects they deserve all the admiration they received from his contemporaries. What, for example, could be finer than the ruling conceit of his 38th sonnet?

This night while Sleep begins with heavy wings,

To hatch mine eyes, and that unbitted thought

Doth fall to stray, and my chief powers are brought

To leave the sceptre of all subject things:

The first that straight my fancy's error brings

Unto my mind, is Stella's image, wrought

By Love's own self, but, with so curious draught

That she, methinks, not only shines but sings.

I start, look, hark: but what in closed-up sense

Was held, in open sense it flies away,

Leaving me nought but wailing eloquence:

I, seeing better sights in Sight's decay

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Called it anew, and wooed sleep again:

But him, her host, that unkind guest had slain.

The first fifty or sixty sonnets exhibit Astrophel's love in what may be called in fashionable mathematical language the statical stage: the subsequent dynamical stage being composed of sonnets descriptive of moods and conceits occasioned by a sequence of incidents between the lovers—supposed encouragement, venturous liberties, discouragement, despair, and so forth. During the statical or brooding stage, the poet-lover's mind is occupied with similitudes and all sorts of fanciful inventions to set forth the incomparable charms of his mistress and the unexampled force of his passion. During that period his love is subject to no fluctuations, no dynamic change; it suffers neither increase nor abatement. It is chiefly in this stage that the soft gracefulness and ethereal reach of Sidney's fancy are displayed. Instead of the sighing lover's commonplace raw assertion that his mistress is fairer than Helen, or Semele, or Ariadne, or Chloris, or any other mythological beauty, or that she would have borne away the apple from Juno, Pallas, and Venus, Astrophel presents Stella with the following ingenious and delicately wrought conceit, enlivened by a sportive breath of tender humour:—

Phoebus was judge between Jove, Mars, and Love,

Of those three gods whose arms the fairest were

Jove's golden shield did eagles sable bear,

Whose talons held young Ganymede above:

But in vert field Mars bore a golden spear,

Which through a bleeding heart his point did shove.

Each had his crest; Mars carried Venus' glove,

Jove on his helm the thunder-bolt did rear.

Cupid then smiles: see! on his crest there lies

Stella's fair hair; her face he makes his shield,

Whose roses gules are borne in silver field.

Phoebus drew wide the curtains of the skies

To blaze these last, and sware devoutly then

The first thus match'd, were scantly gentlemen.

He is brimful of fancies equally delicate. Venus falls out on Cupid because under terror of the threats of Mars he would not wound that god deep enough. The angry mother breaks her son's bow and shafts, and the poor boy is disconsolate—

Till that his grandame Nature, pitying it,

Of Stella's brows made him two better bows,

And in her eyes of arrows infinite

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O how for joy he leaps! O how he crows!

And straight therewith, like wags new got to play,

Falls to shrewd turns,—and I was in his way.

The commonplace that his mistress's eyes are like stars he builds up into a profession of faith in Astrology. He takes Plato's saying, that if Virtue could come directly in contact with our eyes, it would raise flames of love in our souls, and maintains the truth of the doctrine, for Virtue has taken Stella's shape, and he is conscious of the effect in his own person. He exults over Reason, who at first intermeddled and decried, but when Stella appeared, knelt down and offered to produce good reasons for loving her. He is puzzled to make out why his plaints move her so faintly. He will not admit that she is hard-hearted; but at last he hits upon the true explanation:—

I much do guess, yet find no truth, save this,

That when the breath of my complaints doth touch

Those dainty doors unto the court of bliss,

The heavenly nature of that place is such

That once come there the sobs of mine annoys

Are metamorphosed straight to tunes of joys.

These sweet fancies rise in the head when the heart is comparatively tranquil. When storms began to agitate, the lover's strains became more impassioned. The following is the 48th sonnet:—

Soul's joy, bend not those morning stars from me,

Where virtue is made strong by beauty's might

Where Love is chasteness, pain doth learn delight,

And humbleness grows on with majesty.

Whatever may ensue, O let me be

Copartner of the riches of that sight:

Let not mine eyes be hell-driven from that light:

O look! O shine! O let me die, and see!

For though I oft myself of them bemoan,

That through my heart their beamy darts be gone,

Whose cureless wounds, e'en now, most freshly bleed;

Yet since my death-wound is already got,

Dear killer, spare not thy sweet cruel shot:

A kind of grace it is to slay with speed.

Farther on in the series, having so far conquered the lady's indifference, he prays for and receives a kiss, "poor hope's first wealth, hostage of promised weal, breakfast of Love,"

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and expresses his rapture in several most impassioned sonnets. The following is the 81st:—

O kiss, which dost those ruddy gems impart,
Or gems, or fruits, of new-found Paradise:
Breathing all bliss and sweet'ning to the heart;
Teaching dumb lips a nobler exercise!

O kiss, which souls even souls, together ties
By links of Love, and only Nature's art:
How fain would I paint thee to all men's eyes,
Or of thy gifts, at least, shade out some part!
But she forbids; with blushing words she says,
She builds her fame on higher-seated praise:
But my heart burns, I cannot silent be.
Then since, dear life, you fain would have me peace,
And I, mad with delight, want wit to cease,
Stop you my mouth with still, still kissing me.

Sidney observes the Petrarchian form of the sonnet in so far as regards the division of the stanza into two staves, the first of eight lines with two rhymes, the second of six lines with three rhymes. Whether for ease or for variety, he is not particular about the arrangement of the rhymes within these limits. In the first stave he employs sometimes the alternate, sometimes the successive arrangement; and when the rhymes are alternate, he sometimes reverses but oftener repeats in the second quatrain the order of the first. In the second stave, he sometimes interweaves the lines so as to make a stave proper; but oftener he subdivides it into a quatrain followed by a couplet. Sometimes, as in two of the sonnets above quoted, he begins with the couplet and ends with the quatrain; and the arrangement is seemingly dictated not by ease or accident, but by a just sense of metrical effect.

Interspersed with the sonnets are several songs, and in these our poet is happier than in the more confined measures. The last of these songs, which is in the form adopted by Shakespeare for the serenade to Silvia (Two Gent. of Ver., iv. 2), contains some very sweet staves. The two first lines go to the lady; the three following to the lover:—

Who is it that this dark night
Underneath my window plaineth?
It is one, who from thy sight
Being (ah!) exiled, disdaineth
Every other vulgar light.

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Why, alas! and are you he?
Be not yet those fancies changed?
Dear, when you find change in me
Tho' from me you be estranged
Let my change to ruin be.

. . . . . .

But Time will these thoughts remove:
Time doth work what no man knoweth.
Time doth as the subject prove,
With time still affection groweth
In the faithful turtle-dove.
What if ye new beauties see
Will not they stir new affection?
I will think they pictures be
Image-like of saint-perfection,
Poorly counterfeiting thee.

Two such songs as this and the one to Silvia make the stave seem the only true form for a lover's lyric: the lines run into music of their own accord, and scatter sweet perfumes with their light motion. There is nothing more ravishing in the language.

SAMUEL DANIEL (1562-1619).

Daniel, born near Taunton in Somersetshire, was the son of a music-master, but somehow obtained a university education at Oxford. He published a translation of Paulus Jovius's "Discourse of Rare Inventions" in 1585 at the age of twenty-three, and soon afterwards became tutor to Lady Anne Clifford. A man of taste and refined feeling, very unlike some of the sturdy contemporary plants who lived by acting and play-writing, Daniel grew up under the shelter of noble patronage, conciliating favour by the amiability of his disposition as well as by the gracefulness of his literary compliments. He enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Southampton and of the Pembroke family. Through the influence of his noble friends, he had obtained in 1593, the Mastership of the Revels, for which poor John Lyly had waited so long and begged so earnestly; and after the accession of James, he was made Gentleman-Extraordinary, and subsequently one of the Grooms of the Privy Chamber to the Queen Consort. His chief poetical works were—Sonnets to "Delia," 1592; "Delia" augmented, along with the "Complaint of Rosamond" and the "Tragedy of Cleopatra," 1594; metrical history of the "Civil Wars," 1604; "Tragedy of Philotas," 1611; "Hymen's Triumph, a pastoral tragi-comedy," not published till 1623. He wrote several other pieces of less

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importance. His plays were produced for the entertainment of the Court; and it may have been this connection that dictated his choice of the Wars of the Roses as a subject. He also wrote in prose a History of England.

Had Daniel lived in the present day, his destiny probably would have been to write scholarly and elegant articles in the magazines, ripe fruits of leisurely study, cultivated taste, and easy command of polite English. His was not one of the stormy irregular natures that laid the foundation and raised the structure of the English drama: the elements of his being were softly blended, and wrought together mildly and harmoniously. In the prologue to "Hymen's Triumph," he declares that he has no rude antique sport to offer—

But tender passions, motions soft and grave

The still spectators must expect to have.

He wrote for Cynthia, and therefore his play—

Must be gentle like to her

Whose sweet affections mildly move and stir.

He might have said the same about all his poetry. He was no master of strong passions: he never felt them, and he could not paint them. Between his Cleopatra and Shakespeare's there is a wide gulf. But he is most exquisite and delicate in pencilling "tender passions, motions soft and grave."

Did u know?

The publication of Daniel's sonnets in 1592 is an epoch in the history of the English Sonnet. This was the first body of sonnets written in what is sometimes called by pre-eminence the English form—three independent quatrains closed in by a couplet.

Without being strikingly original, Daniel has a way and a vein of his own. He fills his mind with ideas and forms from extraneous sources, and with quietly operating plasticity reshapes them in accordance with the bent of his own modes of thought and feeling. He had not the Shakespearian lightning quickness in adaptation and extension; the process in him was more peaceable and easy. The diction of his poems is choice; the versification easy and flowing. He often puts things with felicitous terseness and vigour, and his words almost invariably come together happily and harmoniously.

The publication of Daniel's sonnets in 1592 is an epoch in the history of the English Sonnet. This was the first body of sonnets written in what is sometimes called by pre-eminence the English form—three independent quatrains closed in by a couplet. Daniel also set an example to Shakespeare in treating the sonnet as a stanza, connecting several of them together as consecutive parts of a larger expression. Apart from their form, there is not very much interest in the sonnets to Delia. They have all Daniel's smoothness and felicity of phrase, and are pervaded by exceedingly sweet and soft sentiment. Though they rouse no strong feelings, they may be dwelt upon by a sympathetic reader with lively enjoyment.

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One of them, with somewhat greater depth of feeling than most of the others, the sonnet beginning—"Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night," is ranked among the best sonnets in the language. But their most general interest is found in their relation to Shakespeare's sonnets, several of which seem to have been built up from ideas suggested by the study of those to Delia. In the following sonnets, for example, readers familiar with Shakespeare's will not fail to remark a certain similarity of idea, although the two series of sonnets differ as widely as the genius of the two poets.

SONNET 37.

But love whilst that thou mayst be loved again,
Now whilst thy May hath filled thy lap with flowers;
Now whilst thy beauty bears without a stain:
Now use the summer smiles, ere winter lowers:
And whilst thou spreadst unto the rising Sun
The fairest flower that ever saw the light,
Now joy thy time before thy sweet be done;
And, Delia, think thy morning must have night,
And that thy brightness sets at length to west,
When thou wilt close up that which now thou show'st,
And think the same becomes thy fading best,
Which then shall most inveil and shadow most.
Men do not weigh the stalk for that it was,
When once they find her flower, her glory pass.

SONNET 39.

When winter snows upon thy sable hairs,
And frost of age hath nipt thy beauties near;
When dark shall seem thy day that never clears,
And all lies withered that was held so dear:
Then take this picture which I here present thee,

Limned with a pencil that's not all unworthy:
Here see the gifts that God and Nature lent thee;
Here read thyself, and what I suffer'd for thee.
This may remain thy lasting monument,
Which happily posterity may cherish;
These colours with thy fading are not spent,

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These may remain, when thou and I shall perish.
If they remain, then thou shalt live thereby:
They will remain, and so thou canst not die.

SONNET 41.

Be not displeased that these my papers should
Bewray unto the world how fair thou art;
Or that my wits have showed the best they could
The chastest flame that ever warmed heart!
Think not, sweet Delia, this shall be thy shame,
My Muse should sound thy praise with mournful warble;
How many live, the glory of whose name
Shall rest in ice, when thine is graved in marble!
Thou mayst in after-ages live esteemed
Unburied in these lines, reserved in pureness;
These shall entomb those eyes, that have redeemed
Me from the vulgar, thee from all obscureness.
Although my careful accents never moved thee,
Yet count it no disgrace that I have loved thee."

SONNET 52.

Let others sing of knights and paladins,
In aged accents and untimely words;
Paint shadows in imaginary lines
Which well the reach of their high wits records
But I must sing of thee, and those fair eyes
Authentic shall my verse in time to come
When yet th' unborn shall say, "Lo where she lies
Whose beauty made him speak, that else was dumb."
These are the arks, the trophies I erect,
That fortify thy name against old age;
And these thy sacred virtues must protect,
Against the dark and Time's consuming rage.
Though th' error of my youth in them appear
Suffice they show I lived and loved thee dear."

Notes

Daniel's genius is best shown in the expression of bereaved love in the "Complaint of Rosamond," and in "Hymen's Triumph"—as Spenser said, "in tragic plaints and passionate mischance." In the expression of courtship love, his imagination is cold and acts artificially and mechanically: but when the beloved object is taken away, he is moved to the depths, and pours forth his strains with genuine warmth. The passion has still a certain softness in it: his lovers have not the inconsolable fierce distraction of Shakespeare's forsaken lover, "tearing of papers, breaking rings atwain:" they do not shriek undistinguished woe: but they sigh deeply, and their voices are richly laden with impassioned remembrane The plaintive sorrow of Thyrsis is sweet and profound. But nothing that Daniel has written flows with surer instinct and more natural impulse than the agonised endearments of Harry over the body of Rosamond. Wholly different in character from the frantic doting of Venus over her lost Adon, these verses are hardly less perfect as the utterance of a milder and less fiercely fond passion. The deep heart's sorrow of the bereaved lover makes itself felt in every line—

Then as these passions do him overwhelm
He draws him near my body to behold it;
And as the vine married unto the elm
With strict embraces, so doth he enfold it:
And as he in his careful arms doth hold it
Viewing the face that even death commends
On senseless lips millions of kisses spends.
"Pitiful mouth," said he, "that living gavest
The sweetest comfort that my soul could wish
O be it lawful now, that dead thou havest,
This sorrowiug farewell of a dying kiss.
And you, fair eyes, containers of my bliss,
Motives of love, born to be matched never,
Entomb'd in your sweet circles, sleep for ever.
"Ah, how methinks I see Death dallying seeks
To entertain itself in Love's sweet place!
Decayed roses of discoloured cheeks,
Do yet retain dear notes of former grace,
And ugly Death sits fair within her face;
Sweet remnants resting of vermilion red,
That Death itself doubts whether she be dead.
"Wonder of beauty, O receive these plaints,

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These obsequies, the last that I shall make thee:
For lo, my soul that now already faints,
(That loved the living, dead will not forsake thee)
Hastens her speedy course to overtake thee.
I'll meet my death, and free myself thereby,
For ah, what can he do that cannot die?
"Yet, ere I die, thus much my soul doth vow,
Revenge shall sweeten death with ease of mind:
And I will cause posterity shall know,
How fair thou wert above all womankind.
And after-ages monuments shall find
Showing thy beauty's title, not thy name,
Rose of the world that sweetened so the same."

HENRY CONSTABLE (1555—1610).

Constable was of Roman Catholic family, and was educated at St John's, Cambridge, where he took the degree of B.A. in 1579. He was obliged to leave England in 1595, from suspicion of treasonable practices. Venturing back in 1601 or 1602, he was committed to the Tower, from which he was not released till towards the close of 1604. He is mentioned as if he were still alive in the "Return from Parnassus" (1606), and in Bolton's "Hypercritica" (1616) as if he were then dead. The first edition of his sonnets to "Diana" appeared in 1592, and contained 23; a second was issued in 1594, containing 27. Sixty-three sonnets by Constable, methodically arranged in sevens, are printed in the Harleian Miscellany from a MS. known as Todd's MS.: this collection comprises all that appear in the printed collections. Constable wrote also certain "Spiritual Sonnets," and a version of the tale of Venus and Adonis, which was not published till 1600, but is believed to have been written earlier.

Like Daniel, Constable does not attempt the delineation of stormy passions, yet his deepest vein is quite different from Daniel's. He has a more ardent soul than Daniel: his imagination is more warmly and richly coloured: he has more of flame and less of moisture in him. Daniel's words flow most abundantly and with happiest impulse when his eye is dim with tears; Constable's when his whole being is aglow with the rapture of beauty. Tears fall from the poet's eyes in the following sonnet, but they fall like rain in sunshine. The occasion is his lady's walking in a garden:—

My lady's presence makes the roses red

Because to see her lips they blush for shame:

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The lily's leaves for envy pale became,
And her white hands in them this envy bred.
The marigold abroad its leaves did spread
Because the sun's and her power is the same
The violet of purple colour came,
Dyed with the blood she made my heart to shed.
In brief, all flowers from her their virtue take;
From her sweet breath their sweet smells do proceed;
The living heat which her eyebeams do make
Warmeth the ground, and quickeneth the seed.
The rain wherewith she watereth these flowers
Falls from mine eyes which she dissolves in showers.

The following is more characteristic of his soaring ardour—"rapture all air and fire;" though the structure is somewhat artificial:—

Blame not my heart for flying up so high,
Sith thou art cause that it this flight begun,
For earthly vapours, drawn up by the sun,
Comets become, and night-suns in the sky.
My humble heart so with thy heavenly eye
Drawn up aloft, all low desires doth shun:
Raise thou me up, as thou my heart has done,
O during night, in heaven remain may I.
Blame not, I say again, my high desire,
Sith of us both the cause thereof depends
In thee doth shine, in me doth burn a fire;
Fire draweth up others, and itself ascends.
Thine eye a fire, and so draws up my love;
My love a fire, and so ascends above.

The most exquisite of his sonnets for sweet colour and winning fancy is that where he compares his love to a beggar at the door of beauty—

Pity refusing my poor Love to feed,

A beggar starved for want of help he lies,
And at your mouth, the door of beauty, cries
That thence some alms of sweet grants may proceed.
But as he waiteth for some almes-deed,

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A cherry tree before the door he spies—
O dear, quoth he, two cherries may suffice,
Two only life may save in this my need.

But beggars can they nought but cherries eat?
Pardon my Love, he is a goddess' son,
And never feedeth but of dainty meat,
Else need he not to pine as he hath done.
For only the sweet fruit of this sweet tree
Can give food to my love, and life to me.

In one of his sonnets he makes the same glorious claim for his lady that Shakespeare makes for the fair youth of his adoration—

Miracle of the world! I never will deny
That former poets praise the beauty of their days;
But all those beauties were but figures of thy praise,
And all those poets did of thee but prophesy.

His amorous sonnets and other light poems were the effusions of his youth, and like Spenser he turned in his older years to the contemplation of heavenly beauty. He concludes his love-sonnets by saying—

For if none ever loved like me, then why
Still blameth he the things he doth not know?
And he that hath so loved will favour show,
For he hath been a fool as well as I.

And adds in prose—"When I had ended this last sonnet, and found that such vain poems as I had by idle hours writ, did amount just to the climacterical number 63; methought it was high time for my folly to die, and to employ the remnant of wit to other calmer thoughts less sweet and less bitter." There can be little doubt that the beautiful "spiritual sonnets" ascribed to him by Mr Park, and printed in vol. ii. of the "Heliconia," are his composition. Those addressed to "our Blessed Lady" are particularly fine.

4.3.4. Thomas Lodge (1556-1625).

Lodge, the next in order of our sonneteers, led rather a varied life. His father was a grocer in London, who in 1563 attained to the dignity of Lord Mayor. He entered Trinity College, Oxford, in 1573, and Lincoln's Inn in 1578; but literature seems to have had more attraction for him than the bar. In 1586, and again in 1591-3, we find him engaged in privateering expeditions to the West Indies, in search of excitement and adventure. He belonged to the wild society of Greene,

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Marlowe, and Nash; but if he took much part in their dissipations, he had strength enough to survive it, and when the leaders of the set died off, he became sober and respectable, studied medicine, gave up poetry, and spent the leisure of his professional life in translating Josephus, and the "works, both natural and moral," of Seneca. His chief productions were—A "Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage-plays," in reply to Stephen Gosson's "School of Abuse," 1580; "Alarm against Usurers," along with the novelette of "Forbonius and Prisceria," 1584; "Scylla's Metamorphosis," with "sundry most absolute Poems and Sonnets," 1589; "Euphues Golden Legacy," (reprinted in Mr Collier's "Shakespeare's Library," as being the basis of "As You Like It," 1590; "Phyllis honoured with Pastoral Sonnets," 1593; "The Wounds of Civil War," a tragedy on the history of Marius and Sylla, 1594; "A Fig for Momus," a body of satires, 1595; "Wit's Misery and the World's Madness," a prose satire, 1596; "A Marguerite of America," a very tragical novel, 1596.

Lodge's love-poems have an exquisite delicacy and grace: they breathe a tenderer and truer passion than we find in any of his contemporaries. His sonnets are more loose and straggling, slighter and less compactly built, than Constable's or Daniel's; but they have a wonderful charm of sweet fancy and unaffected tenderness. His themes are the usual praises of beauty and complaints of unkindness; but he contrives to impart to them a most unusual air of sincere devotion and graceful fervour. None of his rivals can equal the direct and earnest simplicity and grace of his adoration of Phyllis, and avowal of faith in her constancy.

Fair art thou, Phyllis; ay, so fair, sweet maid,
As nor the sun nor I have seen more fair;
For in thy cheeks sweet roses are embayed
And gold more pure than gold doth gild thy hair.
Sweet bees have hived their honey on thy tongue,
And Hebe spiced her nectar with thy breath:
About thy neck do all the graces throng
And lay such baits as might entangle Death.
In such a breast what heart would not be thrall?
From such sweet arms who would not wish embraces?
At thy fair hands who wonders not at all,
Wonder itself through ignorance embases.
Yet nathëless tho' wondrous gifts you call these,
My faith is far more wonderful than all these.

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There is a seeming artlessness in Lodge's sonnets, a winning directness, that constitutes a great part of their charm. They seem to be uttered through a clear and pure medium straight from the heart: their tender fragrance and music come from the heart itself. If the poet's design was to assume a pastoral innocence and simplicity, he has eminently succeeded. There are many conceits in his sonnets, but they are expressed so simply and naturally that they take on the semblance of half-earnest beliefs. A simple silly Arcadian may be allowed the sweet fancy of supposing a storm to be the result of Aurora's envy and despair at seeing his lovely mistress.

The dewy roseate Morn had with her hairs
In sundry sorts the Indian clime adorned
And now her eyes apparelled in tears
The loss of lovely Memnon long had mourned:
Whenas she spied the nymph whom I admire,
Kembing her locks, of which the yellow gold
Made blush the beauties of her curled wire,
Which heaven itself with wonder might behold:
Then red with shame, her reverend locks she rent,
And weeping hid the beauty of her face—
The flower of fancy wrought such discontent:
The Sighs which 'midst the air she breathed a space
A three days' stormy tempest did maintain,
Her shame a fire, her eyes a swelling rain.

And when despair seizes him, with what earnestness he makes his appeal to the last relief!—

Burst, burst, poor heart, thou hast no longer hope:
Captive mine eyes unto eternal sleep:
Let all my senses have no further scope;
Let death be lord of me and all my sheep.
For Phyllis bath betrothed fierce disdain,
That makes his mortal mansion in her heart
And tho' my tongue have long time taken pain,
To sue divorce and wed her to desart,
She will not yield; my words can have no power;
She scorns my faith; she laughs at my sad lays;
She fills my soul with never-ceasing sour,

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Who filled the world with volumes of her praise.

In such extremes what wretch can cease to crave

His peace from Death who can no mercy have?

It may, however, be acknowledged that Lodge's nature was not specially fitted for the sonnet form of composition; he was not sufficiently patient and meditative to elaborate intricate stanzas. His lines have on them the dewy freshness of an impulsive gush,—a freshness off which the dew has not been brushed by the travail of thought; and the opening of his sonnets in many cases leads us to expect better things than we find as we proceed when the leading idea has been hammered out into a quatorzain. In the sonnet that opens with the lines—

Ah, pale and dying infant of the spring,

How rightly now do I resemble thee

That self-same hand that thee from stalk did wring,

Hath rent my breast and robbed my heart from rue.

the conclusion is laboured and disappointing. And still more disappointing is the sonnet to his lady on her sickness, which opens with the exquisitely tender verses—

How languisheth the primrose of love's garden?

How trill her tears the elixir of my senses?

although it contains two other beautiful lines of adjuration—

Ah, roses, love's fair roses, do not languish

Blush through the milk-white veil that holds you covered.

Mixed with his sonnets to Phyllis, and scattered through his prose tales, are many lyrics of less intricate measure, which show Lodge's charm at the height of its power. Take, for example, the two following in honour of Phyllis:—

Love guards the roses of thy lips,

And flies about them like a bee;

If I approach, he forward skips,

And if I kiss, he stingeth me.

Love in thine eyes doth build his bower,

And sleeps within their pretty shine;

And if I look the boy will lower,

And from their orbs shoot shafts divine,

Love works thy heart within his fire

And in my tears doth firm the same;

And if I tempt, it will retire,

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And of my plaints doth make a game.
Love, let me cull her choicest flowers,
And pity me, and calm her eye;
Make soft her heart, dissolve her lowers,
Then will I praise thy deity.
But if thou do not, Love, I'll truly serve her,
In spite of thee, and by firm faith deserve her.
My Phyllis hath the morning sun,
At first to look upon her,
And Phyllis hath morn-waking birds
Her risings for to honour.
My Phyllis hath prime feathered flowers
That smile when she treads on them,
And Phyllis hath a gallant flock
That leaps since she doth own them.
But Phyllis hath so hard a heart,
Alas that she should have it!
As yie]ds no mercy to desart
Nor grace to those that crave it.
Sweet sun, when thou lookest on,
Pray her regard my moan.
Sweet birds, when you sing to her,
To yield some pity woo her.
Sweet flowers, whenas she treads on,
Tell her her beauty deads one.
And if in life her love she nill agree me,
Pray her before I die she'll come and see me.
Not less exquisite is Rosalind's Madrigal:—
Love in my bosom like a bee
Doth suck his sweet:
Now with his wings he plays with me,
Now with his feet.
Within mine eyes he makes his nest,
His bed amid my tender breast,
My kisses are his daily feast,

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And yet he robs me of my rest.
Ah, wanton, will ye?
And if I sleep then percheth he
With pretty flight,
And makes his pillow of my knee
The livelong night.
Strike I my lute, he tunes the string,
He music plays if so I sing,
He lends me every lovely thing:
Yet cruel he my heart doth sting.
Whist, wanton, still ye,
Else I with roses every day
Will whip you hence;
And bind you when you long to play
For your offence.
I'll shut mine eyes to keep you in,
I'll make you fast it for your sin,
I'll count your power not worth a pin,
Alas what hereby shall I win,
If he gainsay me?
What if I beat the wanton boy
With many a rod?
He will repay me with annoy,
Because a god.
Then sit thou safely on my knee
And let thy bower my bosom be:
Lurk in mine eyes, I like of thee:
O Cupid, so thou pity me,
Spare not but play thee.

"Scylla's Metamorphosis," the tale of Glaucus and Scylla, is interesting on its own account, and further, as the probable model of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis," whose unhappy loves it introduces as an episode. It is at least the first published of the apocryphal classical tales which at that time became a transient fashion—the English anticipator, if not the model, of Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," Drayton's "Endymion and Phoebe," and Chapman's "Ovid's Banquet of Sense." I need not follow the windings of the tale. The gist is that Scylla was

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metamorphosed as a punishment for her cruelty to Glaucus, a sea-god: and the interest of the poem lies in its voluptuous descriptions. I may quote his picture of the anguish of Venus for comparison with Daniel's Henry and Shakespeare's Venus: it is more a pretty grief than a deep passion: its sweetness reminds us of a child's endearments to a dead pet bird.

He that hath seen the sweet Arcadian boy
Wiping the purple from his forced wound,
His pretty tears betokening his annoy;
His sighs, his cries, his falling on the ground;
The echoes ringing from the rocks his fall,
The trees with tears reporting of his thrall.
And Venus starting at her love-mate's cry
Forcing her birds to haste her chariot on;
And, full of grief, at last, with piteous eye,
Seen where all pale with death he lay alone
Whose beauty quail'd as wont the lilies droop
When wasteful winter winds do make them stoop.
Her dainty hand addressed to claw her dear,
Her roseal lip allied to his pale cheek,
Her sighs, and then her looks and heavy cheer,
Her bitter threats, and then her passions meek;
How on his senseless corpse she lay a-crying,
As if the boy were then but new a-dying.

Lodge's "Fig for Momus" is often amusing, but the satire is not very pungent. He was much too good-natured a man to be a satirist: he was not capable even of smiling spite, much less of bitter derision. His "Epistles" are entitled to the claim that he makes for them, of being the first productions of the kind in English, and their date disposes at once of Joseph Hall's conceited boast—

I first adventure, follow me who list

And be the second English satirist.

But priority is their chief merit: they are colourless imitations of Horace. Marston is the first real English satirist.

Nor can Lodge be said to have been successful as a dramatist. The "Wounds of Civil War" is a heavy drama. Sylla is drawn with considerable power as a bold rough man with a certain sense of humour in him: ambitious, boastful, treating his enemies with scoffing contempt, making a jest of death and cruelty, rudely

repelling compliments, provoking public censure for the pleasure of defying it. He may have supplied some raw material for Shakespeare's "Coriolanus." Sylla talks very much in the vein of Tamburlaine; and it is probable from this that Lodge may fairly get the credit or discredit of the extravagant ramps of Basni in the "Looking-glass for London," which he wrote in conjunction with Greene. It is a curious thing that men like Lodge and Peele should quite equal, if not surpass, even Marlowe in outrageous heroics. One wonders that the Herod of the Mysteries should be out-Heroded by one who dwells with such fresh enthusiasm on tender beauties. How different are Sylla's rants from this strain!—

O shady vale, O fair enriched meads,

O sacred woods, sweet fields, and rising mountains;

O painted flowers, green herbs where Flora treads,

Refreshed by wanton winds and watery fountains.

Perhaps, however, it is not more surprising than that the author of "Tamburlaine" should be the author of "Hero and Leander."

1.4 METAPHYSICAL POETRY

John Donne is acknowledged as the master of metaphysical poetry and is admired for his talent and magnificent wit exercised in his writing. Metaphysical poetry is a special branch of poetry that deals with the pedagogic use of intellect and emotion in a harmonic manner. The basic praxis of metaphysical poetry is to highlight the philosophical view of nature and its ambience concerning human life. Despite criticisms from various corners, Donne and his other companions remained busy with their work to concentrate on metaphysical poetry to portray the feelings and sentiments of human beings by dint of their skillful and artful literary accomplishments. This paper is to address the outstanding performance of John Donne in the arena of metaphysical poetry and it endeavours to make a critical assessment of the diverse issues all embracing metaphysical poetry as well as to establish the relevance of metaphysical poetry in the literary realm.

Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere

This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere The Sun Rising: John Donne The startling conversational lines marvellously enumerate the poet‘s intense appeal to spread the beams of sun on the lovers‘ world as a mark of illuminating the macrocosmic world and beckon the readers to enter into a new realm of poetry with a sense of attachment and belonging between different objects of nature and human sentiments, feeling, passion etc. This philosophical structure of poetic aptitude to associate the different aspects of nature and its constituents in a significant manner constitutes the basics of metaphysical poetry the pioneering

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contribution of which has been made by John Donne. Metaphysical poetry and John Donne are so inherently interconnected that one without the other becomes a misnomer. Metaphysical poetry symbolizes the splendid and meticulous blending of intellect and emotion, ingenious wit and caustic humour so as to acquaint the readers with a new pattern of poetic excellence.

Genesis and Concept of Metaphysical Poetry

The onset of social reforms and Renaissance in particular made a sensational change in socio-political atmosphere in the late 16th and 17th centuries in England. In that era, politics and religion were intrinsically intertwined with each other and religion was at the heart of political controversy. The realm of education was revolutionized with new scientific ideologies, discoveries and inventions, coupled with grand and splendid literary creations. In the midst of such political insecurity, religious controversy, social fragmentation and intellectual ferment, there was the strong and pervasive presence of a spirit of freshness, of vivacity, of enthusiasm, of originality, of individuality, of new learning, of zest and so on. Diverse literary trends emerged in this whirlpool of change and enriched the history of literature. While Shakespeare lends a unique dimension to poetic drama and Spenser to dramatico-lyrical poetry, this era also witnessed the flourishing of an erudite group of poets whose poetic reputation rested on a powerful mingling of the intellect and the emotion in the form of metaphysical poetry. Chagrined by the much trodden track of Petrarchan sonnets coupled with pompous words and emotional exuberance, this new circle of poets, known as metaphysical poets, set a new fashion of composing poems, which provided intellectual parallels to a spectrum of emotional experience, a sudden transmission from playfulness to high-pitched passion, interplay of levity and sincerity, and a wide range of imagery, both starkly realistic and startlingly cunning.

John Donne, the pioneer of this metaphysical school of poetry, and his compeers like Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, George Herbert and Richard Crashaw significantly contributed to this new poetic field to draw the attention as well as animadversion from various corners. A more comprehensive list of metaphysical poets would like to include Abraham Cowley, Traherne and Thomas Carew who were either directly or indirectly influenced by Donne, the lynchpin of this group. The term metaphysical‘ refers to dealing with the different facets of nature or a philosophical view of the nature of things. Grierson depicts metaphysical poetry as poetry inspired by a philosophical concept of the universe and the role assigned to human spirit in the great drama of existence.

Donne and his associates are designated as metaphysical poets in so far as their poetic works have been enriched by the varied aspects of human life like

love, religion, death etc. by way of demonstrating their impact on human life in a lively manner with the help of far-fetched imagery.

Metaphysical poetry has sparkling capability to explore and express ideas and feelings about the terrestrial world and its diverse phenomena in a rational way to mesmerize the readers. Making innovative and shocking use of puns, paradoxes and employing subtle logical propositions, the metaphysical poetry has achieved a style that is energetic and vigorous unlike the rich mellifluousness and lilting overtones of the then conventional poetry. Broadly speaking, metaphysical poetry was the result of revolt against the conventional romanticism of Elizabethan love poetry and so, the metaphysical group of poets was inclined towards amalgamation of heterogeneous ideas and disparate images, use of intricate rhythm, realism, obscurity etc. Rightly does Joan Bennet observe that in case of Donne and his circle, the term metaphysical actually refers to style rather than subject matter.

Metaphysical poetry was in its heyday up to mid-17th century until neo-classicism entered to reign the literary realm and in the next two centuries metaphysical poetry went into total eclipse whereby Donne and his successors were discarded for displaying intentional obscurity. But 20th century ushered an unexpected revival of the metaphysical tradition where Donne and his group regained their lost favour and were studied with renewed interest and veneration by virtue of the modernist poet-critic T. S. Eliot‘s celebrated essay The Metaphysical Poets in which Eliot vehemently admired their stunning capacity for devouring and merging all kinds of experience:

> When a poet‘s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man‘s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of a typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.

Characteristics of Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poem primarily hinges on, to say in Eliotean phrase, a unification of sensibility— the marvellous fusion of head and heart, of intellect and emotion, of thought and passion. Unlike poets in the Petrarchan and Spenserian tradition, a metaphysical poet attempts to establish a logical connection between his emotional feelings and intellectual concepts so that readers are compelled to think afresh, exercising their wit in lieu of a passive reading of poems. In this regard, metaphysical poets utilize striking images and conceits which are considered the hallmark of any metaphysical poem. For instance, Donne in A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning compares the lovers with a pair of compasses: ¯If they be two, they are two so/ As stiff twin compasses are two/ Thy soul the

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fixed foot, makes no show/ to move, but doth, if th'other do.

Such a far-fetched comparison to show the mutuality and interdependence of the lovers in terms of compasses is indeed astounding for which Samuel Johnson describes metaphysical conceit as a kind of discordia concors – a combination of dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike (Life of Cowley).

Again in Twicknam Garden Donne makes another brilliant use of conceit whose ingenuity, Helen Gardner considers, is more striking than its justice:

> The spider Love, which transubstantiates all/ And can convert manna to gall.

Although Dr. Johnson pejoratively says that in metaphysical poetry heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together, it is evinced that such blend of discordant elements is quintessential to prove and persuade the readers about the point, the poet wishes to highlight.

Eschewing hackneyed phrases and worn-out images of conventional Elizabethan lyrics, these metaphysical poets telescope images and draw references from diverse spheres of cosmology, geography, science, philosophy, alchemy, theology, law and even from colonial enterprise so far as Britain was then emerging as the greatest empire through colonial expansion in different countries. The easy equation between lover's triumph and territorial conquest is perhaps nowhere so tellingly exemplified than in Andrew Marvell's To His Coy Mistress:

¯My vegetable Love should grow/ Vaster than Empires. . ..

In a similar vein, Donne charts love's course in tandem with his race's charting of the new world:

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,

Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown,

Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one (The Good Morrow).

While the following lines from Donne's The Good Morrow:

Where can we find two better hemispheres/Without sharp north, without declining west? compare the world of the lovers with the geographical world; the concluding couplet of The Sun Rising:

> Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere/ This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere brings forth a cosmic imagery to show how the microcosmic world of the lovers emblematizes the macrocosmic world.

Marvell's The Definition of Love, which is an abstraction on perfect love, culminates with an astrological allusion: ¯Therefore the Love which us doth bind/ But Fate so enviously debarrs/ Is the Conjunction of the Mind/ And Opposition of the Stars. In Love's Growth Donne draws his imagery from mediaeval science, and scholastic philosophy to illustrate the true nature of love:

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> . . . this medicine, love, which cures all sorrow/ With more, not only be no quintessence, / But mixed of all stuffs, paining soul, or sense. . .

The speaker in Love‘s Alchemy, on the contrary, derives his imagery from alchemy to suggest that it is not possible to fathom the mystery of love:

> I should not find that hidden mystery/ . . .
>
> as no chemic yet the elixir got.

Another distinct feature of metaphysical poetry, as practised by Donne and his successors, is a strange coalescence of passionate thinking and subtle ratiocination. For example, The Flea presents a desperate lover, trying to woo his beloved with logical and earnest solicitation for physical consummation: ¯And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be/ Confess it . . . . This flea is you and I, and this/ Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is. . .

The metaphysical poetry is also characterized by a sudden dramatic beginning and superb utilization of colloquial language in lieu of specific poetic terms, as evinced in the abrupt, conversational opening of The Canonization where the poet-lover admonishes the intruder in a colloquial tone for hampering their privacy:

> For God‘s sake hold your tongue, and let me love, Or chide my palsy, or my gout/ My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout..

John Donne: The Architect of Metaphysical Poetry

John Donne is regarded as both the pioneer and the chief spokesperson of metaphysical poetry. Robert Browning rightly complemented on Donne‘s poetic proliferation by the words: ¯Who was the Prince of wits, amongst whom he reign‘d / High as a Prince, and as great State maintain‘d? Donne had a prosperous literary life, garnished with numerous love poems, songs, sonnets, elegies, satires, sermons, religious verse and treatises but a majority of Donne‘s poetical works were published posthumously, barring a few like The Anniversaries (1612) and Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions (1623).

By his glorious poems, Donne helped the readers to taste the metaphysical flavour of his poetic expressions. In his major love lyrics like The Sun Rising, The Canonization, The Good Morrow, The Anniversary, A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning, The Ecstasy, Lovers‘ Infiniteness, The Flea, The Indifferent, A Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy‘s Day, A Valediction: Of Weeping, The Undertaking, The Relic, The Apparition, Love‘s Growth, The Dream, The Triple Fool, Song: Go And Catch A Falling Star etc.,

Donne critically sketched human love to differentiate it from the conventional concept of love given by others. Whereas most of the poets through ages contend that love remains beyond the compass of time‘s bending sickle, Donne in his

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poem The Canonization has blended love‘s timeless fragrance with love‘s unifying power, through the symbol of phoenix‘ and here lies Donne‘s ingenious talent as a poet sermoning on love. The line we in us find the eagle and the dove is a powerful expression of the miracle of love to harmonize the antipathetic and opposite sexes – eagle and dove, symbolizing masculine virility and feminine softness respectively.

Again in the same poem Donne celebrates love not simply as a holy passion, purging the lovers from baser things; rather as an alternative religion, the reverend love which becomes one another‘s hermitage, a haven of heavenly bliss and spiritual grace and thereby transforming the ordinary lovers to the saints of love to be followed by the posterity who will beg from above/A pattern of your love.

Through this act of resembling the canonization of priest with the glorification of lovers, Donne has pointed out a peculiar metaphysical flair of connecting the sublime with the commonplace. While the poet-speaker in The Canonization bestows a saintly grace to the earthly lovers, in The Sun Rising he describes the lovers as the monarchs in the realm of love and also claims that in comparison to the lovers‘ dignity and grandeur, all honour‘s mimic; all wealth alchemy‘ i.e. love is the greatest wealth to them. The speaker-lover in The Sun Rising strategically glorifies love‘s perpetuity against the evanescent and ephemeral feature of nature through these lines:

Love, all alike no season knows, nor clime,

/ Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time, in a manner much akin to Shakespeare‘s Sonnet No. 116 where he avows Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, / But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

The poet-persona in The Good Morrow proclaims how love creates its own perfect world, combined of two better hemispheres:

For love, all love of other sights controls,

And makes one little room, an everywhere.

John Donne also made his remarkable performance by employing sparkling wit and jarring language in his writings. Having been disgruntled with the soft and melting phrases of the followers of Petrarch, Donne devised a language, terse and vigorous —all of which contribute to lend a masculine aura to metaphysical poetry. The strange and uneven opening of Donne‘s Song (Go and Catch a Falling Star) strikes a dissonant tone:

Go, and catch a falling star,

Get with child a mandrake root,

Tell me, where all past years are

Or who cleft the Devil‘s foot. . .

In Song, Donne has critically compared the impossible task of catching a

falling star with the impossibility of getting a faithful woman:

…..And swear / No where / Lives a woman true, and fair..

While among the Elizabethan poets, use of wit has been decorative and ornamental, Donne in his writings has employed wit sometimes in the form of satire and hyperbolic statements and often in a serious and sincere manner. In The Sun Rising Donne has categorically applied satire:

Thy beams, so reverend, and strong

Why shouldst thou think?

I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink.

Again in the same poem Donne‘s witty approach is conveyed by way of hyperbolic expression:

She is all states, and all princes, I,

Nothing else is to suggest that the lady-love is the empress of the kingdom where the lover is merely the prince.

The following lines from Donne‘s The Canonization:

We can die by it, if not live by love

And if unfit for tombs and hearse

Our legend be,

it will be fit for verse highlight how the speaker has used poetic wit in a serious and sincere tone to emphasize the immortality of terrestrial lovers through verse even if after death nothing is mentioned on their tombs.

Summary

John Donne is one of the most genius and versatile English poets. He is admired for his colossal contribution in metaphysical poetry. In his numerous writings he has added lots of witty approaches full of satire, passionate feelings, striking conceits etc. to highlight the nature and reality revolving around human lives. The new era of writing in the form of metaphysical poetry starkly attracted the readers through ages although many eminent writers like Dryden, Dr. Johnson strongly discarded his writings on the plea that Donne unnecessarily used metaphysical aspects to perplex the natural phenomena of love, sex etc. Although Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan, George Herbert and others have evinced their astuteness and sharpness in representing common subject matters like love, religion etc. with a new-fangled approach, John Donne shines amongst them like a luminous star for his stunning and unrivaled genius in rationalizing his daring imagination. It is Donne who blows the trumpet of change in the clichéd pattern of poetry, teeming with emotion, by inaugurating intellectualized poetry‘—the metaphysical poetry. At the same time, scarcely can one deny how Donne‘s immense contribution to this domain of poetry facilitates and felicitates the meteoric rise and development of metaphysical poetry. Irrespective of time and age, John Donne is highly appraised all over the globe for his fantastic intellectual

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aptitude in describing the varied states of emotion and action of human beings.

1.5. UNIVERSITY WITS

The University Wits were a group of well-educated scholars-cum-men of letters who wrote in the closing years of the sixteenth century. All of them were actively associated with the theatre and the plays written by them mark a pronounced stage of development over the drama which existed before them. With their dramatic work they paved the way for the great Shakespeare who was indebted to them in numerous ways.

Given below are the names of these University Wits:

(l) JohnLyly

(2) Robert Greene

(3) George Peele

(4) Thomas Lodge

(5) Thomas Nashe

(6) Thomas Kyd

(7) Christopher Marlowe

They were called University Wits because they had training at one or other of the two Universities-Oxford and Cambridge. The only exception, and that a doubtful one, was Thomas Kyd. Apart from academic training (in most cases, an M. A. degree) they had numerous characteristics in common. They were members of learned societies and rather liberal in their views concerning God and morality. They were all reckless Bohemians and had their lives cut short by excessive debauchery or a violent death. Marlowe was killed in a street brawl, perhaps over bought kisses, and Greene, after a career of unfettered self-dissipation, died friendless and penniless and in a very touchingly repentant frame of mind. Further, in their intellectualism they were true embodiments of the impact of the Renaissance on English culture and sensibility. Then, all of them had fairly good relations with one another and were wont freely to lend a hand to one another in the writing or completing of dramatic works.

Their Contribution to the Drama:

Whatever may be said against their reproachable careers as human beings, it will have to be admitted that, to quote Allardyce Nicoll,"they laid.a sure basis for the English theatre." For understanding appropriately the contribution of the University Wits in this respect we should first acquaint ourselves with the state of the English drama before them. Now, when the University Wits started writing there were two fairly distinct traditions of the dramatic art before them. One was the native tradition (especially of. comedy) which was vigorous, no doubt', but devoid of the artistic discipline of he classical Greek and Roman drama. The other was the tradition set by the imitators of ancient Roman drama. Such works

as Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* (tragedy) and *Ralph Roister Doister* (comedy) are instances of this tradition. These plays, though they exhibit ample awareness of the classical form and control, are devoid of the vigour of the purely native plays. Differentiating between the popular and classical tradition, Allardyce Nicoll observes: "The classicists had form but no fire; the popular dramatists had interest, but little sense of form." The function of the University Wits was to combine the form with the fire. They had plenty of "fire" in them, all being reckless hedonists, but they had also the sense of form acquired by them from training in classical learning. While retaining in their dramatic works the vigour of the popular native tradition, they gave them that literary grace and power which offered Shakespeare "a viable and fitting medium for the expression of his genius."

One thing which needs to be amply emphasised is that though the University Wits looked to the classical drama and incorporated its general respect of form in their own productions, they never imitated it slavishly. They retained for themselves sufficient freedom, sometimes even that of violating its well-recognised principles such as the strict separation of the species (comedy and tragedy, for instance), the observance of "the three unities" (those of time, place, and action), and the reporting of the major incidents to the audience through the dialogue of the *dramatis personae* or the agency of the messenger. What they established upon the English stage was not a pale copy of the ancient Greek or roman drama, but a kind of romantic drama which was to be later adopted by Shakespeare himself. Lyly, Greene, and Peele contributed much towards the establishment of the romantic comedy, and Kyd and Marlowe, Elizabethan tragedy. Besides, Marlowe in his *Edward II* set an example of the historical play for Shakespeare and others.

Further, the University Wits set about the work of reforming the language of the drama. They made the medium of dramatic utterance extremely pliant and responsive to all the various moods endeavoured to be conveyed through it. Lyly lenfthe language of comedy, especially the prose, a wonderfully sophisticated touch, Peele gave it a rare sweetness, and Greene, considerable geniality and openness. As regards the language of tragedy, Kyd did not do much except .introducing exaggerative bombast (which is not always without vigour), but Marlowe breathed into it that consuming intensity coupled with virtuosic brilliance which thrilled his contemporaries and thrills us even today. Blank verse became Mariowe's "mighty line."

Now let us consider the individual contribution of the various University Wits to the development of English drama.

(1) John Lyly (1554-1606):

Lyly is better known for his prose romance *Euphues* than his dramatic productions. It must be remembered that he himself was a courtier and wrote for the discerning courtiers. He had no intention to charm the eyes and ears of the masses or to win

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their acclamation. His plays are rather of the nature of masques which were very popular with the queen and the court. He gave comedy a touch of sophistication and an intellectual tone lacking in the native comedy which was predominantly of the nature of rough-and-tumble farce. Lyly wrote eight plays in all out of which *Compaspe, Endunion,* and *Gallathea* are the best and the best known. And though all the eight are, broadly speaking, comedies, yet they can be roughly divided, afterNicoll, into three groups as follows:

(i) those which are allegorical and mythical in tone;

(ii) those which display realistic features ; and

(iii) those which mark the introduction of more or less historical features.

Lyly's plays are the production of scholarship united to an elegant fancy and a somewhat fantastic wit, but not of a writer capable of moving the passions or of depicting character by subtle and felicitous touches. Broadly speaking, Lyly's achievement is to have synthesised many mutually antagonistic elements which had till then lain unreconciled. His was a Renaissance mind working synthetically on the native material before him. For instance we have frequently in his plays a courtly main plot (in which such characters as kings, queens, princes, princesses, knigh ts, fairies, pagan and Greek and Roman deities figure) supported by a sub-plot setting forth the blunders of villagers. Lyly strangely amalgamates humour and romantic imagination and in this way paves the way for Shakespeare who does likewise in many of his comedies.

In his plays Lyly used a mixture of verse and prose. This mixing of the two is suggestive of his mixing of the world of reality and the world of romance. "The same fusion", observes Nicoll. "is to be discovered in *As You Like It".* Lyly found a suitable blank verse for comedy as Marlowe did for tragedy. Whereas Marlowe's blank verse is characterized by consuming intensity and mouth-filling bombast, Lyly's is by its lightness of touch suitable for comedy. The prose that Lyly used in his comedies is sometimes mannered after the style of his *Euphues;* it is full of puns, far-fetched conceits, and verbal pyrotechnics which Shakespeare incorporated in his early comedies *uch* as *Love's Labour Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

(2) Robert Greene (1558-92):

Greene wrote some five plays in all. They are:

(i) The Comical History ofAlphonsus King ofAragon

(ii) A Looking Glass for London and England (written jointly with Lodge)

(iii) The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay

(iv) The History of Orlando Furioso

(v) The Scottish History of James, the Fourth.

Out of them the most important and interesting is *Friar Bacon* and *Friar Bungay.* With this play and James IV, Greene contributed substantially towards

the establishment of the romantic comedy. He effects two kinds of fusion:

(a) The fusion of various plots and sub-plots; and

(b) the fusion of various moods and worlds in one and the ame play.

In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,* for instance, there are, in the words of Nicoll, "three distinct worlds mingled together-the world of magic, the world of aristocratic life, and the world of the country. These, by his art, Greene has woven together into a single harmony, showing the way to Shakespeare when the latter came to write *A Midsummer Night's Dream."* As regards characterisation, Nicoll gives Greene the credit of being "the first to draw the Rosalinds and Celias of Elizabethan times." Dorothea, the heroine of his comedy *James IV* which has romantic love for its theme, is the best known of all the female characters in Elizabethan drama excluding Shakespeare's works. Further, as regards Greene's handling of blank verse which he used as the medium of his comedies, it may be observed that he gave it more flexibility than the imitators of the classical models allowed it.

(3) George Peele (1558-97):

The five plays of Peele extant today are:

(i) *The Arraignment of Paris* (a pastoral play)

(ii) *The Battle of Alcazar* (a romantic tragedy)

(iii) *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward, the First* (a chronicle history)

(iv) *The Love of King David and Fair Bathsheba* (a kind of mvsterv piav. for it has a biblical theme) '

(v) *The Old Wives' Tale* (a romantic satire on the current dramatic taste)

The list shows Peele's versatility as a dramatist. However, his plays are not marked by any technical brilliance. What is of interest to us is his excellence as a poet. "Certainly", observes Compton-Rickett, "he shares with Marlowe the honour of informing blank verse with musical ability that, in the later hand of Shakespeare, was to be one of its most important characteristics." But it is Peele's fault that "he allows poetry to enter into scenes from which it ought to be excluded" (Nicoll). For instance, when Absalom in *David and Bathsheba* finds his own hair about to hang him to death, he bursts into a poetic utterance:

What angry angel sitting in these shades,

Hath laid his cruel hands upon my hair .

And holds my body thus twixt heaven and earth?

(4) Thomas Lodge (1558-1625) and

(5) Thomas Nashe (1567-1601):

Their dramatic work is inconsiderable. Lodge who was, according to Gosson, "little better than a vagrant, looser than liberty, lighter than vanity itself," was, in Nicoll's words, "the least of the University Wits *",for he* "gave practically nothing to the theatre." He has left only one play, *The Wounds of Civil War.* Both Nashe

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and he are much more important for their fiction than dramatic art.

(6) Thomas Kyd (1557-97):

His only play *The Spanish Tragedy* is modelled on Seneca's revenge tragedies which before Kyd had been imitated by some scholars like Sackville and Norton, the writers *ofGorboduc.* But whereas *Gorboduc* was rather slavishly and strictly based on Seneca, Kyd is much more flexible in his attempt. Of course there are murders and bloodshed, suicides and horrifying incidents (like the biting off of a man's tongue by himself and the running amuck of a respectable lady), the ghost and many other Senecan features, yet *The Spanish Tragedy* breaks away from the Senecan tradition on various points. For example, there is much of action on the stage itself (and not reported, as in Seneca). Moreover, though, after Seneca, it has for its *leitmotifrevenge* (Heironimo's revenge for the murder of his son) yet there is strong external action. The Elizabethan audiences had a craving for watching sensational, even horrifying action. Kyd was obliging enough. Nicoll aptly describes *The Spanish Tragedy* as "a Senecan play adapted to popular requirements."

Kyd's contribution to English tragedy is twofold. First, he gave a new kind of tragic hero who was neither a royal personage nor a superman but an ordinary person. Secondly, he introduced the element of introspection in the hero. Along with the external conflict in the play, we are conscious of a kind of introspective self-analysis within Heironimo himself. In this; respect Kyd was paving the way for Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Kyd's blank verse was ridiculed for its pomposity and exaggeration even by his contemporaries-who had an ear for high-sounding words. Like Seneca's tragic style, Kyd's also has the element of rhetoric in it. Kyd's extravagance is sometimes annoying but we must remember Compton-Rickett's words that "even extravagance is better than lifelessness."

(7) Christopher Marlowe (1564-93):

He is, in Nicoll's words, "the most talented of pre-Shakespeareans." His plays are:

(i) Tamburlaine, the Great;

(ii) Doctor Faustus;

(iii) he Jew of Malta;

(iv) Edward, the Second; and

(v) Parts of The Massacre at Paris and Dido Queen oj Carthage.

Marlowe's contribution to English tragedy is very vital and manifold. He himself seems to be aware of having scored an advance over the previous drama. In the prologue to his first play he sets his manifesto in these lines :

From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,

And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,

We will lead you to the stately tent of war.

Marlowe promises that his play is going to be different from the conventional plays in both its language and subject. And he, indeed, keeps his promise.

First of all, Marlowe exalted and varied the subject-matter of tragedy. For the Senecan motive of revenge he substituted the more interesting theme of ambition—ambition for power as in *Tamburlaine,* ambition for infinite knowledge as in *Doctor Faustus,* and ambition for gold as in *The Jew of Malta.*

Secondly, he put forward a new kind of the tragic hero. The medieval concept of tragedy was the fall of a great man. See, for instance, the words of the Monk in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.*

Tragedie is to seyn a certyne storie,

As old bokes maken us memorie,

Of hym who stood in great prosperitie

And is y-fallen out of high degree

Into miserie and endeth wretchedly.

Marlowe revived the Aristotelean conception of the tragic hero in so far as he introduced a certain flaw or flaws in his character. His heroes are air supermen whose major flaw is always an over-weening ambition. Their love is the love of the impossible; but with a singular intensity and concentration of purpose, they make headway towards their destination though they perish by forces beyond their control. Thus, there is a dramatic conflict between their ambition and the antagonistic forces of life which stand in its way. But along with this outer conflict, there is, at least in *Doctor Faustus,* a struggle in the mind of the chief character also. This was something new for English tragedy.

Next, he gave a greater unity to the drama. This he did in *Edward II.* The rest of his plays are weak in structure, being loose strings of scenes and episodes. But as he matured he acquired a greater technical and constructive skill.

One of Marlowe's chief merits is his reformation of the chronicle plays of his time. They were formless and poor in characterisation. Marlawe humanised the puppets of these plays and introduced motives in them. Also he gave shape and internal development to his plots. He handled the crude historical material judiciously and artistically, selecting some, rejecting some, and modifying some, so as to suit his dramatic purpose. Out of the formlessness of old chronicle Marlowe produced a play which is a genuine tragedy and the model for Shakespeare's *RichardII.*

Last but not the least is Marlowe's establishment of blank verse as an effective and pliant medium of tragic utterance. His blank verse is immensely superior to the blank verse *of Gorboduc,* the first tragedy which employed this measure. He found it wooden, mechanical, and lifeless and breathed into it a scarifying intensity 'of passion which electrified it into something living^and throbbing with energy. He substituted the end-stopped lines of *Gorboduc* with run-on lines forming verse paragraphs. True, some element of bombast is perceptible in Marlowe's

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earlier works, but in *Edward II* his style becomes quite subdued and answers more readily to the whole gamut of varying moods sought to be conveyed through it. He made blank verse a great dramatic medium acknowledged by all his successors as the metre indispensable for any serious drama. With Marlowe, indeed, begins a new era in the history of-English drama.

1.6. JACOBIAN DRAMA

Jacobean drama (that is, the drama of the age of James 1-1603-1625) was a decadent form of the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The Elizabethan age was the golden age of English drama. But with the turn of the century the drama in England also took a turn. It does not mean that there were no dramatists left. There certainly was a large number of them, but none of them could come anywhere near Shakespeare. Just as after Chaucer poetry in England suffered a decline, similarly after Shakespeare had given his best (that is, after the sixteenth century) drama also suffered a decline. With the passage of time it grew more and more decadent, till with Shirley in the age of Charles I the old kind of drama expired and even theatres were closed (in 1642). *"It was inevitable",* says Long "that drama should decline after Shakespeare, for the simple reason that there was no other great enough to fill his place."

The dramatists of the Jacobean age can be divided into two classes as follows:

(i) The dramatists of the old school-Dekker, Heywood, Webster, Beaumont, and Fletcher.

(ii) The satiric group-Chapman, Jonson, Marston, Middleton, and Tourneur.

The Change of Patrons:

One of the reason for the decadence in Jacobean drama was its loss of national spirit and patronage. In the age of Elizabeth, drama was trulv national, as 'it was patronised alike bv the queen, the nobles the courtiers, and groundlings. But in the age of James I, it lost contact with common people and came to be patronised by, to quote Hardin Craig, "the courtly classes, their hangers-on, and the socially irresponsible parts of the population." Consequently, to quote the same critic "the stage spoke not to all men, but to men with somewhat specialized interests" Dramatists had to cater to the somewhat decadent courtly taste with tales of intrigue, cruelty, and immorality couched in a high-flown, "polished" style.

Marked Foreign Influence:

The drama of the age of James shows, unlike that of the age of Elizabeth, a very marked foreign influence, for more ill than good. In this connexion Hardin Craig observes: "The older dramatists and their audiences had been satisfied with such intrigue as was afforded by the Italian short story. Their patriotism had sent them to Holjnshed, who had rifled Geoffrey of Monmouth... But in the new age foreign influences of increased potency made themselves felt. Dramatists borrowed the

declamatory themes and exaggerated sentiments of Spanish drama, and discovered rew ranges of intrigue, crime, and licentiousness in Italy and Italian subjects. Specifically they revived the drama of revenge and, driving it to the extreme, converted it into a drama of horror."

Plot-Construction

In spite of the overall inferiority of Jacobean dramatists to Elizabethan dramatists, some credit must be given to them for their gift of plot-construction. Elizabethan dramatists, including Shakespeare, did not show any skill at architectonics. Moreover, they were generally too lazy to invent plots for themselves and were content to borrow them rather too frequently. It does not mean, however, that they were plagiarists pure and simple. Shakespeare borrowed the plots of most of his plays, but by virtue of his imagination, dramatic skill, poetic gift, and psychological insight transformed them into altogether new entities. But the fact remains that he was a borrower. "The Jacobean dramatists", observes Hardin Craig, "seem for the first time to have begun to invent plots to suit their own tastes and ends." This is particularly true of the comic dramatists like Marston and Ben Jonson. Secondly, Jacobean dramatists show a greater skill in the construction and development of their plots. In many of them the various threads of the action are carefully interwoven into a wonderful harmony of texture seldom to be met with in Elizabethan plays. Jonson, Middleton, and Fletcher were particularly endowed with the gift of plot-construction. Ben *Jonson's Alchemist* is, according to Coleridge, one of the three literary works of the world (the two others being Sophocles. *Oedipus the King* and *Fielding's novel Tom Jones')* which have perfectly constructed plots. But what applies to the above-named dramatists does not apply to all Jacobean dramatists. Many of them, such as Dekker, are agregious offenders in this respect. As Jenet Spens points out in *Elizabethan Drama,* "the lack of connexion between plot and sub-plot was one of the most marked vices of the post-Shakespearean dramatists, and Dekker happens to offer the most absurd instance of it. There is unity in Dekker's better plays, but it is the unity of the novel rather than that of the drama."

New Experiments:

In addition to their overall better plot-construction Jacobean dramatists may be credited with setting up some new patterns of drama. It was they who gave us the following kinds of drama, till then unattempted, or indifferently attempted, in England:

(i) Domestic drama : such as Heywood's/ *Woman Killed with Kindness.*

(ii) Drama glorifying a particular profession : such as Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (which came, however, in 1599).

(iii) Drama showing the life and manners of the people of London: such as many of Ben Jonson's comedies.

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(iv) Drama dealing with social problems, mostly prostitution: such as Dekker's *The Honest Whore.* This kind of drama later came to be practised by no less a distinguished dramatist than George Bernard Shaw.

Moral Laxity:

A-fter giving Jacobean drama its due, let us discuss some elements of decadence which appear in it. One of these elements is its moral laxity. As we have already said, Jacobean drama was patronised mostly by the courtly classes which were known for their lack of moral discipline. James I himself was, to use the words of Hardin Craig, "a moralist without character." The same is true of most of the dramatists of his age. Some of them made fairly sincere attempts to preach morality, and none of them commended, or even condoned, sin or vice. But that does not absolve them of the charge of-showing an almost morbid interest in sexual immorality even though for the purpose of condemning it. Play after play was written on the theme of immoral love. *The White Devil, A Woman Killed with Kindness,* and *The Duchess ofMalfi* are all tragedies of illicit love. *A King and No King* is a tragedy of incestuous love. Later, in the Caroline age, Ford produced his very shocking play *'Tis Pity She Is a Whore* in which he openly dealt with the incestuous passion of a brother and sister which ends in disaster for both. Prostitutes appeared as heroines in many a play, such as Dekker's *The Honest Whore* and Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan.* Abject debauchees figured prominently in numerous plays. It was only Heywood and Webster who abstained from licentious themes. Heywood looked to the past and, in the words of Irvin Ribner in his Jacobean Tragedy, "doggedly continued to assert the moral values of an earlier age in a new world in which they no longer had great meaning." As regards Webster, the same critic observes that his plays "are an agonised search for moral order in the uncertain and chaotic world of Jacobean scepticism."

Gloom and Pessimism:

This scepticism led the Jacobean age to spiritual vacuity and despair. The courtiers, in particular, became voluptuous .cynics. But this voluptuousness was not without the agonising sense of melancholy arising chiefly from the prospect of human mortality without any Christian consolation regarding the future. Themes of death, time, and mutability engaged the attention of most writers and the tragedies of the Jacobean period, too, are exhibitive of what Ribner calls a "spirit of negation and disillusion, depair and spiritual no-confidence." Shakespearean tragedy does give rise to the feelings of pity and fear, and even awe, but it does not create any pessimistic feeling. There are death and destruction no doubt, but the human spirit rises phoenix-like from the pyre with a new, resplendent glory. But this kind of reassuring feeling is absent from Jacobean tragedy. All that happens in it is quite earthly, lacking the spiritual dimension *of Hamlet,* and still less, the much vaster, cosmic dimension of *Lear.* The scepticism, gloom, despair, and pessimism of the age are thus reflected by its tragedy also.

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Melodramatic Sensationalism:

The English have always had, in spite of the long line of critics from Sidney to Dryden to Addison to Dr. Johnson, a taste for crude and melodramatic sensationalism generally of the kind of physical violence and bloodshed. Even Elizabethan dramatists including *Shakespeare* could not do without catering to the popular taste by introducing into their tragedies a large number of murders and scenes of violence. They might have been partly influenced by the tradition of Senecan revenge tragedy, but the popular taste for "blood and thunder" was also a dictating factor. Considered from the point of view of story alone, such plays as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta,* Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* and *Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy* are all melodramas. But their melodramatic nature does not force itself on the eye or the ear, thanks to the rare poetic power which sustains them in a higher region. But the same is not true of the Jacobean mel'odramatic tragedies. With the departure or decay of the poetic power they have not much left to recommend themselves to us. Most of the tragedies of the age only succeed in covering the stage in the last act with a virtual rivulet of blood so revolting to the refined eye.

Sentimentalism:

On the other side of the scale to this artless and unthinking bloodshed was the Jacobean tendency towards sentimentalism. To quote Allardyce Nicoll, "there is apparent in the audience of the seventeenth century an increasing love of pathos and of what may be called sentimentalism." The pathos sought to be created by Jacobean dramatists is generally of the artificial kind. But some plays, such as Heywood's *Woman Killed with Kindness,* contain some really pathetic scenes. The death scene of the duchess in Webster's *The Duchess ofMalfi* is one of the superb examples of pathos in the whole range of English literature. But such scenes are more of the nature of an exception than a rule. The pathos of Lear's or Cordelia's or Edward II's death is seldom captured by a Jacobean dramatist. Allardyce, Nicoll observes about these dramatists : "The dramatists employ every means, illegitimate as well as legitimate, to stir the emotions of the spectators and to present before them something of novelty."

Satire and Realism:

The Jacobean age brought into vogue a new kind of realistic and satiric comedy aimed at the exposure of London life and manners and the vices and follies of the times. The exposure was effected for the purpose of correction through satire and ridicule. We find comedy writers like Ben Jonson and Marston holding the mirror to their age and lashing the follies of the Londoners. Their plays are quite realistic with *real* London as their background. They do not transport us to the fairyland atmosphere of the romantic comedies such as *As You Like It* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* What they give us is a much more direct criticism of life. Ben Jonson was quite articulate about his aim.

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I'll strip the ragged follies of the time
Naked, as at their birth;
And with a whip of steel
Print wounding lashes in their iron ribs.

Marston and Ben Jonson were engaged in what is known as "the War of Theatres" and wrote stinging satires against each other: The humour of Jacobean comedy was no longer the genial, puckish, fresh and refreshing humour of Shakespeare's comedies, but the bitter and satirical humour which always arises from

Poor Characterisation

Jacobean drama suffered decadence in the all-important field of characterisation. It could not boast of a character of the stature and psychological compexity of Shakespeare's Lear or Hamlet, or even Marlowe's Dr. Faustus. Jacobean dramatists relied for dramatic effect more on the situation than on the character. In the field of comedy, the Jacobean age presents conventional and wooden types, as, for instance, Ben Jonson's 'humours." In the field of tragedy, we have again some highly conventional and recurring characters such as, to use the words of Nicoll, the "Headstrong monarch", the "lustful tyrant," "a predetermined hero, often a husband, and with him the inevitable heroine either sinning or sinned against." Then there is the "faithful friend" of the hero. "Again, there are," says Nicoll, "sudden and wholly unpsychological revolutions of character which mar the majority of these dramas and we realize that there could be no possible delving into the depths of personality such as we find in Shakespeare."

Poor Poetry

Poetically, Jacobean drama is much less rich than Elizabethan drama. The passionate lyricism of Shakespeare and the grandeur of Marlowe's mighty line became things of the past. Rhetorical devices took the place of true poetry. In Ben Jonson's tragedies, *Catiline* and *Sejanus,* there is more of oratory than poetry. Playwrights such as Dekker, Heywood, and Tourneur handled blank verse quite loosely, nor could they breathe into it that pulsating life and poetic beauty which constitute an overwhelming proportion of the pleasure we derive from Elizabethan drama.

1.7 MYSTERY AND MIRACLE PLAYS

Miracle Play, or Mystery Play, in medieval Europe, a dramatization of a story from the Bible or the life of a saint. In France, miracle play referred only to a play depicting the life of a saint, and mystère (mystery play) to one based on a Bible story. The terms were used interchangeably in England.

The miracle play developed from the trope, a few lines of dialogue

dramatizing part of the Mass and acted out during the Mass for the edification of the worshipers, who did not understand Latin. At first, tropes were written in Latin and performed by the clergy. Gradually, as many different Bible scenes were enacted and the plays grew more complex, the whole town became responsible for their production. Clergymen were no longer the actors, the plays were written in the common language rather than Latin, and the performances were moved from the church to the marketplace.

Each large town had its own body of miracle plays, called a cycle, which was presented annually to celebrate a religious holiday, usually Corpus Christi. A cycle told a complete story, such as the life of Christ. Some cycles depicted scenes from the Bible from the creation of the world to the final judgment, consisted of more than 40 plays, and took two or more days to perform.

Methods of production varied. In France and most other continental European countries, lay brotherhoods produced the plays. A series of stages, called mansions, was erected along one side of a street. The mansions, which were reused each year, represented the settings of the plays. Heaven's gate was at one end, Hell-mouth (shaped like a dragon's jaws) was at the other, and such places as Bethlehem and Herod's palace were in between. The spectators walked along the street to follow the action of the plays.

In England the plays were put on by craft guilds. Each guild performed a separate play on a two-tiered, horse-drawn platform called a pageant. The lower level of the pageant, curtained from the audience's view, was used as a dressing room; the upper as a stage. On the day of a performance, audiences assembled at several locations about town. The guilds moved their pageants from place to place, performing once for each audience.

Manuscripts still exist for the cycles of plays performed in the English towns of York, Wakefield, and Chester.

English Miracle Plays

Miracle plays were popular in England from the 12th to the 16th century. It is impossible to fix the date or authorship of any of the known plays. The earliest of record is the Ludus de Sancta Katharine, performed at Dunstable about 1100. (Miracle plays had been enacted in France even earlier than this.) The Harrowing of Hell, a long verse drama of the 13th or 14th century, tells of Christ's descent into hell in the interval between his burial and resurrection. He forces Satan to release several Old Testament characters who were unsaved because they had died before his coming.

Comic or ribald elements became so common in the miracle plays that the clergy began to frown upon all theater-going as early as 1300. A comic sheep-stealing scene was introduced in the Second Shepherd's Play of the Wakefield cycle. In another play, Noah quarrels violently with his wife and has great difficulty in getting her aboard the Ark. A play about the Crucifixion was enlivened by a

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playful King Herod, who leaps off the stage to jeer at members of the audience. These humorous episodes were ancestors of the interlude, a type of short farce presented usually at banquets in the homes of aristocrats.

Morality Plays

The morality plays combined characteristics of the miracle play and allegorical works like the Romance of the Rose. They appeared in the latter part of the 14th century. The virtues and vices—personified in such characters as Pride, Gluttony, Temperance, and Good Deeds—engaged in a struggle for the soul of man. The Paternoster moralities, performed in York, depicted this struggle as occurring between the Seven Moral Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins. The comic Devil of the miracle plays was retained, and Vice was introduced as his assistant. Vice, who played mischievous pranks on the virtuous characters, was the forerunner of the jester or clown.

The 15th-century Everyman was the most famous morality play. Its subject is the summoning of every man by Death. After the middle of the 16th century, the popularity of the morality plays declined sharply.

1.8. RESTORATION COMEDY

Restoration comedy refers to English comedies written and performed in the Restoration period from 1660 to 1710. After public stage performances had been banned for 18 years by the Puritan regime, the re-opening of the theatres in 1660 signalled a renaissance of English drama. Restoration comedy is notorious for its sexual explicitness, a quality encouraged by Charles II (1660–1685) personally and by the rakish aristocratic ethos of his court. The socially diverse audiences included both aristocrats, their servants and hangers-on, and a substantial middle-class segment. These playgoers were attracted to the comedies by up-to-the-minute topical writing, by crowded and bustling plots, by the introduction of the first professional actresses, and by the rise of the first celebrity actors. This period saw the first professional woman playwright, Aphra Behn.

Charles II was an active and interested patron of the drama. Soon after his restoration, in 1660, he granted exclusive play-staging rights, so-called Royal patents, to the **King's Company** and the **Duke's Company**, led by two middle-aged Caroline playwrights, Thomas Killigrew and William Davenant. The patentees scrambled for performance rights to the previous generation's Jacobean and Caroline plays, which were the first necessity for economic survival before any new plays existed. Their next priority was to build new, splendid patent theatres in Drury Lane and Dorset Gardens, respectively. Striving to outdo each other in magnificence, Killigrew and Davenant ended up with quite similar theatres, both designed by Christopher Wren, both optimally provided for music and dancing, and both fitted with moveable scenery and elaborate machines for thunder, lightning, and waves.

The dramatists of the Restoration renounced the tradition of satire, as recently embodied by Ben Jonson, and devoted themselves to the comedy of manners, which uncritically accepted the social code of the upper class.

The audience of the early Restoration period was not exclusively courtly, as has sometimes been supposed, but it was quite small and could barely support two companies. There was no untapped reserve of occasional playgoers. Ten consecutive performances constituted a smash hit. This closed system forced playwrights to be extremely responsive to popular taste. Fashions in the drama would change almost week by week rather than season by season, as each company responded to the offerings of the other, and new plays were urgently sought. The King's Company and the Duke's Company vied with one another for audience favour, for popular actors, and for new plays, and in this hectic climate the new genres of heroic drama, pathetic drama, and Restoration comedy were born and flourished.

United Company, 1682–95

Both the quantity and quality of the drama suffered when in 1682 the more successful Duke's Company absorbed the struggling King's Company, and the amalgamated *United Company* was formed. The production of new plays dropped off sharply in the 1680s, affected by both the monopoly and the political situation (see Decline of comedy below). The influence and the incomes of the actors dropped, too. In the late 80s, predatory investors ("Adventurers") converged on the United Company, while management was taken over by the lawyer Christopher Rich. Rich attempted to finance a tangle of "farmed" shares and sleeping partners by slashing salaries and, dangerously, by abolishing the traditional perks of senior performers, who were stars with the clout to fight back.

War of the theatres, 1695–1700

The company owners, wrote the young United Company employee Colley Cibber, "who had made a monopoly of the stage, and consequently presum'd they might impose what conditions they pleased upon their people, did not consider that they were all this while endeavouring to enslave a set of actors whom the public were inclined to support."Performers like the legendary Thomas Betterton, the tragedienne Elizabeth Barry, and the rising young comedienne Anne Bracegirdle had the audience on their side and, in the confidence of this, they walked out.

The actors gained a Royal "licence to perform", thus bypassing Rich's ownership of both the original Duke's and King's Company patents from 1660, and formed their own cooperative company. This unique venture was set up with detailed rules for avoiding arbitrary managerial authority, regulating the ten actors' shares, the conditions of salaried employees, and the sickness and retirement benefits of both categories. The cooperative had the good luck to open in 1695 with the première of William Congreve's famous *Love For Love* and the skill to make it a huge box-office success.

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London again had two competing companies. Their dash to attract audiences briefly revitalised Restoration drama, but also set it on a fatal downhill slope to the lowest common denominator of public taste. Rich's company notoriously offered Bartholomew Fair-type attractions – high kickers, jugglers, ropedancers, performing animals – while the co-operating actors, even as they appealed to snobbery by setting themselves up as the only legitimate theatre company in London, were not above retaliating with "prologues recited by boys of five, and epilogues declaimed by ladies on horseback.

Comedies

Variety and dizzying fashion changes are typical of Restoration comedy. Even though the "Restoration drama" unit taught to college students is likely to be telescoped in a way that makes the plays all sound contemporary, scholars now have a strong sense of the rapid evolution of English drama over these forty years and of its social and political causes. The influence of theatre company competition and playhouse economics is also acknowledged.

John Lacy was the favourite comic of King Charles II. Restoration comedy peaked twice. The genre came to spectacular maturity in the mid-1670s with an extravaganza of aristocratic comedies. Twenty lean years followed this short golden age, although the achievement of Aphra Behn in the 1680s is to be noted. In the mid-1690s a brief second Restoration comedy renaissance arose, aimed at a wider audience. The comedies of the golden 1670s and 1690s peak times are extremely different from each other. An attempt is made below to illustrate the generational taste shift by describing *The Country Wife* (1675) and *The Provoked Wife* (1697) in some detail. These two plays differ from each other in some typical ways, just as a Hollywood movie of the 1950s differs from one of the 1970s. The plays are not, however, offered as being "typical" of their decades. Indeed, there exist no typical comedies of the 1670s or the 1690s; even within these two short peak-times, comedy types kept mutating and multiplying.

Aristocratic comedy, 1660–80

The drama of the 1660s and 1670s was vitalised by the competition between the two patent companies created at the Restoration, as well as by the personal interest of Charles II, and the comic playwrights rose to the demand for new plays. They stole freely from the contemporary French and Spanish stage, from English Jacobean and Caroline plays, and even from Greek and Roman classical comedies, and combined the looted plotlines in adventurous ways. Resulting differences of tone in a single play were appreciated rather than frowned on, as the audience prized "variety" within as well as between plays.

Early Restoration audiences had little enthusiasm for structurally simple, well-shaped comedies such as those of Molière; they demanded bustling, crowded multi-plot action and fast pace. Even a splash of high heroic drama might be

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thrown in to enrich the comedy mix, as in George Etherege's *Love in a Tub* (1664), which has one heroic verse "conflict between love and friendship" plot, one urbane wit comedy plot, and one burlesque pantsing plot. (*See illustration, top right*.) Such incongruities contributed to Restoration comedy being held in low esteem in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, but today the early Restoration total theatre experience is again valued on the stage, as well as by postmodern academic critics.

The unsentimental or "hard" comedies of John Dryden, William Wycherley, and George Etherege reflected the atmosphere at Court, and celebrated with frankness an aristocratic macho lifestyle of unremitting sexual intrigue and conquest. The Earl of Rochester, real-life Restoration rake, courtier and poet, is flatteringly portrayed in Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676) as a riotous, witty, intellectual, and sexually irresistible aristocrat, a template for posterity's idea of the glamorous Restoration rake (actually never a very common character in Restoration comedy). Wycherley's *The Plain Dealer* (1676), a variation on the theme of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, was highly regarded for its uncompromising satire and earned Wycherley the appellation "Plain Dealer" Wycherley or "Manly" Wycherley, after the play's main character Manly. The single play that does most to support the charge of obscenity levelled then and now at Restoration comedy is probably Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675).

William Wycherley, *The Country Wife*: "O Lord, I'll have some china too. Good Master Horner, don't think to give other people china, and me none. Come in with me too."

Example. William Wycherley, *The Country Wife* (1675)

The Country Wife has three interlinked but distinct plots, which each project sharply different moods:

1. Horner's impotence trick provides the main plot and the play's organising principle. The upper-class town rake Horner mounts a campaign for seducing as many respectable ladies as possible, first spreading a false rumour of his own impotence, to be allowed where no complete man may go. The trick is a great success and Horner has sex with many married ladies of virtuous reputation, whose husbands are happy to leave him alone with them. In one famously outrageous scene, the "China scene", sexual intercourse is assumed to take place repeatedly just off stage, where Horner and his mistresses carry on a sustained double entendre dialogue purportedly about Horner's china collection.

   The Country Wife is driven by a succession of near-discoveries of the truth about Horner's sexual prowess (and thus the truth about the respectable ladies), from which he extricates himself by quick thinking and good luck. Horner never becomes a reformed character, but keeps

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his secret to the end and is assumed to go on merrily reaping the fruits of his planted misinformation, past the last act and beyond.

2. The married life of Pinchwife and Margery is based on Molière's *School For Wives*. Pinchwife is a middle-aged man who has married an ignorant young country girl in the hope that she will not know to cuckold him. However, Horner teaches her, and Margery cuts a swathe through the sophistications of London marriage without even noticing them. She is enthusiastic about the virile handsomeness of town gallants, rakes, and especially theatre actors (such self-referential stage jokes were nourished by the new higher status of actors), and keeps Pinchwife in a state of continual horror with her plain-spokenness and her interest in sex. A running joke is the way Pinchwife's pathological jealousy always leads him into supplying Margery with the very type of information he wishes her not to have.
3. The courtship of Harcourt and Alithea is a comparatively uplifting love story in which the witty Harcourt wins the hand of Pinchwife's sister Alithea from the hands of the Upper-class town snob Sparkish whom she was engaged to until she discovered he only loved her for her money.

Decline of comedy, 1678–90

When the two companies were amalgamated in 1682 and the London stage became a monopoly, both the number and the variety of new plays being written dropped sharply. There was a swing away from comedy to serious political drama, reflecting preoccupations and divisions following on the Popish Plot (1678) and the Exclusion Crisis (1682). The few comedies produced also tended to be political in focus, the whig dramatist Thomas Shadwell sparring with the tories John Dryden and Aphra Behn. Behn's unique achievement as an early professional woman writer has been the subject of much recent study.

Comedy renaissance, 1690–1700

During the second wave of Restoration comedy in the 1690s, the "softer" comedies of William Congreve and John Vanbrugh reflected mutating cultural perceptions and great social change. The playwrights of the 1690s set out to appeal to more socially mixed audiences with a strong middle-class element, and to female spectators, for instance by moving the war between the sexes from the arena of intrigue into that of marriage. The focus in comedy is less on young lovers outwitting the older generation, more on marital relations after the wedding bells. Thomas Southerne's dark *The Wives' Excuse* (1691) is not yet very "soft": it shows a woman miserably married to the fop Friendall, everybody's friend, whose follies and indiscretions undermine her social worth, since her honour is

bound up in his. Mrs Friendall is pursued by a would-be lover, a matter-of-fact rake devoid of all the qualities that made Etherege's Dorimant charming, and she is kept from action and choice by the unattractiveness of all her options. All the humour of this "comedy" is in the subsidiary love-chase and fornication plots, none in the main plot.

In Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695) and *The Way of the World* (1700), the "wit duels" between lovers typical of 1670s comedy are underplayed. The give-and-take set pieces of couples still testing their attraction for each other have mutated into witty prenuptial debates on the eve of marriage, as in the famous "Proviso" scene in *The Way of the World* (1700). Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife* (1697) follows in the footsteps of Southerne's *Wives' Excuse*, with a lighter touch and more humanly recognisable characters.

1.9 17TH CENTURY LITERATURE

The earlier seventeenth century, and especially the period of the English Revolution (1640–60), was a time of intense ferment in all areas of life — religion, science, politics, domestic relations, culture. That ferment was reflected in the literature of the era, which also registered a heightened focus on and analysis of the self and the personal life. However, little of this seems in evidence in the elaborate frontispiece to Michael Drayton's long "chorographical" poem on the landscape, regions, and local history of Great Britain (1612), which appeared in the first years of the reign of the Stuart king James I (1603–1625). The frontispiece appears to represent a peaceful, prosperous, triumphant Britain, with England, Scotland, and Wales united, patriarchy and monarchy firmly established, and the nation serving as the great theme for lofty literary celebration. Albion (the Roman name for Britain) is a young and beautiful virgin wearing as cloak a map featuring rivers, trees, mountains, churches, towns; she carries a scepter and holds a cornucopia, symbol of plenty. Ships on the horizon signify exploration, trade, and garnering the riches of the sea. In the four corners stand four conquerors whose descendants ruled over Britain: the legendary Brutus, Julius Caesar, Hengist the Saxon, and the Norman William the Conqueror, "whose line yet rules," as Drayton's introductory poem states.

Yet this frontispiece also registers some of the tensions, conflicts, and redefinitions evident in the literature of the period and explored more directly in the topics and texts in this portion of the NTO Web site. It is Albion herself, not King James, who is seated in the center holding the emblems of sovereignty; her male conquerors stand to the side, and their smaller size and their number suggest something unstable in monarchy and patriarchy. Albion's robe with its multiplicity of regional features, as well as the "Poly" of the title, suggests forces pulling against national unity. Also, Poly-Olbion had no successors: instead of a celebration of the nation in the vein of Spenser's Faerie Queene or Poly-Olbion itself, the great seventeenth-century heroic poem, Paradise Lost, treats the Fall

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of Man and its tragic consequences, "all our woe."

The first topic here, "Gender, Family, Household: Seventeenth-Century Norms and Controversies," provides important religious, legal, and domestic advice texts through which to explore cultural assumptions about gender roles and the patriarchal family. It also invites attention to how those assumptions are modified or challenged in the practices of actual families and households; in tracts on transgressive subjects (cross-dressing, women speaking in church, divorce); in women's texts asserting women's worth, talents, and rights; and especially in the upheavals of the English Revolution.

"Paradise Lost in Context," the second topic for this period, surrounds that radically revisionist epic with texts that invite readers to examine how it engages with the interpretative traditions surrounding the Genesis story, how it uses classical myth, how it challenges orthodox notions of Edenic innocence, and how it is positioned within but also against the epic tradition from Homer to Virgil to Du Bartas. The protagonists here are not martial heroes but a domestic couple who must, both before and after their Fall, deal with questions hotly contested in the seventeenth century but also perennial: how to build a good marital relationship; how to think about science, astronomy, and the nature of things; what constitutes tyranny, servitude, and liberty; what history teaches; how to meet the daily challenges of love, work, education, change, temptation, and deceptive rhetoric; how to reconcile free will and divine providence; and how to understand and respond to God's ways.

The third topic, "Civil Wars of Ideas: Seventeenth-Century Politics, Religion, and Culture," provides an opportunity to explore, through political and polemical treatises and striking images, some of the issues and conflicts that led to civil war and the overthrow of monarchical government (1642–60). These include royal absolutism vs. parliamentary or popular sovereignty, monarchy vs. republicanism, Puritanism vs. Anglicanism, church ritual and ornament vs. iconoclasm, toleration vs. religious uniformity, and controversies over court masques and Sunday sports. The climax to all this was the highly dramatic trial and execution of King Charles I (January 1649), a cataclysmic event that sent shock waves through courts, hierarchical institutions, and traditionalists everywhere; this event is presented here through contemporary accounts and graphic images.

Paradise Lost—An Introduction

Milton's great epic (1667) is built upon the stories and myths — in the Bible and in the classical tradition — through which Western men and women have sought to understand the meaning of their experience of life. Attention to some of these materials and to the ways in which Milton draws upon, and departs from, other versions and interpretations of those stories will enrich the reading of his poem.

The foundation story, of course, is the Genesis account of the Creation

of the world and of Adam and Eve, culminating in the drama of their temptation and Fall. By Milton's time, the seventeenth century, that story had been reformulated in many translations in many languages and had accumulated many centuries of interpretive commentary, Jewish and Christian. Milton, in undertaking an imaginative, poetic re-creation of that story, had necessarily to accept, revise, or counter the views offered by such influential commentators as Saint Augustine and the Reformation theologian John Calvin. He probably did not know Rachel Speght's commentary, A Muzzle for Melastomus, or Aemilia Lanyer's poem Eve's Apology in Defense of Women, but these texts provide the first examples of women turning Genesis commentary to feminist account. The various commentators' views — about Adam and Eve, about the Edenic garden, about prelapsarian conditions of life, about the Tree of Knowledge, about the nature of man and woman as created, about marriage as first instituted, and about the causes of the Fall — can be usefully compared to Milton's own analyses in his theological tract Christian Doctrine, which remained unpublished until the nineteenth century, as well as his poetic representations of such matters in Paradise Lost.

During his tour of Italy in 1638–39, Milton probably saw some of the numerous representations of aspects of the Genesis story in Renaissance paintings and tapestries. We do not know which ones he saw, but certain remarkable images may have stimulated his imagination. A representative sample is included here: Veronese's Creation of Eve, Cranach's Adam and Eve, Dürer's The Fall, two of the Medici tapestries presenting The Fall and The Judgement of Adam and Eve, and Masaccio's The Expulsion.

Milton's poem also draws on such repositories of classical myth as Ovid's Metamorphoses and other literary analogues. Ovid's narrative of the myth of Narcissus resonates throughout the story told by Milton's Eve about her first coming to consciousness. Two allegorical interpretations of the Narcissus myth — by Milton's contemporary George Sandys, the translator of Ovid, and by Sigmund Freud — may highlight how Milton reworks that myth. The poetic version of the Fall story in Guillaume Du Bartas's hexameral poem The Divine Weeks and Works provides another kind of literary analogue. In Joshua Sylvester's translation that work was extremely popular, and Milton certainly knew it. Finally, the epic tradition itself was a major literary resource for Milton: it is sampled here through the opening passages — propositions and invocations — of four epics central to Milton's idea of that genre: Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, Virgil's Aeneid, and Torquato Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered. Milton's epic proposition and invocation may be compared to these, and also Milton's defense of his better kind of tragic epic. Homer and Virgil did not use rhyme, and Milton scorned it in heroic poems as a "troublesome and modern bondage"; accordingly, the classical epics are represented here by modern unrhymed translations. Tasso did employ rhyme, as did his Elizabethan translator Edward Fairfax.

The first important criticism of Milton's epic was provided by his good

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friend the poet Andrew Marvell, in a commendatory poem published in 1674 along with the second edition of Paradise Lost. It invites comparison with later prose criticism by Addison (NAEL 8, 1.2485) and Samuel Johnson .

Responding visually to Paradise Lost are a set of engravings by John Baptist Medina that were included in the elaborate folio edition of Paradise Lost in 1688. Several of the Medina images, notably those included here, provide their own interesting interpretations of crucial scenes in the poem.

Character Writers of the 17th Century

The seventeenth century "character" was a new English prose form. Sir Thomas Overbury.one of the important seventeenth century character writers, defined it as a picture, real or personal, quaintly drawn in various colours, all of them brightened by one shadowing." A "character" is very short—a thamb-nail sketch of an individual who is much more a type than an individual. The intention of the character-writer is, generally, reformative, and his instruments are satire and wit. The character, says David Daiches in *A Critical History of English Literature.* Vol. 1, "is essentially a portrait of a tvpe rather than an individual, often done with an. almost exhibitionist wit." The progress of the character in England is marked by a gradual shift of emphasis from the typical to the individual qualities of the persons dealt with.

Theophrastus:

Like most English literary genres, the character was imported from abroad. The model for the English character writers was the Greek psychologist Theophrastus (372-287 B.C.) whose *Ethical Characters* comprised brief character-sketches of some thirty vicious or unpleasant Athenian types done in witty but bitter prose. Theophrastus first came to be known in Latin translation in 1592 and in English in 1616. It is possible that Theophrastus wrote some characters of virtuous types also: however, only the characters of evil or unpleasant types have come down to us. He composed his characters in accordance with a set formula. He starts every character with a very brief description of the vice he is going to handle-flattery, cowardice, talkativeness, superstitiousness, etc. After that he goes on to describe a typical possessor of that vice and his actions under its influence. Any reference to the strictly individual peculiarities of the person concerned is conspicuous by its absence. For illustration let us quote here the beginning of his character of *The Distrustful Man:*

"Distrustfulness is a disposition to suspect all men of dishonesty. The Distrustful Man is this sort of man. When he has sent one of his slaves to buy provisions he sends another one after the first to find out exactly what they cost. In travelling he carries his own money and sits down every few hundred years to count it..."

The vogue of character writing was initiated in English by Joseph Hall, and

was carried forward by the distinguished character writers uverbury and Earle. right upto the age of the Restoration when it died a natural death after having outlived its appeal and utility. Let us now discuss briefly the work of the more important of seventeenth-century character writers.

Joseph Hall (1574-1656):

Joseph Hall is credited with the naturalisation of the new prose form of the character in English literature. His work entitled *Characters of Virtues and Vices* came out in 1608. He doubtlessly took Theophrastus for his model, but it is possible that, as Tucker Brooke observes, "his immediate inspiration was found in the incidental character-sketches that Ben Jonson had introduced in *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599) and *Cynthia's Revels* (1600). Ben Jonson's "humours" are also predominantly types, but whereas he adopts the dynamic method of the dramatist in unfolding them, the character writer, like Hall, uses the static or descriotive method". But the moral aim is shared equally earnestly by the dramatist and the prose writer.

Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices* consists of two books: Book I deals with virtuous types (such as the wise man, the honest man, and the true friend) and Book II with their vicious counterparts (such as the malcontent, the flatterer, and the unshrift). On the whole, Hall is more successful with vices than with virtues. Let us now compare Hall's approach and execution with those of Theophrastus.

(1) Hall's sketches are somewhat longer than Theophrastus's. In spite of the fact that he was called by his contemporaries "our English Seneca" for his packed and rhetorical expression, it has to be admitted that his characters lack compression as also trie artistic selection and rejection of traits which distinguish Theophrastus's work.

(2) Secondly, Hall, as Tucker Brooke says, "intensified the moral tone." He was a clergyman. David Daiches observes: "He is less the witty observer of men than the Christian moralist seeking to improve his readers by warning or example." His egregious moral bias finds expression in his Poem to Book I "Virtue is not loved enough because her loveliness is secret... What need we more, than to discover the two to the world? This work shall save the labour of exhorting and dissuasion."

(3) Thirdly, his characters are rich in a peculiar kind of wit which is entirely his own. For illustration, see the end of the character of the busybody: "He knows not why, but his custom is to go a little about and to leave the cross still on the right hand. One event is enough to make a rule; out of these rules he concludes fashions, proper to himself; and nothing can turn him out of his course. If he has done his task, he is safe: it matters not with what affection, finally, if God would let him be the carver of his own obedience, he could not have a better subject as he is, he cannot have a worse."

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(4) Lastly, Hall's sketches are characterised by crude and unpolished vigour-the same which we find in his satirical verse *Virgidemiarum.*

Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613):

Hall's work did not achieve any notable popularity. It was Overbury who first distinguished himself in the field of character writing. He died in the Tower of London in 1613 in quite mysterious circumstances. A year after his death a publisher brought out his poem *A Wife.* The second edition of the poem was supplemented by twenty-two prose characters said to be the work of Overbury "and other learned gentlemen his friends." The next three months saw the publication of no fewer than four more editions and the number of characters increase from twenty-two to eighty-three. Among the anonymous contributors were famous writers of their times, such as John Donne, the poet and Dekker and Webster the dramatists. This work achieved and maintained remarkable popularity. Fourteen editions were published in the following half-century. Let us now discuss some of the important features of Overbury's characters.

(1) Overbury's characters are considerably shorter in length than Hall's. Most of them run to under three hundred words.

(2) Overbury does not portray his characters to view them from an abstract moral position. Nor is his aim pre-eminently reformative. He is interested rather in the presentation of contemporary types. However, he was a courtier and, as such, had open contempt for the commonalty. Hardin Craig observes in *A History of EnglishLiterature* edited by himself: "Overbury was a courtier and an acute and acrimonious observer of men and manners. His essays are the product of a circle of wits who profess scorn of the ordinary and the commonplace in human life."

(3) Overbury, unlike Hall, did not make any formal division between virtue and vice. This, as Tucker Brooke observes in *A Literary History of England* edited by Albert C. Baugh, helped him in "achieving greater naturalness and a more pleasant diversity." However, that does not mean that he is blind to moral considerations. He does, like Theophrastus and Hall before him, have a didactic and reformative aim which he tries to realise through witty satire.

(4) His satire and wit are more sophisticated than Hall's. They have much more of literary and artistic quality. According to Legouis it was Overbury who "gave this genre [the character] a really literary character." Mark the telling pungency in his description of a uritan: "A Puritan is a diseased piece of Apocrypha: bind him to the Bible, and he corrupts the whole text : ignorance and fat feed are his founders; his nurses railing rabies and round breeches : his life is but aborrowed blast of wind; for between two religions, as between twodoors, he is ever whistling."

(5) Lastly, Overbury practised a novelty in including somewomen also among his characters. The most striking, fresh, andrefreshing of his characters is

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"The Fair and Happy Milkmaid." As acourtier disgusted with the artificial beauty aids used by sophisticatedwomen of the highest circles of society he celebrates in glowing termsthe natural beauty and innocence of a milkmaid.

Here is an extractfrom that character:

"…though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silk-worm, she is decked in innocence, a far better wearing...In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk whiter or sweeter; for never came almond-gloss or aromatic ointment on her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet, when she reaps them as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them."

John Earle (16017-1665):

Overbury's work gave a considerable fillip to character writing in English. Among those who practised this genre may be mentioned the following:

(i) John *Stephens-Satirical Essays, Characters and Others* (1615)

(ii) Nicholas Breton (1555-1626) and Richard Barthwait (1588-1673)

(iii) Geoffrey Minshull (c. 1594-1*668)—Essays and*

***Characters of a Prison and Prisoners* (1618).**

Character sequences followed almost as thickly as sonnet sequences. But out of all of them John Earle's *Microcosmography* is the most important and the most interesting. It was first published in 1628, and achieved immediate and well deserved fame. Earle's seventy-eight portraits have lived on till today for he is easily the most attractive of all the character writers. Given below are some important features of his work.

(1) Earle has a greater variety of material. His treatment ranges over such diverse characters as "A Young Raw Preacher", "A Mere Formal Man", "A She Precise Hypocrite", and "The Common Singing Men in Cathedral Churches". Overbury as a courtier had better opportunities to see the world than Earle who was a clergyman and for nearly twenty years a fellow of Merton College, Oxford. His clerical and scholarly bias is apparent in his frequent selection of types connected with the church and the university-"An Old College Butler," "A Young Gentleman of the University", "A Downright Scholar," "A Plodding Student," "An University Don," "A Pretender to Learning," and so forth.

(2) Earle is not very exhibitive of his wit which is generally unobtrusive and polished. However, it sharpens up whenever he deals with hypocrisy, as when he chastises "A Pretender to Learning!' who, as he says, "is one that would make others more fools than himself; for though he know nothing, he would not have the world know so much."

(3) A novel feature initiated by Earle was the treatment of some inanimate objects

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among his characters. One such "character" is "A Tavern". Earle says about it: "A house of sin you may call it, but not ahouse of darkness, for the candles are never out, and it is like those countries far in the north where it is as clear at midnight as at midday."

(4) Much of the charm of Earle's characters lies in his style. Tucker Brooke observes: "Earle has a neat epigrammatic style which, if he had lived a century later, would have been called Addisonian..." One of the most remarkable of his portraits is that of "A Child", which curiously foreshadows Wordsworth's exaltation of childhood. Mark these words: "The elder he grows, he is a stair lower from God, and like his first father much worse in his breeches...Could he put off his body with his little coat, he had got eternity without a burthen, and exchanged but one heaven for another."

After Earle:

After Earle we find the character shifting from the type to the individual. Samuel Butler's large collection of characters was written in the late 1660's but not published until 1759. Butler was pungently satirical and was chiefly concerned with contemporary follies and fads. However, it is not his characters but the characters of Earle which have a clear affinity with the spirit of the *Taller* and *the Spectator.* Thereafter the character, as David Daiches puts it in *A Critical History of English Literature,* Vol. I, was "ready to join the other streams that flowed into the English novel."

1.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Who succeeded Elizabeth I in 1603, establishing the Stuart dynasty?

   (a) James IV of Scotland (b) James VI of Scotland

   (c) Mary, Queen of Scots (d) Anne Boleyn

2. James I shaped culture by publishing works on which of the following subjects?

   (a) tobacco (b) royal absolutism

   (c) witchcraft (d) a, b, and c

3. What is the customary ending to a court masque?

   (a) a fox hunt

   (b) a reading from the Bible

   (c) the unmasking of the masquers

   (d) b and c only

4. Who authored Il Cortigiano (The Courtier), a book that was highly influential in the English court, providing subtle guidance for behavior?

   (a) Cavalcanti (b) Castiglione

   (c) Pirandello (d) Boccaccio

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5.. Which of the following best describes Castiglione's term sprezzatura?

(a) the art of living well

(b) the art of fine dining

(c) the art of concealment

(d) the art of deciphering graceful words

6. Who wrote the notorious book, Il Principe (The Prince)?

(a) Cavalcanti (b) Castiglione

(c) Pirandello (d) Machiavelli

7. What is the apt title of John Skelton's poem about court life?

(a) "Abstinence of Emotion" (b) "Benediction"

(c) "Courtly Life" (d) "Dread"

8. Which of the following sixteenth-century poets was not a courtier?

(a) George Puttenham (b) Philip Sidney

(c) Walter Ralegh (d) Thomas Wyatt

9. Which of the following statements is not an accurate reflection of education during the English Renaissance?

(a) It was aimed primarily at sons of the nobility and gentry.

(b) Its curriculum emphasized ancient Greek, the language of diplomacy, professions, and higher learning.

(c) It was conducted by tutors in wealthy families or in grammar schools.

(d) It was ordered according to the medieval trivium and quadrivium.

10. What impulse probably accounts for the rise of distinguished translations of works, such as Homer's lliad and Odyssey, into English during the sixteenth century?

(a) human reverence for the classics

(b) a blatant disregard for accuracy

(c) pride for the vernacular language

(d) a and c only

11. What was the predominant religion in England during the early sixteenth century?

(a) Atheism (b) Protestantism

(c) Catholicism (d) Hinduism

12. Who began to ignite the embers of dissent against the Catholic Church in November 1517 in a movement that came to be known as the Reformation?

(a) Anne Boleyn (b) Martin Luther

(c) Pope Leo X (d) Ulrich Zwingli

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1.11 SUMMARY

The English language had almost no prestige abroad at the beginning of the sixteenth century. One of the earliest sixteenth-century works of English literature, Thomas More's *Utopia*, was written in Latin for an international intellectual community. It was only translated into English during the 1550s, nearly a half-century after its original publication in Britain. By 1600, though English remained somewhat peripheral on the continent, it had been transformed into an immensely powerful expressive medium, as employed by Shakespeare, Marlowe, and the translators of the Bible.

The development of the English language is linked to the consolidation and strengthening of the English state. The Wars of the Roses ended with Henry VII's establishment of the Tudor dynasty that would rule England from 1485 to 1603. The Tudors imposed a much stronger central authority on the nation. The royal court was a center of culture as well as power, finding expression in theater, masques, fashion, and taste in painting, music, and poetry. The court fostered paranoia, and in this anxious atmosphere courtiers became highly practiced at crafting and deciphering graceful words with double or triple meanings. For advice on the cultivation and display of the self, they turned to Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* (*The Courtier*). Beyond the court, London was the largest and fastest-growing city in Europe, and literacy increased throughout the century, in part due to the influence of Protestantism as well as the rise of the printing press. Freedom of the press did not exist, and much literature, especially poetry, still circulated in manuscript.

The movement now known as the Renaissance unleashed new ideas and new social, political and economic forces that gradually displaced the spiritual and communal values of the Middle Ages. The Renaissance came to England through the spiritual and intellectual orientation known as humanism. Humanism, whose adherents included Sir Thomas More, John Colet, Roger Ascham, and Sir Thomas Elyot, was bound up with struggles over the purposes of education and curriculum reform. Education was still ordered according to the medieval *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and music), and it emphasized Latin, the language of diplomacy, professions, and higher learning. But the focus of education shifted from training for the Church to the general acquisition of "literature," in the sense both of literacy and of cultural knowledge.

Officially at least, England in the early sixteenth century had a single religion, Catholicism. The Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on the authority of scripture (*sola scriptura*) and salvation by faith alone (*sola fide*), came to England as a result of Henry VIII's insistence on divorcing his wife, Catherine of Aragon, against the wishes of the Pope. Henry declared himself supreme head of the Church of England (through the Act of Supremacy). Those like Thomas More who refused the oath acknowledging the king's supremacy were held guilty of treason and executed. Henry was an equal-opportunity persecutor, hostile to

Catholics and zealous reformers alike. His son Edward VI was more firmly Protestant, whilst Mary I was a Catholic. Elizabeth I, though a Protestant, was cautiously conservative, determined to hold religious zealotry in check.

A female monarch in a male world, Elizabeth ruled through a combination of adroit political maneuvering and imperious command, enhancing her authority by means of an extraordinary cult of love. The court moved in an atmosphere of romance, with music, dancing, plays, and masques. Leading artists like the poet Edmund Spenser and the miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard celebrated Elizabeth's mystery and likened her to various classical goddesses. A source of intense anxiety was Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic with a plausible claim to the English throne, whom Elizabeth eventually had executed. When England faced an invasion from Catholic Spain in 1588, Elizabeth appeared in person before her troops wearing a white gown and a silver breastplate; the incident testifies to her self-consciously theatrical command of the grand public occasion as well as her strategic appropriation of masculine qualities. By the 1590s, virtually everyone was aware that Elizabeth's life was nearing an end, and there was great anxiety surrounding the succession to the throne.

Renaissance literature is the product of a rhetorical culture, a culture steeped in the arts of persuasion and trained to process complex verbal signals. Aesthetically, Elizabethan literature reveals a delight in order and pattern conjoined with a profound interest in the mind and heart. In his *Defense of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney argued that poetry's magical power to create perfect worlds was also a moral power, encouraging readers to virtue. The major literary modes of the Elizabethan period included pastoral, as exemplified in Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, andheroic/epic, as in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

A permanent, freestanding public theater in England dates only from 1567. There was, however, a rich and vital theatrical tradition, including interludes and mystery and morality plays. Around 1590, an extraordinary change came over English drama, pioneered by Marlowe's mastery of unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse. The theaters had many enemies; moralists warned that they were nests of sedition, and Puritans charged that theatrical transvestism excited illicit sexual desires, both heterosexual and homosexual. Nonetheless, the playing companies had powerful allies, including Queen Elizabeth, and continuing popular support.

1.12 KEY -WORDS

Allegory : story or poem in which characters, settings, and events stand for other people or events or for abstract ideas or qualities.

Alliteration : repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together.

Allusion : reference to someone or something that is known from history, literature, religion, politics, sports,

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science, or another branch of culture. An indirect reference to something (usually from literature, etc.).

Comedy : in general, a story that ends with a happy resolution of the conflicts faced by the main character or characters.

Conceit : an elaborate metaphor that compares two things that are startlingly different. Often an extended metaphor.

Confessional Poetry : a twentieth century term used to describe poetry that uses intimate material from the poet's life.

Conflict : the struggle between opposing forces or characters in a story.

1.13 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who are Elizabethan Sonneters? Discuss their contribution.
2. Who is the architect of Metaphysical poetry? Discuss.
3. Write a short note on the University Wits?
4. Briefly explain the 16th century literature.

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (b) 2. (d) 3. (c) 4. (b) 5. (c) 6. (d) 7. (d) 8. (a) 9. (b) 10. (d) 11. (c) 12. (b)

1.14 FURTHER READINGS

1. Eliot, T.S., The Metaphysical Poets, Selected Essays, London: Faber, 1932
2. Bennet, Joan., Five Metaphysical Poets: Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Marvell, Kolkata Radha Publishing House, 1988
3. Reeves, James, Ed., Selected Poems of John Donne, London, Heineman, 1952

UNIT - 2:

THE ROMANTIC POETRY

STRUCTURE

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Development of the 19th Century
2.3 The Romantic Hero
2.4 Self-Assessment
2.5 Summary
2.6 Review Questions
2.7 Further Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss the romantic period.
- Explain the development of 19th century.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Romantic movement began somewhere near the end of the 18th century in Western Europe and lasted well into the first half of the 19th century. In part, the movement was a rebellion in response to the Enlightenment of the century prior, which focused on the more scientific and rational thought. Characteristics of Romantic literature emphasize passion, emotion, and nature. Romantic poetry was often written in common everyday language for all to relate, not just the upper class. Nature was a focus of many famous poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth was known as the "father of English Romanticism." Any of his works can support the focus of nature. Robert Burns uses his Scottish dialect to support the "common everyday language" of the era. William Blake supports the emphasis of emotion in his Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience

Literary critics consider 1798, the year when Wordsworth and Coleridge published their "Lyrical Ballads," to mark the beginning of the English Romantic Movement. However, its actual beginnings date back to the poetry of Gray, Collins, Blake and Burns who are regaded as 'Transition Poets' who lived and wrote at the end of the Neo-Classical Age. Critical opinion is divided as to when the Romantic Movement actually came to an end; infact, some critics consider

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the Victorian age to be a continuation of the Romantic Age and that the English Romantic Age extended till the beginning of the Modern Age in the twentieth century.

The characteristic features of English Romantic poetry are:

1. Love and worship of Nature and dislike for the urban life.

2. Love for the Medieval Age.

3. Love for the supernatural and the mystical.

4. Poetry came to be regarded as the spontaneous expression of the poet's own subjective feelings and did not conform to the poetic conventions of classical doctrines.

5.Completely abandoned the 'Heroic Couplet' and substituted it with simpler verse forms like the ballads which belonged to the English rural Folk. In fact the 'Ballad Revival' is said to have sparked off the English Romantic Movememnt.

6. The 'poetic diction' of the Neo-Classical Age was completely done away with and the language of the ordinary people became the language of Romantic poetry.

7. The subjects of Romantic poetry were often ordinary people: "The Idiot Boy."

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Romanticism was an artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century. Various dates are given for the Romantic period in British literature, but here the publishing of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is taken as the beginning, and the crowning of Queen Victoria in 1837 as its end, even though, for example, William Wordsworth lived until 1850 and both Robert Burns and William Blakepublished before 1798. The writers of this period, however, "did not think of themselves as 'Romantics' , and the term was first used by critics of the Victorian period. Romanticism arrived later in other parts of the English-speaking world.

William Blake is considered a seminal figure in the history of both the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. The Romantic period was one of major social change in England, because of the depopulation of the countryside and the rapid development of over crowded industrial cities, that took place in the period roughly between 1750 and 1850.

The movement of so many people in England was the result of two forces:

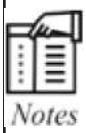
the Agricultural Revolution, that involved the Enclosure of the land, drove workers off the land, and the Industrial Revolution which provided them employment, "in the factories and mills, operated by machines driven by steam-power". Indeed Romanticism may be seen in part as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, though it was also a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment, as well a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. The French Revolution was an especially important influence on the political thinking of many of the Romantic poets.

Romanticism Defined

The 19th Century is often called "the romantic era." *Romaniticism* describes a movement in the history of culture, an aesthetic style, and an attitude or spirit. As a movement, romanticism involved a revolt against convention and authority and a search for freedom in personal, political, and artistic life. The romantics reacted against the rationalism of Enlightenment culture and the impersonality of growing industrialism. They worked to revive their nations' history and to liberate the oppressed peoples of the earth.

In art, romanticism was a reaction against the neoclassical quest for order and intellectual control in favor of free expression of the imagination and the liberation of the emotions.

Subjective and spontaneous outpouring of feeling; emotions equally important as reason. Sentimentality, nostalgia, melancholy, longing were the attitudes of mind. Romanticism glorified the self by way of intuition and the senses.



Heroes and visionaries, they freed themselves from the Church and state, and tended to pursue fiercely individualistic paths to creativity - paths that often alienated them from society and lead to frustration, despair and even early death.

The Romantic View of Nature

1. Estranged from traditional religious beliefs, the romantics looked upon nature as the dwelling place of God. God and the natural universe were one and the same.
2. Perceived nature as a metaphor for the sublime: the power and mystery of forces that inspired awe, solace, and self-discovery.
3. With Rousseau, the romantics held that humans were by nature good but were corrupted by society. "Natural man" was one who was close to nature and unspoiled by social institutions.
4. Nature was the font of divine ecstasy and the medium of the mystical bond that united God with the human soul.

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2.3 THE ROMANTIC HERO

As the romantics idealized nature and the natural, so they exalted the creative singularity of the individual in the person of the hero. Romantic heroes differed from traditional literary heroes in that they tended to challenge rather than champion the social and moral values of their time. The romantics saw themselves as heroes – the champions of a cult of the senses and of the heart. 19th century intellectuals celebrated the heroic personality, especially in its dedication to the causes of liberty and equality.

2.3.1 William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth was born on April 7th, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England. Young William's parents, John and Ann, died during his boyhood. Raised amid the mountains of Cumberland alongside the River Derwent, Wordsworth grew up in a rustic society, and spent a great deal of his time playing outdoors, in what he would later remember as a pure communion with nature. In the early 1790s William lived for a time in France, then in the grip of the violent Revolution; Wordsworth's philosophical sympathies lay with the revolutionaries, but his loyalties lay with England, whose monarchy he was not prepared to see overthrown. While in France, Wordsworth had a long affair with Annette Vallon, with whom he had a daughter, Caroline. A later journey to France to meet Caroline, now a young girl, would inspire the great sonnet "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free."

The chaos and bloodshed of the Reign of Terror in Paris drove William to philosophy books; he was deeply troubled by the rationalism he found in the works of thinkers such as William Godwin, which clashed with his own softer, more emotional understanding of the world. In despair, he gave up his pursuit of moral questions. In the mid-1790s, however, Wordsworth's increasing sense of anguish forced him to formulate his own understanding of the world and of the human mind in more concrete terms. The theory he produced, and the poetics he invented to embody it, caused a revolution in English literature.

Developed throughout his life, Wordsworth's understanding of the human mind seems simple enough today, what with the advent of psychoanalysis and the general Freudian acceptance of the importance of childhood in the adult psyche. But in Wordsworth's time, in what Seamus Heaney has called "Dr. Johnson's supremely adult eighteenth century," it was shockingly unlike anything that had been proposed before. Wordsworth believed (as he expressed in poems such as the "Intimations of Immortality" Ode) that, upon being born, human beings move from a perfect, idealized realm into the imperfect, un-ideal earth. As children, some memory of the former purity and glory in which they lived remains, best perceived in the solemn and joyous relationship of the child to the beauties of nature. But as children grow older, the memory fades, and the magic of nature dies. Still, the memory of childhood can offer an important solace,

which brings with it almost a kind of re-access to the lost purities of the past. And the maturing mind develops the capability to understand nature in human terms, and to see in it metaphors for human life, which compensate for the loss of the direct connection.

Freed from financial worries by a legacy left to him in 1795, Wordsworth moved with his sister Dorothy to Racedown, and then to Alfoxden in Grasmere, where Wordsworth could be closer to his friend and fellow poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Together, Wordsworth and Coleridge began work on a book called *Lyrical Ballads,* first published in 1798 and reissued with Wordsworth's monumental preface in 1802.

The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* represents a landmark moment for English poetry; it was unlike anything that had come before, and paved the way for everything that has come after. According to the theory that poetry resulted from the "spontaneous overflow" of emotions, as Wordsworth wrote in the preface, Wordsworth and Coleridge made it their task to write in the simple language of common people, telling concrete stories of their lives. According to this theory, poetry originated in "emotion recollected in a state of tranquility"; the poet then surrendered to the emotion, so that the tranquility dissolved, and the emotion remained in the poem. This explicit emphasis on feeling, simplicity, and the pleasure of beauty over rhetoric, ornament, and formality changed the course of English poetry, replacing the elaborate classical forms of Pope and Dryden with a new Romantic sensibility. Wordsworth's most important legacy, besides his lovely, timeless poems, is his launching of the Romantic era, opening the gates for later writers such as John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron in England, and Emerson and Thoreau in America.

Following the success of *Lyrical Ballads* and his subsequent poem *The Prelude,* a massive autobiography in verse form, Wordsworth moved to the stately house at Rydal Mount where he lived, with Dorothy, his wife Mary, and his children, until his death in 1850. Wordsworth became the dominant force in English poetry while still quite a young man, and he lived to be quite old; his later years were marked by an increasing aristocratic temperament and a general alienation from the younger Romantics whose work he had inspired. Byron—the only important poet to become more popular than Wordsworth during Wordsworth's lifetime—in particular saw him as a kind of sell-out, writing in his sardonic preface to *Don Juan* that the once-liberal Wordsworth had "turned out a Tory" at last. The last decades of Wordsworth's life, however, were spent as Poet Laureate of England, and until his death he was widely considered the most important author in England.

Analysis

Wordsworth's monumental poetic legacy rests on a large number of important poems, varying in length and weight from the short, simple lyrics of the 1790s to the vast expanses of *The Prelude,* thirteen books long in its 1808 edition. But the

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themes that run through Wordsworth's poetry, and the language and imagery he uses to embody those themes, remain remarkably consistent throughout the Wordsworth canon, adhering largely to the tenets Wordsworth set out for himself in the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads.* Here, Wordsworth argues that poetry should be written in the natural language of common speech, rather than in the lofty and elaborate dictions that were then considered "poetic." He argues that poetry should offer access to the emotions contained in memory. And he argues that the first principle of poetry should be pleasure, that the chief duty of poetry is to provide pleasure through a rhythmic and beautiful expression of feeling—for all human sympathy, he claims, is based on a subtle pleasure principle that is "the naked and native dignity of man."

Recovering "the naked and native dignity of man" makes up a significant part of Wordsworth's poetic project, and he follows his own advice from the 1802 preface. Wordsworth's style remains plain-spoken and easy to understand even today, though the rhythms and idioms of common English have changed from those of the early nineteenth century. Many of Wordsworth's poems (including masterpieces such as "Tintern Abbey" and the "Intimations of Immortality" ode) deal with the subjects of childhood and the memory of childhood in the mind of the adult in particular, childhood's lost connection with nature, which can be preserved only in memory. Wordsworth's images and metaphors mix natural scenery, religious symbolism (as in the sonnet "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free," in which the evening is described as being "quiet as a nun"), and the relics of the poet's rustic childhood—cottages, hedgerows, orchards, and other places where humanity intersects gently and easily with nature.

Wordsworth's poems initiated the Romantic era by emphasizing feeling, instinct, and pleasure above formality and mannerism. More than any poet before him, Wordsworth gave expression to inchoate human emotion; his lyric "Strange fits of passion have I known," in which the speaker describes an inexplicable fantasy he once had that his lover was dead, could not have been written by any previous poet. Curiously for a poet whose work points so directly toward the future, many of Wordsworth's important works are preoccupied with the lost glory of the past—not only of the lost dreams of childhood but also of the historical past, as in the powerful sonnet "London, 1802," in which the speaker exhorts the spirit of the centuries-dead poet John Milton to teach the modern world a better way to live.

Themes

The Beneficial Influence of Nature

Throughout Wordsworth's work, nature provides the ultimate good influence on the human mind. All manifestations of the natural world—from the highest mountain to the simplest flower—elicit noble, elevated thoughts and passionate

emotions in the people who observe these manifestations. Wordsworth repeatedly emphasizes the importance of nature to an individual's intellectual and spiritual development. A good relationship with nature helps individuals connect to both the spiritual and the social worlds. As Wordsworth explains in *The Prelude*, a love of nature can lead to a love of humankind. In such poems as "The World Is Too Much with Us" (1807) and "London, 1802" (1807) people become selfish and immoral when they distance themselves from nature by living in cities. Humanity's innate empathy and nobility of spirit becomes corrupted by artificial social conventions as well as by the squalor of city life. In contrast, people who spend a lot of time in nature, such as laborers and farmers, retain the purity and nobility of their souls.

The Power of the Human Mind

Wordsworth praised the power of the human mind. Using memory and imagination, individuals could overcome difficulty and pain. For instance, the **speaker** in "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798) relieves his loneliness with memories of nature, while the leech gatherer in "Resolution and Independence" (1807) perseveres cheerfully in the face of poverty by the exertion of his own will. The transformative powers of the mind are available to all, regardless of an individual's class or background. This democratic view emphasizes individuality and uniqueness. Throughout his work, Wordsworth showed strong support for the political, religious, and artistic rights of the individual, including the power of his or her mind. In the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explained the relationship between the mind and poetry. Poetry is "emotion recollected in tranquility"—that is, the mind transforms the raw emotion of experience into poetry capable of giving pleasure. Later poems, such as "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1807), imagine nature as the source of the inspiring material that nourishes the active, creative mind.

The Splendor of Childhood

In Wordsworth's poetry, childhood is a magical, magnificent time of innocence. Children form an intense bond with nature, so much so that they appear to be a part of the natural world, rather than a part of the human, social world. Their relationship to nature is passionate and extreme: children feel joy at seeing a rainbow but great terror at seeing desolation or decay. In 1799, Wordsworth wrote several poems about a girl named Lucy who died at a young age. These poems, including "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" (1800) and "Strange fits of passion have I known" (1800), praise her beauty and lament her untimely death. In death, Lucy retains the innocence and splendor of childhood, unlike the children who grow up, lose their connection to nature, and lead unfulfilling lives. The speaker in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" believes that children delight in nature because they have access to a divine, immortal world. As children age

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and reach maturity, they lose this connection but gain an ability to feel emotions, both good and bad. Through the power of the human mind, particularly memory, adults can recollect the devoted connection to nature of their youth.

Motifs

Wandering and Wanderers

The speakers of Wordsworth's poems are inveterate wanderers: they roam solitarily, they travel over the moors, they take private walks through the highlands of Scotland. Active wandering allows the characters to experience and participate in the vastness and beauty of the natural world. Moving from place to place also allows the wanderer to make discoveries about himself. In "I travelled among unknown men" (1807), the speaker discovers his patriotism only after he has traveled far from England. While wandering, speakers uncover the visionary powers of the mind and understand the influence of nature, as in "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (1807). The speaker of this poem takes comfort in a walk he once took after he has returned to the grit and desolation of city life. Recollecting his wanderings allows him to transcend his present circumstances. Wordsworth's poetry itself often wanders, roaming from one subject or experience to another, as in *The Prelude*. In this long poem, the speaker moves from idea to idea through digressions and distractions that mimic the natural progression of thought within the mind.

Memory

Memory allows Wordsworth's speakers to overcome the harshness of the contemporary world. Recollecting their childhoods gives adults a chance to reconnect with the visionary power and intense relationship they had with nature as children. In turn, these memories encourage adults to re-cultivate as close a relationship with nature as possible as an antidote to sadness, loneliness, and despair. The act of remembering also allows the poet to write: Wordsworth argued in the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry sprang from the calm remembrance of passionate emotional experiences. Poems cannot be composed at the moment when emotion is first experienced. Instead, the initial emotion must be combined with other thoughts and feelings from the poet's past experiences using memory and imagination. The poem produced by this time-consuming process will allow the poet to convey the essence of his emotional memory to his readers and will permit the readers to remember similar emotional experiences of their own.

Vision and Sight

Throughout his poems, Wordsworth fixates on vision and sight as the vehicles

through which individuals are transformed. As speakers move through the world, they see visions of great natural loveliness, which they capture in their memories. Later, in moments of darkness, the speakers recollect these visions, as in "I wandered lonely as a cloud." Here, the speaker daydreams of former jaunts through nature, which "flash upon that inward eye / which is the bliss of solitude" (21–22). The power of sight captured by our mind's eye enables us to find comfort even in our darkest, loneliest moments. Elsewhere, Wordsworth describes the connection between seeing and experiencing emotion, as in "My heart leaps up" (1807), in which the speaker feels joy as a result of spying a rainbow across the sky. Detailed images of natural beauty abound in Wordsworth's poems, including descriptions of daffodils and clouds, which focus on what can be seen, rather than touched, heard, or felt. In Book Fourteenth of *The Prelude*, climbing to the top of a mountain in Wales allows the speaker to have a prophetic vision of the workings of the mind as it thinks, reasons, and feels.

Did u know?

Marchbanks is pathetic. In describing him, Shaw uses the word, "sensitiveness," as opposed to "sensitive."

Symbols

Light

Light often symbolizes truth and knowledge. In "The Tables Turned" (1798), Wordsworth contrasts the barren light of reason available in books with the "sweet" and "freshening" light of the knowledge nature brings. Sunlight literally helps people see, and sunlight also helps speakers and characters begin to glimpse the wonders of the world. In "Expostulation and Reply" (1798), the presence of light, or knowledge, within an individual prevents dullness and helps the individual to see, or experience. Generally, the light in Wordsworth's poems represents immortal truths that can't be entirely grasped by human reason. In "Ode: Imitations of Immortality," the speaker remembers looking at a meadow as a child and imagining it gleaming in "celestial light" . As the speaker grows and matures, the light of his youth fades into the "light of common day" of adulthood. But the speaker also imagines his remembrances of the past as a kind of light, which illuminate his soul and give him the strength to live.

The Leech Gatherer

In "Resolution and Independence," the ancient leech gatherer who spends his days wandering the moors looking for leeches represents the strong-minded poet who perseveres in the face of poverty, obscurity, and solitude. As the poem begins, a wanderer travels along a moor, feeling elated and taking great pleasure in the

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sights of nature around him but also remembering that despair is the twin of happiness. Eventually he comes upon an old man looking for leeches, even though the work is dangerous and the leeches have become increasingly hard to find. As the speaker chats with the old man, he realizes the similarities between leech gathering and writing poetry. Like a leech gather, a poet continues to search his or her mind and the landscape of the natural world for poems, even though such intense emotions can damage one's psyche, the work pays poorly and poverty is dangerous to one's health, and inspiration sometimes seems increasingly hard to find. The speaker resolves to think of the leech gatherer whenever his enthusiasm for poetry or belief in himself begins to wane.

"The infinite variety of natural appearances" – his principal source of inspiration and the primary subject of his poetry. Through the senses, one communed with elemental and divine universal forces. Nature could restore to human beings their untainted, childhood sense of wonder. Defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" – "emotion recollected in tranquility." His rejection of the artificial diction of neoclassical verse anticipated a new, more natural voice in poetry – one informed by childhood memories and deeply felt experiences.

Preferred **lyric poetry** – a style that has the form and musical quality of a song; a short poem that expresses personal feelings, which may or may not be set to music.

In "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth established three of the key motifs of 19th century romanticism: the redemptive power of nature, the idea of nature's sympathy with humankind, and the view that one who is close to nature is close to God:

Line 49: Nature allows the poet to "see into the life of things."

Line 91: Nature infuses him with "the still, sad music of humanity" and ultimately bringing him into the sublime presence of the divine spirit.

Lines 109-110: Nature is the "anchor" of his purest thoughts, the "nurse" and "guardian" of his heart and soul.

2.3.2 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792, into a wealthy Sussex family which eventually attained minor noble rank—the poet's grandfather, a wealthy businessman, received a baronetcy in 1806. Timothy Shelley, the poet's father, was a member of Parliament and a country gentleman. The young Shelley entered Eton, a prestigious school for boys, at the age of twelve. While he was there, he discovered the works of a philosopher named William Godwin, which he consumed passionately and in which he became a fervent believer; the young man wholeheartedly embraced the ideals of liberty and equality espoused by the French Revolution, and devoted his considerable passion and persuasive power

to convincing others of the rightness of his beliefs. Entering Oxford in 1810, Shelley was expelled the following spring for his part in authoring a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*—atheism being an outrageous idea in religiously conservative nineteenth-century England.

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From 1888 to 1898 Shaw spent his life as a professional critic.

At the age of nineteen, Shelley eloped with Harriet Westbrook, the sixteen-year-old daughter of a tavern keeper, whom he married despite his inherent dislike for the tavern. Not long after, he made the personal acquaintance of William Godwin in London, and promptly fell in love with Godwin's daughter Mary Wollstonecraft, whom he was eventually able to marry, and who is now remembered primarily as the author of *Frankenstein.* In 1816, the Shelleys traveled to Switzerland to meet Lord Byron, the most famous, celebrated, and controversial poet of the era; the two men became close friends. After a time, they formed a circle of English expatriates in Pisa, traveling throughout Italy; during this time Shelley wrote most of his finest lyric poetry, including the immortal "Ode to the West Wind" and "To a Skylark." In 1822, Shelley drowned while sailing in a storm off the Italian coast. He was not yet thirty years old.

Shelley belongs to the younger generation of English Romantic poets, the generation that came to prominence while William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were settling into middle age. Where the older generation was marked by simple ideals and a reverence for nature, the poets of the younger generation (which also included John Keats and the infamous Lord Byron) came to be known for their sensuous aestheticism, their explorations of intense passions, their political radicalism, and their tragically short lives.

Shelley died when he was twenty-nine, Byron when he was thirty-six, and Keats when he was only twenty-six years old. To an extent, the intensity of feeling emphasized by Romanticism meant that the movement was always associated with youth, and because Byron, Keats, and Shelley died young (and never had the opportunity to sink into conservatism and complacency as Wordsworth did), they have attained iconic status as the representative tragic Romantic artists. Shelley's life and his poetry certainly support such an understanding, but it is important not to indulge in stereotypes to the extent that they obscure a poet's individual character. Shelley's joy, his magnanimity, his faith in humanity, and his optimism are unique among the Romantics; his expression of those feelings makes him one of the early nineteenth century's most significant writers in English.

Shelley's *Defence of Poetry (1821)*, a manifesto of the writer's function in society, hails poets as "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Poets take

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their authority from nature, the fountainhead of inspiration. The heart in each individual (which naturally knows goodness and beauty) must be stirred to love what is good, and to this end art is the great instrument.

Shelley intuited an eternal reality beyond, separate from the mortal world in which we live where all we know is fleeting, unsubstantial, and illusory.

Analysis

The central thematic concerns of Shelley's poetry are largely the same themes that defined Romanticism, especially among the younger English poets of Shelley's era: beauty, the passions, nature, political liberty, creativity, and the sanctity of the imagination. What makes Shelley's treatment of these themes unique is his philosophical relationship to his subject matter—which was better developed and articulated than that of any other Romantic poet with the possible exception of Wordsworth—and his temperament, which was extraordinarily sensitive and responsive even for a Romantic poet, and which possessed an extraordinary capacity for joy, love, and hope. Shelley fervently believed in the possibility of realizing an ideal of human happiness as based on beauty, and his moments of darkness and despair (he had many, particularly in book-length poems such as the monumental *Queen Mab*) almost always stem from his disappointment at seeing that ideal sacrificed to human weakness.

Shelley's intense feelings about beauty and expression are documented in poems such as "Ode to the West Wind" and "To a Skylark," in which he invokes metaphors from nature to characterize his relationship to his art. The center of his aesthetic philosophy can be found in his important essay *A Defence of Poetry,* in which he argues that poetry brings about moral good. Poetry, Shelley argues, exercises and expands the imagination, and the imagination is the source of sympathy, compassion, and love, which rest on the ability to project oneself into the position of another person. He writes,

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others. The pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb.

No other English poet of the early nineteenth century so emphasized the connection between beauty and goodness, or believed so avidly in the power of art's sensual pleasures to improve society. Byron's pose was one of amoral sensuousness, or of controversial rebelliousness; Keats believed in beauty and

aesthetics for their own sake. But Shelley was able to believe that poetry makes people and society *better*; his poetry is suffused with this kind of inspired moral optimism, which he hoped would affect his readers sensuously, spiritually, and morally, all at the same time.

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Poetry or art is created in or immediately after moments of visionary ascent to the eternal, and is an attempt to render such moments in words and images. Since language is limited in its expression of deep truth, words and images are only symbolic gestures pointing to something beyond; hence, success in conveying truth is never complete (which many have concluded led to Shelley's volcanic personality, intense engagement in the natural world, and deep melancholy.

In "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley appeals to the wind, a symbol of creativity, to drive his visions throughout the universe. The wind drives leaves over the earth (stanza 1), clouds through the air (stanza 2), and waves on the seas (stanza 3).

Final stanza – he compares the poet to a lyre, whose "mighty harmonies," stirred by the wind of creativity, will awaken the world. By means of language that is itself musical, Shelley defends the notion of poetry as the music of the soul. In his "Essay on Christianity," Shelley wrote: "We are not the arbiters of every motion of our own complicated nature; we are not the masters of our own imaginations and moods of mental being. There is a Power by which we are surrounded, like the atmosphere in which some motionless lyre is suspended, which visits with its breath our silent chords at will."

Themes

The Heroic, Visionary Role of the Poet

In Shelley's poetry, the figure of the poet (and, to some extent, the figure of Shelley himself) is not simply a talented entertainer or even a perceptive moralist but a grand, tragic, prophetic hero. The poet has a deep, mystic appreciation for nature, as in the poem "To Wordsworth" (1816), and this intense connection with the natural world gives him access to profound cosmic truths, as in "Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude" (1816). He has the power—and the duty—to translate these truths, through the use of his imagination, into poetry, but only a kind of poetry that the public can understand. Thus, his poetry becomes a kind of prophecy, and through his words, a poet has the ability to change the world for the better and to bring about political, social, and spiritual change. Shelley's poet is a near-divine savior, comparable to Prometheus, who stole divine fire and gave it to humans in Greek mythology, and to Christ. Like Prometheus and Christ, figures of the poets in Shelley's work are often doomed to suffer: because their visionary power isolates them from other men, because they are misunderstood by critics, because they are persecuted by a tyrannical government, or because they are suffocated by conventional religion and middle-class values. In the end, however, the poet triumphs because his art is immortal, outlasting the tyranny of

government, religion, and society and living on to inspire new generations.

The Power of Nature

Like many of the romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, Shelley demonstrates a great reverence for the beauty of nature, and he feels closely connected to nature's power. In his early poetry, Shelley shares the romantic interest in pantheism—the belief that God, or a divine, unifying spirit, runs through everything in the universe. He refers to this unifying natural force in many poems, describing it as the "spirit of beauty" in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and identifying it with Mont Blanc and the Arve River in "Mont Blanc." This force is the cause of all human joy, faith, goodness, and pleasure, and it is also the source of poetic inspiration and divine truth. Shelley asserts several times that this force can influence people to change the world for the better. However, Shelley simultaneously recognizes that nature's power is not wholly positive. Nature destroys as often as it inspires or creates, and it destroys cruelly and indiscriminately. For this reason, Shelley's delight in nature is mitigated by an awareness of its dark side.

The Power of the Human Mind

Shelley uses nature as his primary source of poetic inspiration. In such poems as "The Mask of Anarchy Written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester" (1819) and "Ode to the West Wind," Shelley suggests that the natural world holds a sublime power over his imagination. This power seems to come from a stranger, more mystical place than simply his appreciation for nature's beauty or grandeur. At the same time, although nature has creative power over Shelley because it provides inspiration, he feels that his imagination has creative power over nature. It is the imagination—or our ability to form sensory perceptions—that allows us to describe nature in different, original ways, which help to shape how nature appears and, therefore, how it exists. Thus, the power of the human mind becomes equal to the power of nature, and the experience of beauty in the natural world becomes a kind of collaboration between the perceiver and the perceived. Because Shelley cannot be sure that the sublime powers he senses in nature are only the result of his gifted imagination, he finds it difficult to attribute nature's power to God: the human role in shaping nature damages Shelley's ability to believe that nature's beauty comes solely from a divine source.

Motifs

Autumn

Shelley sets many of his poems in autumn, including "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Ode to the West Wind." Fall is a time of beauty and death, and so

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it shows both the creative and destructive powers of nature, a favorite Shelley theme. As a time of change, autumn is a fitting backdrop for Shelley's vision of political and social revolution. In "Ode to the West Wind," autumn's brilliant colors and violent winds emphasize the passionate, intense nature of the poet, while the decay and death inherent in the season suggest the sacrifice and martyrdom of the Christ-like poet.

Ghosts and Spirits

Shelley's interest in the supernatural repeatedly appears in his work. The ghosts and spirits in his poems suggest the possibility of glimpsing a world beyond the one in which we live. In "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the speaker searches for ghosts and explains that ghosts are one of the ways men have tried to interpret the world beyond. The speaker of "Mont Blanc" encounters ghosts and shadows of real natural objects in the cave of "Poesy." Ghosts are inadequate in both poems: the speaker finds no ghosts in "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and the ghosts of Poesy in "Mont Blanc" are not the real thing, a discovery that emphasizes the elusiveness and mystery of supernatural forces.

Christ

From his days at Oxford, Shelley felt deeply doubtful about organized religion, particularly Christianity. Yet, in his poetry, he often represents the poet as a Christ-like figure and thus sets the poet up as a secular replacement for Christ. Martyred by society and conventional values, the Christ figure is resurrected by the power of nature and his own imagination and spreads his prophetic visions over the earth. Shelley further separates his Christ figures from traditional Christian values in *Adonais*, in which he compares the same character to Christ, as well as Cain, whom the Bible portrays as the world's first murderer. For Shelley, Christ and Cain are both outcasts and rebels, like romantic poets and like himself.

Symbols

Mont Blanc

For Shelley, Mont Blanc—the highest peak in the Alps—represents the eternal power of nature. Mont Blanc has existed forever, and it will last forever, an idea he explores in "Mont Blanc." The mountain fills the poet with inspiration, but its coldness and inaccessibility are terrifying. Ultimately, though, Shelley wonders if the mountain's power might be meaningless, an invention of the more powerful human imagination.

The West Wind

Shelley uses the West Wind to symbolize the power of nature and of the imagination inspired by nature. Unlike Mont Blanc, however, the West Wind is

active and dynamic in poems, such as "Ode to the West Wind." While Mont Blanc is immobile, the West Wind is an agent for change. Even as it destroys, the wind encourages new life on earth and social progress among humanity.

The Statue of Ozymandias

In Shelley's work, the statue of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, or Ozymandias, symbolizes political tyranny. In "Ozymandias," (1817) the statue is broken into pieces and stranded in an empty desert, which suggests that tyranny is temporary and also that no political leader, particularly an unjust one, can hope to have lasting power or real influence. The broken monument also represents the decay of civilization and culture: the statue is, after all, a human construction, a piece of art made by a creator, and now it—and its creator—have been destroyed, as all living things are eventually destroyed.

2.3.3 Samual Talor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in Devon in 1772. His father, a clergyman, moved his family to London when Coleridge was young, and it was there that Coleridge attended school (as he would later recall in poems such as "Frost at Midnight"). He later attended Cambridge but left without completing his studies. During the politically charged atmosphere of the late eighteenth century—the French Revolution had sent shockwaves through Europe, and England and France were at war—Coleridge made a name for himself both as a political radical and as an important young poet; along with his friends Robert Southey and William Wordsworth, he became one of the most important writers in England. Collaborating with Wordsworth on the revolutionary *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, Coleridge helped to inaugurate the Romantic era in England; as Wordsworth explained it in the 1802 preface to the third edition of the work, the idea of poetry underlying *Lyrical Ballads* turned the established conventions of poetry upside down: Privileging natural speech over poetic ornament, simply stated themes over elaborate symbolism, emotion over abstract thought, and the experience of natural beauty over urban sophistication, the book paved the way for two generations of poets, and stands as one of the milestones of European literature.

While Coleridge made important contributions to *Lyrical Ballads,* it was much more Wordsworth's project than Coleridge's; thus, while it is possible to understand Wordsworth's poetic output in light of his preface to the 1802 edition of the volume, the preface's ideas should not be used to analyze Coleridge's work. Insofar as Wordsworth was the poet of nature, the purity of childhood, and memory, Coleridge became the poet of imagination, exploring the relationships between nature and the mind as it exists as a separate entity. Poems such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan" demonstrate Coleridge's talent for concocting bizarre, unsettling stories full of fantastic imagery and magic; in

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poems such as "Frost at Midnight" and "Dejection: An Ode," he muses explicitly on the nature of the mind as it interacts with the creative source of nature.

Coleridge married in 1795 and spent much of the next decade living near and traveling with Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. In 1799, Coleridge met Sara Hutchinson, with whom he fell deeply in love, forming an attachment that was to last many years. Coleridge became an opium addict (it is thought that "Kubla Khan" originated from an opium dream) and, in 1816, moved in with the surgeon James Gillman in order to preserve his health. During the years he lived with Gillman, Coleridge composed many of his important non-fiction works, including the highly regarded *Biographia Literaria.* However, although he continued to write until his death in 1834, Romanticism was always a movement about youth, and today Coleridge is remembered primarily for the poems he wrote while still in his twenties.

Analysis

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's place in the canon of English poetry rests on a comparatively small body of achievement: a few poems from the late 1790s and early 1800s and his participation in the revolutionary publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1797. Unlike Wordsworth, his work cannot be understood through the lens of the 1802 preface to the second edition of that book; though it does resemble Wordsworth's in its idealization of nature and its emphasis on human joy, Coleridge's poems often favor musical effects over the plainness of common speech. The intentional archaisms of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and the hypnotic drone of "Kubla Khan" do not imitate common speech, creating instead a more strikingly stylized effect.

Further, Coleridge's poems complicate the phenomena Wordsworth takes for granted: the simple unity between the child and nature and the adult's reconnection with nature through memories of childhood; in poems such as "Frost at Midnight," Coleridge indicates the fragility of the child's innocence by relating his own urban childhood. In poems such as "Dejection: An Ode" and "Nightingale," he stresses the division between his own mind and the beauty of the natural world. Finally, Coleridge often privileges weird tales and bizarre imagery over the commonplace, rustic simplicities Wordsworth advocates; the "thousand thousand slimy things" that crawl upon the rotting sea in the "Rime" would be out of place in a Wordsworth poem.

If Wordsworth represents the central pillar of early Romanticism, Coleridge is nevertheless an important structural support. His emphasis on the imagination, its independence from the outside world and its creation of fantastic pictures such as those found in the "Rime," exerted a profound influence on later writers such as Shelley; his depiction of feelings of alienation and numbness helped to define more sharply the Romantics' idealized contrast between the emptiness of the city—where such feelings are experienced—and the joys of nature. The heightened understanding of these feelings also helped to shape the stereotype of the suffering Romantic genius, often further characterized by drug addiction:

this figure of the idealist, brilliant yet tragically unable to attain his own ideals, is a major pose for Coleridge in his poetry.

His portrayal of the mind as it moves, whether in silence ("Frost at Midnight") or in frenzy ("Kubla Khan") also helped to define the intimate emotionalism of Romanticism; while much of poetry is constituted of emotion recollected in tranquility, the origin of Coleridge's poems often seems to be emotion recollected in emotion. But (unlike Wordsworth, it could be argued) Coleridge maintains not only an emotional intensity but also a legitimate intellectual presence throughout his oeuvre and applies constant philosophical pressure to his ideas. In his later years, Coleridge worked a great deal on metaphysics and politics, and a philosophical consciousness infuses much of his verse—particularly poems such as "The Nightingale" and "Dejection: An Ode," in which the relationship between mind and nature is defined via the specific rejection of fallacious versions of it. The mind, to Coleridge, cannot take its feeling from nature and cannot falsely imbue nature with its own feeling; rather, the mind must be so suffused with its own joy that it opens up to the real, independent, "immortal" joy of nature.

2.3.4 John Keats (1795-1821)

Lamented the fleeting nature of pleasure, even as he contemplated the brevity of life. The threat of imminent death seemed to have heightened his awareness of the virtues of beauty, human love, and friendship. He perceived these phenomena as fleeting forms of a higher reality that might be made permanent only in art.

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" – central ideas:

Art is the transmuted product of the imagination, a higher form of nature that triumphantly outreaches the mortal lifespan.

Keats contemplates a Greek vase whose delicately drawn figures immortalize life's fleeting pleasures:

The boughs of trees pictured on such a vase will never shed their leaves.

The fair youths will never grow old.

The music of the pipes and timbrels will never cease to play

The lovers will never cease to love.

Unheard melodies are sweeter – what we imagine is always better than what is heard.

Objects cannot fade; the urn does not age or die, it is eternal.

Keats describes the imaginary urn as a symbol of all great works of art, which, because of their unchanging beauty, remain eternally "true." The poem concludes with the joyous pronouncement that beauty and truth are one.

Nature and the Natural in Asian Literature

Although Asian poets anticipated the romantic engagement with nature, Eastern

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and Western styles of poetry differed considerably. Asian poets translated nature's moods by way of only a few carefully chosen words, evoking the subtlest of analogies between the natural landscape and the human condition. The European romantics, on the other hand, generally built up a series of richly detailed pictorial images through which they might explore the redemptive or affective powers of nature. Whereas Chinese poets tried to record natural appearance with some immediacy, the English romantics felt bound to distill the experience of the senses by way of the intellect, to discover moral analogues, and to put personal feelings at the service of human instruction and improvement. But despite the differences, the nature poetry of both East and West addresses an enduring theme in the humanistic tradition: the value of nature in freeing human beings from the artificial confines of the material world.

Such poetry suggests that:

1. humans and human life processes are extensions of the patterns and rhythms that govern the cosmos itself.
2. Nature and the natural landscape had dominated the literature of the East for centuries.
3. Perceived the natural landscape as symbolic of the oneness of man and nature.
4. Embraced nature as a source of solitary joy and private meditation.
5. Mountainous landscapes and changing seasons are metaphors for human moods and feelings.
6. **Shen Fu** – *Six Chapters from a Floating Life*
7. Reflective view of nature and a heightened sensitivity to its transient moods. All of nature is fragile and impermanent

The Promethean Hero

If Napoleon was 19th century Europe's favorite real-life hero, Prometheus was its favorite fictional hero. According to Greek mythology, Prometheus challenged Zeus by stealing from his home on Mount Olympus the sacred fire (source of divine wisdom and creative inspiration) and bestowing this great gift upon humankind. As punishment, Zeus chained him to a lonely rock, where an eagle fed daily on his liver, which was restored each night.

Romantic poets embraced the figure of Prometheus as the suffering champion of humanity – a symbol of freedom and a deliverer whose noble ambitions had incurred the wrath of the gods. Percy Bysshe Shelley made Prometheus the savior-hero of his four-act play *Prometheus Unbound*. In this drama, Prometheus frees the universe from the tyranny of the gods. Shelley's purpose was to present "Idealisms" (ideal examples) of "Moral excellence" and thereby to excite the emotions of admiration and love that are the springs of moral regeneration.

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2.3.5 Mary Shelley (1797-1851)

Mary Shelley explored another aspect of the Promethean legend in her novel *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*. The novel relates the tale of Victor Frankenstein, who, having discovered the secret of imparting life to inanimate matter, produces a monster endowed with supernatural strength.

A modern Prometheus, Frankenstein suffers the punishment for his ambitious designs when the creature, excluded from the normal life of ordinary mortals, betrays its creator.

Shelley's novel was the first literary work to question the human impact of scientific research.

2.3.6 Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Flamboyant, impassioned, idealist – fought for liberty and brotherhood – he established the prototype of the romantic hero, often called the Byronic hero.

The heroes of Byron's poems were autobiographical: Childe Harold, the wanderer who, alienated from society, seeks companionship in nature; Don Juan, the libertine who cannot satiate his sexual desires; and Prometheus, the god who "stole from Heaven the flame, for which he fell."

Makes the Promethean myth a parable for the romantic imagination; Prometheus preoccupied Byron as a symbol of triumphant individualism. For Byron, capturing the imagination in art or in life was comparable to stealing the sacred fire.
In a number of poems, Byron compares the fallen Napoleon to the mythic Prometheus – symbol of heroic ambition and ungovernable passions.

Byron's "Prometheus:"

In Bryon's ode, the hero's "Godlike crime was to be kind."

Prometheus as "a symbol and a sign" to mortals, who, although "part divine," are doomed to "funereal destiny."

Like Prometheus, says Byron, we must strive to defy that destiny by pursuing the creative projects that will outlive us.

Byron's verses mingle defiance and hope with melancholy and despair.

2.3.7 William Blake (1757-1827)

William Blake, a transitional figure in British literature, was the first romantic poet to focus on content instead of form. Highly affected by the greed of commerce and the cruelty toward the common worker during the Industrial Revolution, Blake compiled the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* in the 1790s. The main theme of the poems in this work came from Blake's belief that children lost their "innocence" as they grew older and were influenced by the ways of the

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world. Blake believed that children were born innocent. They grew to become experienced as they were influenced by the beliefs and opinions of adults. When this happened, they could no longer be considered innocent. The poems from *Songs of Innocence* were written from an innocent child's perspective. *Songs of Experience* were written from the perspective of a more experienced person who had seen all of the evil in the world and had, in a way, become bitter towards it.

"The Lamb" from *Songs of Innocence* can symbolize innocence, serenity, a child, Jesus, or sacrifice. The poem gives credit to God for making such a beautiful being as the lamb. It's companion poem in *Songs of Experience*, "The Tyger," on the other hand, contains a different perspective of human life. The tyger could be compared to an "experienced" human. The tiger, although beautiful, is described as an animal that basically has to kill everyday in order to live. It is a being whose life is made by death. The age-old question is then asked, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"

2.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in Devon in 1772.
   (a) 1772 (b) 1787
   (c) 1786 (d) 1770
2. Wordsworth moved with his sister .....to Racedown, and then to Alfoxden in Grasmere.
   (a) Dorothy (b) Ezra
   (c) Shelly (d) Percy
3. Together, Wordsworth and Coleridge began work on a book called .....
   (a) Lyrical Ballads, (b) The Rime the Ancient Mariner
   (c) Kubla Khan (d) None of these
4. *Lyrical Ballads,* first published in .....
   (a) 1798 (b) 1789
   (c) 1778 (d) 1785

2.5 SUMMARY

In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are every where; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all

knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man.

Romanticism was arguably the largest artistic movement of the late 1700s. Its influence was felt across continents and through every artistic discipline into the mid-nineteenth century, and many of its values and beliefs can still be seen in contemporary poetry. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact start of the Romantic movement, as its beginnings can be traced to many events of the time: a surge of interest in folklore in the mid- to late-eighteenth century with the work of the brothers Grimm, reactions against neoclassicism and the Augustan poets in England, and political events and uprisings that fostered nationalistic pride.

Romantic poets cultivated individualism, reverence for the natural world, idealism, physical and emotional passion, and an interest in the mystic and supernatural. Romantics set themselves in opposition to the order and rationality of classical and neoclassical artistic precepts to embrace freedom and revolution in their art and politics. German romantic poets included Fredrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and British poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, George Gordon Lord Byron, and John Keats propelled the English Romantic movement. Victor Hugo was a noted French Romantic poet as well, and romanticism crossed the Atlantic through the work of American poets like Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe. The Romantic era produced many of the stereotypes of poets and poetry that exist to this day (i.e., the poet as a highly tortured and melancholy visionary). Romantic ideals never specifically died out in poetry, but were largely absorbed into the precepts of many other movements. Traces of romanticism lived on in French symbolism and surrealism and in the work of prominent poets such as Charles Baudelaire and Rainer Maria Rilke

2.6 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe the romantic periods.
2. Who are the romantic heros? Explain briefly about them.
3. Write a brief note on Keats as a romantic poet.
4. How is childhood central to Wordsworth's conception of the self?
5. Discuss Black as a romantic poet.

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (a) 2. (a) 3. (a) 4. (a)

2.7. FURTHER READINGS

1. Coleman, Elliott, editor: *Poems of Byron, Keats, and Shelley.* New York: International Collectors Library, 1967.

UNIT 3: GEOFFREY CHAUCER : THE CANTERBURY TALES

STRUCTURE

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 The Canterbury Tales
3.3 The Order of The Canterbury Tales
3.4. The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale
3.5 Analysis of Major Characters
3.6 Themes, Motifs & Symbols
3.7 Important Explanations
3.8 Self-Assessment
3.9 Summary
3.10 Key-Words
3.11 Review Questions
3.12 Further Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works of Geoffrey Chaucer .
- Explain and analyse the Canterbury Tales.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer is remembered as the author of The Canterbury Tales, which ranks as one of the greatest epic works of world literature. Chaucer made a crucial contribution to English literature in using English at a time when much court poetry was still written in Anglo-Norman or Latin. Chaucer was born in 1340 in London, England. In 1357 he became a public servant to Countess Elizabeth of Ulster. He continued to work as a public servant to the British court throughout his lifetime. *The Canterbury Tales* became his best known and most acclaimed work. He died October 25, 1400 of in London, England and was the first to be buried in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner.

His Early Life

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London. He was the son of a prosperous wine

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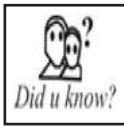
merchant and deputy to the king's butler, and his wife Agnes. Little is known of his early education, but his works show that he could read French, Latin, and Italian. Chaucer's family was of the bourgeois class. They descended from an affluent family who made their money in the London wine trade. According to some sources, Chaucer's father, John, carried on the family wine business.



Geoffrey Chaucer is believed to have attended the St. Paul's Cathedral School, where he probably first became acquainted with the influential writing of Virgil and Ovid.

In 1357, Chaucer became a public servant to Countess Elizabeth of Ulster, the Duke of Clarence's wife. Chaucer was paid a small stipend—enough to pay for his food and clothing. In 1359, the teenage Chaucer went off to fight in The Hundred Years' War in France. At Rethel he was captured for ransom. Thanks to Chaucer's royal connections, King Edward III helped pay his ransom. After Chaucer's release, he joined the Royal Service, traveling throughout France, Spain and Italy on diplomatic missions throughout the early to mid-1360s. For his services, King Edward granted Chaucer a pension of 20 marks.

In 1366 Chaucer married Philippa Roet. Philippa was Sir Payne Roet's daughter, and the marriage conveniently helped further Chaucer's career in the English court.

By 1368 King Edward III had made Chaucer one of his esquires. When the queen died in 1369, it served to strengthen Philippa's position and subsequently Chaucer's as well. In 1370 he went abroad again and fulfilled diplomatic missions in Florence and Genoa through 1373, familiarizing himself with the work of Italian poets Dante and Petrarch along the way. By the time he returned, he and Philippa were prospering, Chaucer had helped establish an English port in Genoa, and was rewarded by being appointed Comptroller of Customs, a lucrative position. Meanwhile Philippa and Chaucer were granted generous pensions by the Duke of Gaunt.

In 1377 and 1388 Chaucer engaged in yet more diplomatic missions, with the objectives of finding a French wife for Richard II and securing military aid in Italy. Busy with his duties, Chaucer had little time to devote to writing poetry, his true passion. In 1385 he petitioned for temporary leave. For the next four years he lived in Kent but worked as a Justice of the Peace and later a Parliament member, rather than focusing on his writing.

When Philippa passed away in 1387, Chaucer stopped sharing in her royal annuities and suffered financial hardship. He needed to keep working in public service in order to earn a living and pay off his growing accumulation of debt.

His Works

Chaucer took his narrative inspiration for his works from several sources but still remained an entirely individual poet, gradually developing his personal style

and techniques. His first narrative poem, *The Book of the Duchess*, was probably written shortly after the death of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, first wife of John Gaunt, in September 1369. His next important work, *The House of Fame*, was written between 1374 and 1385. Soon afterward Chaucer translated *The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius*, and wrote the poem *The Parliament of Birds.*

Chaucer did not begin working on The Canterbury Tales until he was in his early 40s. The book, which was left unfinished when the author died, depicts a pilgrimage by some 30 people, who are going on a spring day in April to the shrine of the martyr, St. Thomas Becket. On the way they amuse themselves by telling stories. Among the band of pilgrims are a knight, a monk, a prioress, a plowman, a miller, a merchant, a clerk, and an oft-widowed wife from Bath. The stories are interlinked with interludes in which the characters talk with each other, revealing much about themselves.

> Chaucer is believed to have written the poem *Troilus and Criseyde* sometime in the mid-1380s. *Troilus and Criseyde* is a narrative poem that retells the tragic love story of Troilus and Criseyde in the context of the Trojan War. Chaucer wrote the poem using rime royal, a technique he originated. Rime Royal involves rhyming stanzas consisting of seven lines a piece, usually with an iambic pentameter rhyme scheme. It is broadly considered one of Chaucer's greatest works, and has a reputation for being more complete and self-contained than most of Chaucer's writing, his famed *The Canterbury Tales* being no exception.

The period of time over which Chaucer penned *The Legend of Good Women* is uncertain although most scholars do agree that Chaucer seems to have abandoned it before its completion. The queen mentioned in the people is believed to be Richard II's wife, Anne of Bohemia. Chaucer's mention of the real-life royal palaces Eltham and Sheen serve to support this theory. In writing *The Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer played with another new and innovative format: The poem is comprised of a series of shorter narratives.

> *The Canterbury Tales* is by far Chaucer's best known and most acclaimed work.

Initially Chaucer had planned for each of his characters to tell four stories a piece. The first two stories would be set as the character was on his/her way to Canterbury, and the second two were to take place as the character was heading home. Apparently, Chaucer's goal of writing 120 stories was an overly ambitious one. In actuality, *The Canterbury Tales* is made up of only 24 tales and rather abruptly ends before its characters even make it to Canterbury. The tales are fragmented and varied in order. Scholars continue to debate as to whether the

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tales were published in their correct order. Despite its erratic qualities, *The Canterbury Tales* continues to be acknowledged for the beautiful rhythm of Chaucer's language, and his characteristic use of clever, satirical wit.

> *A Treatise on the Astrolabe* is one of Chaucer's non-fiction works. It is an essay about the astrolabe, a tool used by astronomers and explorers to locate the positions of the sun, moon and planets. Chaucer planned to write the essay in five parts, but ultimately only completed the first two. Today it is one of the oldest surviving works that explain how to use a complex scientific tool, and it thought to do so with admirable clarity.

Later Life

From 1389 to 1391, after Richard II had ascended to the throne, Chaucer held a draining and dangerous position as Clerk of the Works. He was robbed by highway twice while on the job, which only served to further compound his financial worries. To make matters even worse, Chaucer had stopped receiving his pension. Chaucer eventually resigned the position for a lower but less stressful appointment as sub-forester, or gardener, at the King's park in Somersetshire.

When Richard II was deposed in 1379, his son and successor, Henry IV, took pity on Chaucer and reinstated Chaucer's former pension. With the money, Chaucer was able to lease an apartment in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel in Westminster, where he lived modestly for the rest of his days. The legendary 14th century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer died October 25, 1400 of in London, England. He died of unknown causes and was 60 years old at the time. Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey. His gravestone became the center of what was to be called Poet's Corner, a spot where such famous British writers as Robert Browning and Charles Dickens were later honored and interred.

3.2 THE CANTERBURY TALES

The Canterbury Tales is the most famous and critically acclaimed work of Geoffrey Chaucer, a late-fourteenth-century English poet. Little is known about Chaucer's personal life, and even less about his education, but a number of existing records document his professional life. Chaucer was born in London in the early 1340s, the only son in his family. Chaucer's father, originally a property-owning wine merchant, became tremendously wealthy when he inherited the property of relatives who had died in the Black Death of 1349. He was therefore able to send the young Geoffrey off as a page to the Countess of Ulster, which

meant that Geoffrey was not required to follow in his ancestors' footsteps and become a merchant. Eventually, Chaucer began to serve the countess's husband, Prince Lionel, son to King Edward III. For most of his life, Chaucer served in the Hundred Years War between England and France, both as a soldier and, since he was fluent in French and Italian and conversant in Latin and other tongues, as a diplomat. His diplomatic travels brought him twice to Italy, where he might have met Boccaccio, whose writing influenced Chaucer's work, and Petrarch.

In or around 1378, Chaucer began to develop his vision of an English poetry that would be linguistically accessible to all—obedient neither to the court, whose official language was French, nor to the Church, whose official language was Latin. Instead, Chaucer wrote in the vernacular, the English that was spoken in and around London in his day. Undoubtedly, he was influenced by the writings of the Florentines Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, who wrote in the Italian vernacular. Even in England, the practice was becoming increasingly common among poets, although many were still writing in French and Latin.

That the nobles and kings Chaucer served (Richard II until 1399, then Henry IV) were impressed with Chaucer's skills as a negotiator is obvious from the many rewards he received for his service. Money, provisions, higher appointments, and property eventually allowed him to retire on a royal pension. In 1374, the king appointed Chaucer Controller of the Customs of Hides, Skins and Wools in the port of London, which meant that he was a government official who worked with cloth importers. His experience overseeing imported cloths might be why he frequently describes in exquisite detail the garments and fabric that attire his characters. Chaucer held the position at the customhouse for twelve years, after which he left London for Kent, the county in which Canterbury is located. He served as a justice of the peace for Kent, living in debt, and was then appointed Clerk of the Works at various holdings of the king, including Westminster and the Tower of London. After he retired in the early 1390s, he seems to have been working primarily on The Canterbury Tales, which he began around 1387. By the time of his retirement, Chaucer had already written a substantial amount of narrative poetry, including the celebrated romance Troilus and Criseyde.

Chaucer's personal life is less documented than his professional life. In the late 1360s, he married Philippa Roet, who served Edward III's queen. They had at least two sons together. Philippa was the sister to the mistress of John of Gaunt, the duke of Lancaster. For John of Gaunt, Chaucer wrote one of his first poems, The Book of the Duchess, which was a lament for the premature death of John's young wife, Blanche. Whether or not Chaucer had an extramarital affair is a matter of some contention among historians. In a legal document that dates from 1380, a woman named Cecily Chaumpaigne released Chaucer from the accusation of seizing her (raptus), though whether the expression denotes that

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he raped her, committed adultery with her, or abducted her son is unclear. Chaucer's wife Philippa apparently died in 1387.

Chaucer lived through a time of incredible tension in the English social sphere. The Black Death, which ravaged England during Chaucer's childhood and remained widespread afterward, wiped out an estimated thirty to fifty percent of the population. Consequently, the labor force gained increased leverage and was able to bargain for better wages, which led to resentment from the nobles and propertied classes. These classes received another blow in 1381, when the peasantry, helped by the artisan class, revolted against them. The merchants were also wielding increasing power over the legal establishment, as the Hundred Years War created profit for England and, consequently, appetite for luxury was growing. The merchants capitalized on the demand for luxury goods, and when Chaucer was growing up, London was pretty much run by a merchant oligarchy, which attempted to control both the aristocracy and the lesser artisan classes. Chaucer's political sentiments are unclear, for although The Canterbury Tales documents the various social tensions in the manner of the popular genre of estates satire, the narrator refrains from making overt political statements, and what he does say is in no way thought to represent Chaucer's own sentiments.

Chaucer's original plan for The Canterbury Tales was for each character to tell four tales, two on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. But, instead of 120 tales, the text ends after twenty-four tales, and the party is still on its way to Canterbury. Chaucer either planned to revise the structure to cap the work at twenty-four tales, or else left it incomplete when he died on October 25, 1400. Other writers and printers soon recognized The Canterbury Tales as a masterful and highly original work. Though Chaucer had been influenced by the great French and Italian writers of his age, works like Boccaccio's Decameron were not accessible to most English readers, so the format of The Canterbury Tales, and the intense realism of its characters, were virtually unknown to readers in the fourteenth century before Chaucer. William Caxton, England's first printer, published The Canterbury Tales in the 1470s, and it continued to enjoy a rich printing history that never truly faded. By the English Renaissance, poetry critic George Puttenham had identified Chaucer as the father of the English literary canon. Chaucer's project to create a literature and poetic language for all classes of society succeeded, and today Chaucer still stands as one of the great shapers of literary narrative and character.

3.2.1 Language in The Canterbury Tales

The Canterbury Tales is written in Middle English, which bears a close visual resemblance to the English written and spoken today. In contrast, Old English (the language of Beowulf, for example) can be read only in modern translation or by students of Old English. Students often read The Canterbury Tales in its original language, not only because of the similarity between Chaucer's Middle English and our own, but because the beauty and humor of the poetry—all of its

internal and external rhymes, and the sounds it produces—would be lost in translation.

The best way for a beginner to approach Middle English is to read it out loud. When the words are pronounced, it is often much easier to recognize what they mean in modern English. Most Middle English editions of the poem include a short pronunciation guide, which can help the reader to understand the language better. For particularly difficult words or phrases, most editions also include notes in the margin giving the modern versions of the words, along with a full glossary in the back. Several online Chaucer glossaries exist, as well as a number of printed lexicons of Middle English.

3.3 THE ORDER OF THE CANTERBURY TALES

The line numbers cited in this SparkNote are based on the line numbers given in The Riverside Chaucer, the authoritative edition of Chaucer's works. The line numbering in The Riverside Chaucer does not run continuously throughout the entire Canterbury Tales, but it does not restart at the beginning of each tale, either. Instead, the tales are grouped together into fragments, and each fragment is numbered as a separate whole.

Nobody knows exactly in what order Chaucer intended to present the tales, or even if he had a specific order in mind for all of them. Eighty-two early manuscripts of the tales survive, and many of them vary considerably in the order in which they present the tales. However, certain sets of tales do seem to belong together in a particular order. For instance, the General Prologue is obviously the beginning, then the narrator explicitly says that the Knight tells the first tale, and that the Miller interrupts and tells the second tale. The introductions, prologues, and epilogues to various tales sometimes include the pilgrims' comments on the tale just finished, and an indication of who tells the next tale. These sections between the tales are called links, and they are the best evidence for grouping the tales together into ten fragments. But The Canterbury Tales does not include a complete set of links, so the order of the ten fragments is open to question. The Riverside Chaucer bases the order of the ten fragments on the order presented in the Ellesmere manuscript, one of the best surviving manuscripts of the tale. Some scholars disagree with the groupings and order of tales followed in The Riverside Chaucer, choosing instead to base the order on a combination of the links and the geographical landmarks that the pilgrims pass on the way to Canterbury.

Notes

3.3.1 General Prologue

At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the Nun's Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.) The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at Bailey's tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

3.3.2 The Knight's Tale

Theseus, duke of Athens, imprisons Arcite and Palamon, two knights from Thebes (another city in ancient Greece). From their prison, the knights see and fall in love with Theseus's sister-in-law, Emelye. Through the intervention of a friend, Arcite is freed, but he is banished from Athens. He returns in disguise and becomes a page in Emelye's chamber. Palamon escapes from prison, and the two meet and fight over Emelye. Theseus apprehends them and arranges a tournament between the two knights and their allies, with Emelye as the prize. Arcite wins, but he is accidentally thrown from his horse and dies. Palamon then marries Emelye.

3.3.3 The Miller's Prologue and Tale

The Host asks the Monk to tell the next tale, but the drunken Miller interrupts and insists that his tale should be the next. He tells the story of an impoverished student named Nicholas, who persuades his landlord's sexy young wife, Alisoun, to spend the night with him. He convinces his landlord, a carpenter named John, that the second flood is coming, and tricks him into spending the night in a tub hanging from the ceiling of his barn. Absolon, a young parish clerk who is also in love with Alisoun, appears outside the window of the room where Nicholas and Alisoun lie together. When Absolon begs Alisoun for a kiss, she sticks her rear end out the window in the dark and lets him kiss it. Absolon runs and gets a

red-hot poker, returns to the window, and asks for another kiss; when Nicholas sticks his bottom out the window and farts, Absolon brands him on the buttocks. Nicholas's cries for water make the carpenter think that the flood has come, so the carpenter cuts the rope connecting his tub to the ceiling, falls down, and breaks his arm.

3.3.4 The Reeve's Prologue and Tale

Because he also does carpentry, the Reeve takes offense at the Miller's tale of a stupid carpenter, and counters with his own tale of a dishonest miller. The Reeve tells the story of two students, John and Alayn, who go to the mill to watch the miller grind their corn, so that he won't have a chance to steal any. But the miller unties their horse, and while they chase it, he steals some of the flour he has just ground for them. By the time the students catch the horse, it is dark, so they spend the night in the miller's house. That night, Alayn seduces the miller's daughter, and John seduces his wife. When the miller wakes up and finds out what has happened, he tries to beat the students. His wife, thinking that her husband is actually one of the students, hits the miller over the head with a staff. The students take back their stolen goods and leave.

3.3.5 The Cook's Prologue and Tale

The Cook particularly enjoys the Reeve's Tale, and offers to tell another funny tale. The tale concerns an apprentice named Perkyn who drinks and dances so much that he is called "Perkyn Reveler." Finally, Perkyn's master decides that he would rather his apprentice leave to revel than stay home and corrupt the other servants. Perkyn arranges to stay with a friend who loves drinking and gambling, and who has a wife who is a prostitute. The tale breaks off, unfinished, after fifty-eight lines.

3.3.6 The Man of Law's Introduction, Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

The Host reminds his fellow pilgrims to waste no time, because lost time cannot be regained. He asks the Man of Law to tell the next tale. The Man of Law agrees, apologizing that he cannot tell any suitable tale that Chaucer has not already told—Chaucer may be unskilled as a poet, says the Man of Law, but he has told more stories of lovers than Ovid, and he doesn't print tales of incest as John Gower does (Gower was a contemporary of Chaucer). In the Prologue to his tale, the Man of Law laments the miseries of poverty. He then remarks how fortunate merchants are, and says that his tale is one told to him by a merchant.

In the tale, the Muslim sultan of Syria converts his entire sultanate (including

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himself) to Christianity in order to persuade the emperor of Rome to give him his daughter, Custance, in marriage. The sultan's mother and her attendants remain secretly faithful to Islam. The mother tells her son she wishes to hold a banquet for him and all the Christians. At the banquet, she massacres her son and all the Christians except for Custance, whom she sets adrift in a rudderless ship. After years of floating, Custance runs ashore in Northumberland, where a constable and his wife, Hermengyld, offer her shelter. She converts them to Christianity.

One night, Satan makes a young knight sneak into Hermengyld's chamber and murder Hermengyld. He places the bloody knife next to Custance, who sleeps in the same chamber. When the constable returns home, accompanied by Alla, the king of Northumberland, he finds his slain wife. He tells Alla the story of how Custance was found, and Alla begins to pity the girl. He decides to look more deeply into the murder. Just as the knight who murdered Hermengyld is swearing that Custance is the true murderer, he is struck down and his eyes burst out of his face, proving his guilt to Alla and the crowd. The knight is executed, Alla and many others convert to Christianity, and Custance and Alla marry.

While Alla is away in Scotland, Custance gives birth to a boy named Mauricius. Alla's mother, Donegild, intercepts a letter from Custance to Alla and substitutes a counterfeit one that claims that the child is disfigured and bewitched. She then intercepts Alla's reply, which claims that the child should be kept and loved no matter how malformed. Donegild substitutes a letter saying that Custance and her son are banished and should be sent away on the same ship on which Custance arrived. Alla returns home, finds out what has happened, and kills Donegild.

After many adventures at sea, including an attempted rape, Custance ends up back in Rome, where she reunites with Alla, who has made a pilgrimage there to atone for killing his mother. She also reunites with her father, the emperor. Alla and Custance return to England, but Alla dies after a year, so Custance returns, once more, to Rome. Mauricius becomes the next Roman emperor. Following the Man of Law's Tale, the Host asks the Parson to tell the next tale, but the Parson reproaches him for swearing, and they fall to bickering.

3.4. THE WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE AND TALE

The Wife of Bath gives a lengthy account of her feelings about marriage. Quoting from the Bible, the Wife argues against those who believe it is wrong to marry more than once, and she explains how she dominated and controlled each of her five husbands. She married her fifth husband, Jankyn, for love instead of money. After the Wife has rambled on for a while, the Friar butts in to complain that she is taking too long, and the Summoner retorts that friars are like flies, always meddling. The Friar promises to tell a tale about a summoner, and the Summoner promises to tell a tale about a friar. The Host cries for everyone to quiet down and allow the Wife to commence her tale.

In her tale, a young knight of King Arthur's court rapes a maiden; to atone for his crime, Arthur's queen sends him on a quest to discover what women want most. An ugly old woman promises the knight that she will tell him the secret if he promises to do whatever she wants for saving his life. He agrees, and she tells him women want control of their husbands and their own lives. They go together to Arthur's queen, and the old woman's answer turns out to be correct. The old woman then tells the knight that he must marry her. When the knight confesses later that he is repulsed by her appearance, she gives him a choice: she can either be ugly and faithful, or beautiful and unfaithful. The knight tells her to make the choice herself, and she rewards him for giving her control of the marriage by rendering herself both beautiful and faithful.

The Friar's Prologue and Tale

The Friar speaks approvingly of the Wife of Bath's Tale, and offers to lighten things up for the company by telling a funny story about a lecherous summoner. The Summoner does not object, but he promises to pay the Friar back in his own tale. The Friar tells of an archdeacon who carries out the law without mercy, especially to lechers. The archdeacon has a summoner who has a network of spies working for him, to let him know who has been lecherous. The summoner extorts money from those he's sent to summon, charging them more money than he should for penance. He tries to serve a summons on a yeoman who is actually a devil in disguise. After comparing notes on their treachery and extortion, the devil vanishes, but when the summoner tries to prosecute an old wealthy widow unfairly, the widow cries out that the summoner should be taken to hell. The devil follows the woman's instructions and drags the summoner off to hell.

The Summoner's Prologue and Tale

The Summoner, furious at the Friar's Tale, asks the company to let him tell the next tale. First, he tells the company that there is little difference between friars and fiends, and that when an angel took a friar down to hell to show him the torments there, the friar asked why there were no friars in hell; the angel then pulled up Satan's tail and 20,000 friars came out of his ass.

In the Summoner's Tale, a friar begs for money from a dying man named Thomas and his wife, who have recently lost their child. The friar shamelessly exploits the couple's misfortunes to extract money from them, so Thomas tells the friar that he is sitting on something that he will bequeath to the friars. The friar reaches for his bequest, and Thomas lets out an enormous fart. The friar complains to the lord of the manor, whose squire promises to divide the fart evenly among all the friars.

The Clerk's Prologue and Tale

The Host asks the Clerk to cheer up and tell a merry tale, and the Clerk agrees to tell a tale by the Italian poet Petrarch. Griselde is a hardworking peasant who

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marries into the aristocracy. Her husband tests her fortitude in several ways, including pretending to kill her children and divorcing her. He punishes her one final time by forcing her to prepare for his wedding to a new wife. She does all this dutifully, her husband tells her that she has always been and will always be his wife (the divorce was a fraud), and they live happily ever after.

The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

The Merchant reflects on the great difference between the patient Griselde of the Clerk's Tale and the horrible shrew he has been married to for the past two months. The Host asks him to tell a story of the evils of marriage, and he complies. Against the advice of his friends, an old knight named January marries May, a beautiful young woman. She is less than impressed by his enthusiastic sexual efforts, and conspires to cheat on him with his squire, Damien. When blind January takes May into his garden to copulate with her, she tells him she wants to eat a pear, and he helps her up into the pear tree, where she has sex with Damien. Pluto, the king of the faeries, restores January's sight, but May, caught in the act, assures him that he must still be blind. The Host prays to God to keep him from marrying a wife like the one the Merchant describes.

The Squire's Introduction and Tale

The Host calls upon the Squire to say something about his favorite subject, love, and the Squire willingly complies. King Cambyuskan of the Mongol Empire is visited on his birthday by a knight bearing gifts from the king of Arabia and India. He gives Cambyuskan and his daughter Canacee a magic brass horse, a magic mirror, a magic ring that gives Canacee the ability to understand the language of birds, and a sword with the power to cure any wound it creates. She rescues a dying female falcon that narrates how her consort abandoned her for the love of another. The Squire's Tale is either unfinished by Chaucer or is meant to be interrupted by the Franklin, who interjects that he wishes his own son were as eloquent as the Squire. The Host expresses annoyance at the Franklin's interruption, and orders him to begin the next tale.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

The Franklin says that his tale is a familiar Breton lay, a folk ballad of ancient Brittany. Dorigen, the heroine, awaits the return of her husband, Arveragus, who has gone to England to win honor in feats of arms. She worries that the ship bringing her husband home will wreck itself on the coastal rocks, and she promises Aurelius, a young man who falls in love with her, that she will give her body to him if he clears the rocks from the coast. Aurelius hires a student learned in magic to create the illusion that the rocks have disappeared. Arveragus returns home and tells his wife that she must keep her promise to Aurelius. Aurelius is so impressed by Arveragus's honorable act that he generously absolves her of the promise, and the magician, in turn, generously absolves Aurelius of the money he owes.

The Physician's Tale

Appius the judge lusts after Virginia, the beautiful daughter of Virginius. Appius persuades a churl named Claudius to declare her his slave, stolen from him by Virginius. Appius declares that Virginius must hand over his daughter to Claudius. Virginius tells his daughter that she must die rather than suffer dishonor, and she virtuously consents to her father's cutting her head off. Appius sentences Virginius to death, but the Roman people, aware of Appius's hijinks, throw him into prison, where he kills himself.

The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale

The Host is dismayed by the tragic injustice of the Physician's Tale, and asks the Pardoner to tell something merry. The other pilgrims contradict the Host, demanding a moral tale, which the Pardoner agrees to tell after he eats and drinks. The Pardoner tells the company how he cheats people out of their money by preaching that money is the root of all evil. His tale describes three riotous youths who go looking for Death, thinking that they can kill him. An old man tells them that they will find Death under a tree. Instead, they find eight bushels of gold, which they plot to sneak into town under cover of darkness. The youngest goes into town to fetch food and drink, but brings back poison, hoping to have the gold all to himself. His companions kill him to enrich their own shares, then drink the poison and die under the tree. His tale complete, the Pardoner offers to sell the pilgrims pardons, and singles out the Host to come kiss his relics. The Host infuriates the Pardoner by accusing him of fraud, but the Knight persuades the two to kiss and bury their differences.

The Shipman's Tale

The Shipman's Tale features a monk who tricks a merchant's wife into having sex with him by borrowing money from the merchant, then giving it to the wife so she can repay her own debt to her husband, in exchange for sexual favors. When the monk sees the merchant next, he tells him that he returned the merchant's money to his wife. The wife realizes she has been duped, but she boldly tells her husband to forgive her debt: she will repay it in bed. The Host praises the Shipman's story, and asks the Prioress for a tale.

The Prioress's Prologue and Tale

The Prioress calls on the Virgin Mary to guide her tale. In an Asian city, a Christian school is located at the edge of a Jewish ghetto. An angelic seven-year-old boy, a widow's son, attends the school. He is a devout Christian, and loves to sing Alma Redemptoris (Gracious Mother of the Redeemer). Singing the song on his way through the ghetto, some Jews hire a murderer to slit his throat and throw him into a latrine. The Jews refuse to tell the widow where her son is, but he

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miraculously begins to sing Alma Redemptoris, so the Christian people recover his body, and the magistrate orders the murdering Jews to be drawn apart by wild horses and then hanged.

The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas

The Host, after teasing Chaucer the narrator about his appearance, asks him to tell a tale. Chaucer says that he only knows one tale, then launches into a parody of bad poetry—the Tale of Sir Thopas. Sir Thopas rides about looking for an elf-queen to marry until he is confronted by a giant. The narrator's doggerel continues in this vein until the Host can bear no more and interrupts him. Chaucer asks him why he can't tell his tale, since it is the best he knows, and the Host explains that his rhyme isn't worth a turd. He encourages Chaucer to tell a prose tale.

The Tale of Melibee

Chaucer's second tale is the long, moral prose story of Melibee. Melibee's house is raided by his foes, who beat his wife, Prudence, and severely wound his daughter, Sophie, in her feet, hands, ears, nose, and mouth. Prudence advises him not to rashly pursue vengeance on his enemies, and he follows her advice, putting his foes' punishment in her hands. She forgives them for the outrages done to her, in a model of Christian forbearance and forgiveness.

The Monk's Prologue and Tale

The Host wishes that his own wife were as patient as Melibee's, and calls upon the Monk to tell the next tale. First he teases the Monk, pointing out that the Monk is clearly no poor cloisterer. The Monk takes it all in stride and tells a series of tragic falls, in which noble figures are brought low: Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Zenobia, Pedro of Castile, and down through the ages.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

After seventeen noble "falls" narrated by the Monk, the Knight interrupts, and the Host calls upon the Nun's Priest to deliver something more lively. The Nun's Priest tells of Chanticleer the Rooster, who is carried off by a flattering fox who tricks him into closing his eyes and displaying his crowing abilities. Chanticleer turns the tables on the fox by persuading him to open his mouth and brag to the barnyard about his feat, upon which Chanticleer falls out of the fox's mouth and escapes. The Host praises the Nun's Priest's Tale, adding that if the Nun's Priest were not in holy orders, he would be as sexually potent as Chanticleer.

The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale

In her Prologue, the Second Nun explains that she will tell a saint's life, that of Saint Cecilia, for this saint set an excellent example through her good works and

wise teachings. She focuses particularly on the story of Saint Cecilia's martyrdom. Before Cecilia's new husband, Valerian, can take her virginity, she sends him on a pilgrimage to Pope Urban, who converts him to Christianity. An angel visits Valerian, who asks that his brother Tiburce be granted the grace of Christian conversion as well. All three—Cecilia, Tiburce, and Valerian—are put to death by the Romans.

The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale

When the Second Nun's Tale is finished, the company is overtaken by a black-clad Canon and his Yeoman, who have heard of the pilgrims and their tales and wish to participate. The Yeoman brags to the company about how he and the Canon create the illusion that they are alchemists, and the Canon departs in shame at having his secrets discovered. The Yeoman tells a tale of how a canon defrauded a priest by creating the illusion of alchemy using sleight of hand.

The Manciple's Prologue and Tale

The Host pokes fun at the Cook, riding at the back of the company, blind drunk. The Cook is unable to honor the Host's request that he tell a tale, and the Manciple criticizes him for his drunkenness. The Manciple relates the legend of a white crow, taken from the Roman poet Ovid's Metamorphoses and one of the tales in The Arabian Nights. In it, Phoebus's talking white crow informs him that his wife is cheating on him. Phoebus kills the wife, pulls out the crow's white feathers, and curses it with blackness.

The Parson's Prologue and Tale

As the company enters a village in the late afternoon, the Host calls upon the Parson to give them a fable. Refusing to tell a fictional story because it would go against the rule set by St. Paul, the Parson delivers a lengthy treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins, instead.

Chaucer's Retraction

Chaucer appeals to readers to credit Jesus Christ as the inspiration for anything in his book that they like, and to attribute what they don't like to his own ignorance and lack of ability. He retracts and prays for forgiveness for all of his works dealing with secular and pagan subjects, asking only to be remembered for what he has written of saints' lives and homilies.

3.5 ANALYSIS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Knight

The Knight rides at the front of the procession described in the General Prologue, and his story is the first in the sequence. The Host clearly admires the Knight, as

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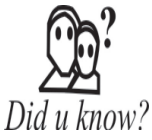
does the narrator. The narrator seems to remember four main qualities of the Knight. The first is the Knight's love of ideals—"chivalrie" (prowess), "trouthe" (fidelity), "honour" (reputation), "fredom" (generosity), and "curteisie" (refinement) (General Prologue, 45–46). The second is the Knight's impressive military career. The Knight has fought in the Crusades, wars in which Europeans traveled by sea to non-Christian lands and attempted to convert whole cultures by the force of their swords. By Chaucer's time, the spirit for conducting these wars was dying out, and they were no longer undertaken as frequently. The Knight has battled the Muslims in Egypt, Spain, and Turkey, and the Russian Orthodox in Lithuania and Russia. He has also fought in formal duels. The third quality the narrator remembers about the Knight is his meek, gentle, manner. And the fourth is his "array," or dress. The Knight wears a tunic made of coarse cloth, and his coat of mail is rust-stained, because he has recently returned from an expedition.

The Knight's interaction with other characters tells us a few additional facts about him. In the Prologue to the Nun's Priest's Tale, he calls out to hear something more lighthearted, saying that it deeply upsets him to hear stories about tragic falls. He would rather hear about "joye and greet solas," about men who start off in poverty climbing in fortune and attaining wealth (Nun's Priest's Prologue, 2774). The Host agrees with him, which is not surprising, since the Host has mentioned that whoever tells the tale of "best sentence and moost solaas" will win the storytelling contest (General Prologue, 798). And, at the end of the Pardoner's Tale, the Knight breaks in to stop the squabbling between the Host and the Pardoner, ordering them to kiss and make up. Ironically, though a soldier, the romantic, idealistic Knight clearly has an aversion to conflict or unhappiness of any sort.



Novels of Forster: Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905); The Longest Journey (1907); A Room with a View (1908); Howards End (1910); A Passage to India (1924); and Maurice (posthumously, 1971).

The Pardoner

The Pardoner rides in the very back of the party in the General Prologue and is fittingly the most marginalized character in the company. His profession is somewhat dubious—pardoners offered indulgences, or previously written pardons for particular sins, to people who repented of the sin they had committed. Along with receiving the indulgence, the penitent would make a donation to the Church by giving money to the pardoner. Eventually, this "charitable" donation became a necessary part of receiving an indulgence. Paid by the Church to offer these indulgences, the Pardoner was not supposed to pocket the penitents' charitable donations. That said, the practice of offering indulgences came under critique by quite a few churchmen, since once the charitable donation became a practice

allied to receiving an indulgence, it began to look like one could cleanse oneself of sin by simply paying off the Church. Additionally, widespread suspicion held that pardoners counterfeited the pope's signature on illegitimate indulgences and pocketed the "charitable donations" themselves.

Chaucer's Pardoner is a highly untrustworthy character. He sings a ballad—"Com hider, love, to me!" (General Prologue, 672)—with the hypocritical Summoner, undermining the already challenged virtue of his profession as one who works for the Church. He presents himself as someone of ambiguous gender and sexual orientation, further challenging social norms. The narrator is not sure whether the Pardoner is an effeminate homosexual or a eunuch (castrated male). Like the other pilgrims, the Pardoner carries with him to Canterbury the tools of his trade—in his case, freshly signed papal indulgences and a sack of false relics, including a brass cross filled with stones to make it seem as heavy as gold and a glass jar full of pig's bones, which he passes off as saints' relics. Since visiting relics on pilgrimage had become a tourist industry, the Pardoner wants to cash in on religion in any way he can, and he does this by selling tangible, material objects—whether slips of paper that promise forgiveness of sins or animal bones that people can string around their necks as charms against the devil. After telling the group how he gulls people into indulging his own avarice through a sermon he preaches on greed, the Pardoner tells of a tale that exemplifies the vice decried in his sermon. Furthermore, he attempts to sell pardons to the group—in effect plying his trade in clear violation of the rules outlined by the host.

The Wife of Bath

One of two female storytellers (the other is the Prioress), the Wife has a lot of experience under her belt. She has traveled all over the world on pilgrimages, so Canterbury is a jaunt compared to other perilous journeys she has endured. Not only has she seen many lands, she has lived with five husbands. She is worldly in both senses of the word: she has seen the world and has experience in the ways of the world, that is, in love and sex.

Rich and tasteful, the Wife's clothes veer a bit toward extravagance: her face is wreathed in heavy cloth, her stockings are a fine scarlet color, and the leather on her shoes is soft, fresh, and brand new—all of which demonstrate how wealthy she has become. Scarlet was a particularly costly dye, since it was made from individual red beetles found only in some parts of the world. The fact that she hails from Bath, a major English cloth-making town in the Middle Ages, is reflected in both her talent as a seamstress and her stylish garments. Bath at this time was fighting for a place among the great European exporters of cloth, which were mostly in the Netherlands and Belgium. So the fact that the Wife's sewing surpasses that of the cloth makers of "Ipres and of Gaunt" (Ypres and Ghent) speaks well of Bath's (and England's) attempt to outdo its overseas competitors.

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Although she is argumentative and enjoys talking, the Wife is intelligent in a commonsense, rather than intellectual, way. Through her experiences with her husbands, she has learned how to provide for herself in a world where women had little independence or power. The chief manner in which she has gained control over her husbands has been in her control over their use of her body. The Wife uses her body as a bargaining tool, withholding sexual pleasure until her husbands give her what she demands.

3.6 THEMES, MOTIFS & SYMBOLS

3.6.1 Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Pervasiveness of Courtly Love

The phrase "courtly love" refers to a set of ideas about love that was enormously influential on the literature and culture of the Middle Ages. Beginning with the Troubadour poets of southern France in the eleventh century, poets throughout Europe promoted the notions that true love only exists outside of marriage; that true love may be idealized and spiritual, and may exist without ever being physically consummated; and that a man becomes the servant of the lady he loves. Together with these basic premises, courtly love encompassed a number of minor motifs. One of these is the idea that love is a torment or a disease, and that when a man is in love he cannot sleep or eat, and therefore he undergoes physical changes, sometimes to the point of becoming unrecognizable. Although very few people's lives resembled the courtly love ideal in any way, these themes and motifs were extremely popular and widespread in medieval and Renaissance literature and culture. They were particularly popular in the literature and culture that were part of royal and noble courts.

Courtly love motifs first appear in The Canterbury Tales with the description of the Squire in the General Prologue. The Squire's role in society is exactly that of his father the Knight, except for his lower status, but the Squire is very different from his father in that he incorporates the ideals of courtly love into his interpretation of his own role. Indeed, the Squire is practically a parody of the traditional courtly lover. The description of the Squire establishes a pattern that runs throughout the General Prologue, and The Canterbury Tales: characters whose roles are defined by their religious or economic functions integrate the cultural ideals of courtly love into their dress, their behavior, and the tales they tell, in order to give a slightly different twist to their roles. Another such character is the Prioress, a nun who sports a "Love Conquers All" brooch.

The Importance of Company

Many of Chaucer's characters end their stories by wishing the rest of the

"compaignye," or company, well. The Knight ends with "God save al this faire compaignye" (3108), and the Reeve with "God, that sitteth heighe in magestee, / Save al this compaignye, grete and smale!". Company literally signifies the entire group of people, but Chaucer's deliberate choice of this word over other words for describing masses of people, like the Middle English words for party, mixture, or group, points us to another major theme that runs throughout The Canterbury Tales. Company derives from two Latin words, com, or "with," and pane, or "bread." Quite literally, a company is a group of people with whom one eats, or breaks bread. The word for good friend, or "companion," also comes from these words. But, in a more abstract sense, company had an economic connotation. It was the term designated to connote a group of people engaged in a particular business, as it is used today.

The functioning and well-being of medieval communities, not to mention their overall happiness, depended upon groups of socially bonded workers in towns and guilds, known informally as companies. If workers in a guild or on a feudal manor were not getting along well, they would not produce good work, and the economy would suffer. They would be unable to bargain, as a modern union does, for better working conditions and life benefits. Eating together was a way for guild members to cement friendships, creating a support structure for their working community. Guilds had their own special dining halls, where social groups got together to bond, be merry, and form supportive alliances. When the peasants revolted against their feudal lords in 1381, they were able to organize themselves well precisely because they had formed these strong social ties through their companies.

Company was a leveling concept—an idea created by the working classes that gave them more power and took away some of the nobility's power and tyranny. The company of pilgrims on the way to Canterbury is not a typical example of a tightly networked company, although the five Guildsmen do represent this kind of fraternal union. The pilgrims come from different parts of society—the court, the Church, villages, the feudal manor system. To prevent discord, the pilgrims create an informal company, united by their jobs as storytellers, and by the food and drink the host provides. As far as class distinctions are concerned, they do form a company in the sense that none of them belongs to the nobility, and most have working professions, whether that work be sewing and marriage (the Wife of Bath), entertaining visitors with gourmet food (the Franklin), or tilling the earth (the Plowman).

The Corruption of the Church

By the late fourteenth century, the Catholic Church, which governed England, Ireland, and the entire continent of Europe, had become extremely wealthy. The cathedrals that grew up around shrines to saints' relics were incredibly expensive to build, and the amount of gold that went into decorating them and equipping them with candlesticks and reliquaries (boxes to hold relics that were more jewel-

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encrusted than kings' crowns) surpassed the riches in the nobles' coffers. In a century of disease, plague, famine, and scarce labor, the sight of a church ornamented with unused gold seemed unfair to some people, and the Church's preaching against greed suddenly seemed hypocritical, considering its great displays of material wealth. Distaste for the excesses of the Church triggered stories and anecdotes about greedy, irreligious churchmen who accepted bribes, bribed others, and indulged themselves sensually and gastronomically, while ignoring the poor famished peasants begging at their doors.

The religious figures Chaucer represents in The Canterbury Tales all deviate in one way or another from what was traditionally expected of them. Generally, their conduct corresponds to common medieval stereotypes, but it is difficult to make any overall statement about Chaucer's position because his narrator is so clearly biased toward some characters—the Monk, for example—and so clearly biased against others, such as the Pardoner. Additionally, the characters are not simply satirical versions of their roles; they are individuals and cannot simply be taken as typical of their professions.

The Monk, Prioress, and Friar were all members of the clerical estate. The Monk and the Prioress live in a monastery and a convent, respectively. Both are characterized as figures who seem to prefer the aristocratic to the devotional life. The Prioress's bejeweled rosary seems more like a love token than something expressing her devotion to Christ, and her dainty mannerisms echo the advice given by Guillaume de Loris in the French romance Roman de la Rose, about how women could make themselves attractive to men. The Monk enjoys hunting, a pastime of the nobility, while he disdains study and confinement. The Friar was a member of an order of mendicants, who made their living by traveling around and begging, and accepting money to hear confession. Friars were often seen as threatening and had the reputation of being lecherous, as the Wife of Bath describes in the opening of her tale. The Summoner and the Friar are at each other's throats so frequently in The Canterbury Tales because they were in fierce competition in Chaucer's time—summoners, too, extorted money from people.

Overall, the narrator seems to harbor much more hostility for the ecclesiastical officials (the Summoner and the Pardoner) than he does for the clerics. For example, the Monk and the Pardoner possess several traits in common, but the narrator presents them in very different ways. The narrator remembers the shiny baldness of the Monk's head, which suggests that the Monk may have ridden without a hood, but the narrator uses the fact that the Pardoner rides without a hood as proof of his shallow character. The Monk and the Pardoner both give their own opinions of themselves to the narrator—the narrator affirms the Monk's words by repeating them, and his own response, but the narrator mocks the Pardoner for his opinion of himself.

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3.6.2 Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Romance

The romance, a tale about knights and ladies incorporating courtly love themes, was a popular literary genre in fourteenth-century literature. The genre included tales of knights rescuing maidens, embarking on quests, and forming bonds with other knights and rulers (kings and queens). In particular, the romances about King Arthur, his queen, Guinevere, and his society of "knights of the round table" were very popular in England. In The Canterbury Tales, the Knight's Tale incorporates romantic elements in an ancient classical setting, which is a somewhat unusual time and place to set a romance. The Wife of Bath's Tale is framed by Arthurian romance, with an unnamed knight of the round table as its unlikely hero, but the tale itself becomes a proto-feminist's moral instruction for domestic behavior. The Miller's Tale ridicules the traditional elements of romance by transforming the love between a young wooer and a willing maiden into a boisterous and violent romp.

Fabliaux

Fabliaux were comical and often grotesque stories in which the characters most often succeed by means of their sharp wits. Such stories were popular in France and Italy in the fourteenth century. Frequently, the plot turns or climaxes around the most grotesque feature in the story, usually a bodily noise or function. The Miller's Tale is a prime experiment with this motif: Nicholas cleverly tricks the carpenter into spending the night in his barn so that Nicholas can sleep with the carpenter's wife; the finale occurs when Nicholas farts in Absolon's face, only to be burned with a hot poker on his rear end. In the Summoner's Tale, a wealthy man bequeaths a corrupt friar an enormous fart, which the friar divides twelve ways among his brethren. This demonstrates another invention around this motif—that of wittily expanding a grotesque image in an unconventional way. In the case of the Summoner's Tale, the image is of flatulence, but the tale excels in discussing the division of the fart in a highly intellectual (and quite hilarious) manner.

3.6.3 Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Springtime

The Canterbury Tales opens in April, at the height of spring. The birds are chirping, the flowers blossoming, and people long in their hearts to go on pilgrimages, which combine travel, vacation, and spiritual renewal. The springtime symbolizes

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rebirth and fresh beginnings, and is thus appropriate for the beginning of Chaucer's text. Springtime also evokes erotic love, as evidenced by the moment when Palamon first sees Emelye gathering fresh flowers to make garlands in honor of May. The Squire, too, participates in this symbolism. His devotion to courtly love is compared to the freshness of the month of May.

Clothing

In the General Prologue, the description of garments, in addition to the narrator's own shaky recollections, helps to define each character. In a sense, the clothes symbolize what lies beneath the surface of each personality. The Physician's love of wealth reveals itself most clearly to us in the rich silk and fur of his gown. The Squire's youthful vanity is symbolized by the excessive floral brocade on his tunic. The Merchant's forked beard could symbolize his duplicity, at which Chaucer only hints.

Physiognomy

Physiognomy was a science that judged a person's temperament and character based on his or her anatomy. Physiognomy plays a significant role in Chaucer's descriptions of the pilgrims in the General Prologue. The most exaggerated facial features are those of the peasants. The Miller represents the stereotypical peasant physiognomy most clearly: round and ruddy, with a wart on his nose, the Miller appears rough and therefore suited to rough, simple work. The Pardoner's glaring eyes and limp hair illustrate his fraudulence.

Fragment 1, lines 1–42

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote ....

The narrator opens the General Prologue with a description of the return of spring. He describes the April rains, the burgeoning flowers and leaves, and the chirping birds. Around this time of year, the narrator says, people begin to feel the desire to go on a pilgrimage. Many devout English pilgrims set off to visit shrines in distant holy lands, but even more choose to travel to Canterbury to visit the relics of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, where they thank the martyr for having helped them when they were in need. The narrator tells us that as he prepared to go on such a pilgrimage, staying at a tavern in Southwark called the Tabard Inn, a great company of twenty-nine travelers entered. The travelers were a diverse group who, like the narrator, were on their way to Canterbury. They happily agreed to let him join them. That night, the group slept at the Tabard, and woke up early the next morning to set off on their journey. Before continuing the tale, the narrator declares his intent to list and describe each of the members of the group.

Analysis

The invocation of spring with which the General Prologue begins is lengthy and formal compared to the language of the rest of the Prologue. The first lines situate

the story in a particular time and place, but the speaker does this in cosmic and cyclical terms, celebrating the vitality and richness of spring. This approach gives the opening lines a dreamy, timeless, unfocused quality, and it is therefore surprising when the narrator reveals that he's going to describe a pilgrimage that he himself took rather than telling a love story. A pilgrimage is a religious journey undertaken for penance and grace. As pilgrimages went, Canterbury was not a very difficult destination for an English person to reach. It was, therefore, very popular in fourteenth-century England, as the narrator mentions. Pilgrims traveled to visit the remains of Saint Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, who was murdered in 1170 by knights of King Henry II. Soon after his death, he became the most popular saint in England. The pilgrimage in The Canterbury Tales should not be thought of as an entirely solemn occasion, because it also offered the pilgrims an opportunity to abandon work and take a vacation.

In line 20, the narrator abandons his unfocused, all-knowing point of view, identifying himself as an actual person for the first time by inserting the first person—"I"—as he relates how he met the group of pilgrims while staying at the Tabard Inn. He emphasizes that this group, which he encountered by accident, was itself formed quite by chance (25–26). He then shifts into the first-person plural, referring to the pilgrims as "we" beginning in line 29, asserting his status as a member of the group.

The narrator ends the introductory portion of his prologue by noting that he has "tyme and space" to tell his narrative. His comments underscore the fact that he is writing some time after the events of his story, and that he is describing the characters from memory. He has spoken and met with these people, but he has waited a certain length of time before sitting down and describing them. His intention to describe each pilgrim as he or she seemed to him is also important, for it emphasizes that his descriptions are not only subject to his memory but are also shaped by his individual perceptions and opinions regarding each of the characters. He positions himself as a mediator between two groups: the group of pilgrims, of which he was a member, and us, the audience, whom the narrator explicitly addresses as "you" in lines 34 and 38.

On the other hand, the narrator's declaration that he will tell us about the "condicioun," "degree," and "array" (dress) of each of the pilgrims suggests that his portraits will be based on objective facts as well as his own opinions. He spends considerable time characterizing the group members according to their social positions. The pilgrims represent a diverse cross section of fourteenth-century English society. Medieval social theory divided society into three broad classes, called "estates": the military, the clergy, and the laity. (The nobility, not represented in the General Prologue, traditionally derives its title and privileges from military duties and service, so it is considered part of the military estate.) In the portraits that we will see in the rest of the General Prologue, the Knight and

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Squire represent the military estate. The clergy is represented by the Prioress (and her nun and three priests), the Monk, the Friar, and the Parson. The other characters, from the wealthy Franklin to the poor Plowman, are the members of the laity. These lay characters can be further subdivided into landowners (the Franklin), professionals (the Clerk, the Man of Law, the Guildsmen, the Physician, and the Shipman), laborers (the Cook and the Plowman), stewards (the Miller, the Manciple, and the Reeve), and church officers (the Summoner and the Pardoner). As we will see, Chaucer's descriptions of the various characters and their social roles reveal the influence of the medieval genre of estates satire.

General Prologue: The Knight through the Man of Law

Fragment 1, lines 43–330

The narrator begins his character portraits with the Knight. In the narrator's eyes, the Knight is the noblest of the pilgrims, embodying military prowess, loyalty, honor, generosity, and good manners. The Knight conducts himself in a polite and mild fashion, never saying an unkind word about anyone. The Knight's son, who is about twenty years old, acts as his father's squire, or apprentice. Though the Squire has fought in battles with great strength and agility, like his father, he is also devoted to love. A strong, beautiful, curly-haired young man dressed in clothes embroidered with dainty flowers, the Squire fights in the hope of winning favor with his "lady." His talents are those of the courtly lover—singing, playing the flute, drawing, writing, and riding—and he loves so passionately that he gets little sleep at night. He is a dutiful son, and fulfills his responsibilities toward his father, such as carving his meat. Accompanying the Knight and Squire is the Knight's Yeoman, or freeborn servant. The Yeoman wears green from head to toe and carries an enormous bow and beautifully feathered arrows, as well as a sword and small shield. His gear and attire suggest that he is a forester.

Next, the narrator describes the Prioress, named Madame Eglentyne. Although the Prioress is not part of the royal court, she does her best to imitate its manners. She takes great care to eat her food daintily, to reach for food on the table delicately, and to wipe her lip clean of grease before drinking from her cup. She speaks French, but with a provincial English accent. She is compassionate toward animals, weeping when she sees a mouse caught in a trap, and feeding her dogs roasted meat and milk. The narrator says that her features are pretty, even her enormous forehead. On her arm she wears a set of prayer beads, from which hangs a gold brooch that features the Latin words for "Love Conquers All." Another nun and three priests accompany her.

The Monk is the next pilgrim the narrator describes. Extremely handsome, he loves hunting and keeps many horses. He is an outrider at his monastery (he looks after the monastery's business with the external world), and his horse's bridle can be heard jingling in the wind as clear and loud as a church bell. The Monk is aware that the rule of his monastic order discourages monks from

engaging in activities like hunting, but he dismisses such strictures as worthless. The narrator says that he agrees with the Monk: why should the Monk drive himself crazy with study or manual labor? The fat, bald, and well-dressed Monk resembles a prosperous lord.

The next member of the company is the Friar—a member of a religious order who lives entirely by begging. This friar is jovial, pleasure-loving, well-spoken, and socially agreeable. He hears confessions, and assigns very easy penance to people who donate money. For this reason, he is very popular with wealthy landowners throughout the country. He justifies his leniency by arguing that donating money to friars is a sign of true repentance, even if the penitent is incapable of shedding tears. He also makes himself popular with innkeepers and barmaids, who can give him food and drink. He pays no attention to beggars and lepers because they can't help him or his fraternal order. Despite his vow of poverty, the donations he extracts allow him to dress richly and live quite merrily.

Tastefully attired in nice boots and an imported fur hat, the Merchant speaks constantly of his profits. The merchant is good at borrowing money, but clever enough to keep anyone from knowing that he is in debt. The narrator does not know his name. After the Merchant comes the Clerk, a thin and threadbare student of philosophy at Oxford, who devours books instead of food. The Man of Law, an influential lawyer, follows next. He is a wise character, capable of preparing flawless legal documents. The Man of Law is a very busy man, but he takes care to appear even busier than he actually is.

Analysis

The Canterbury Tales is more than an estates satire because the characters are fully individualized creations rather than simple good or bad examples of some ideal type. Many of them seem aware that they inhabit a socially defined role and seem to have made a conscious effort to redefine their prescribed role on their own terms. For instance, the Squire is training to occupy the same social role as his father, the Knight, but unlike his father he defines this role in terms of the ideals of courtly love rather than crusading. The Prioress is a nun, but she aspires to the manners and behavior of a lady of the court, and, like the Squire, incorporates the motifs of courtly love into her Christian vocation. Characters such as the Monk and the Friar, who more obviously corrupt or pervert their social roles, are able to offer a justification and a rationale for their behavior, demonstrating that they have carefully considered how to go about occupying their professions.

Within each portrait, the narrator praises the character being described in superlative terms, promoting him or her as an outstanding example of his or her type. At the same time, the narrator points out things about many of the characters that the reader would be likely to view as flawed or corrupt, to varying degrees. The narrator's naïve stance introduces many different ironies into the General

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Prologue. Though it is not always clear exactly how ironic the narrator is being, the reader can perceive a difference between what each character should be and what he or she is.

The narrator is also a character, and an incredibly complex one at that. Examination of the narrator's presentation of the pilgrims reveals some of his prejudices. The Monk's portrait, in which the narrator inserts his own judgment of the Monk into the actual portrait, is the clearest example of this. But most of the time, the narrator's opinions are more subtly present. What he does and doesn't discuss, the order in which he presents or recalls details, and the extent to which he records objective characteristics of the pilgrims are all crucial to our own ironic understanding of the narrator.

The Knight, the Squire, and the Yeoman

The Knight has fought in crusades the world over, and comes as close as any of the characters to embodying the ideals of his vocation. But even in his case, the narrator suggests a slight separation between the individual and the role: the Knight doesn't simply exemplify chivalry, truth, honor, freedom, and courtesy; he "loves" them. His virtues are due to his self-conscious pursuit of clearly conceived ideals. Moreover, the Knight's comportment is significant. Not only is he a worthy warrior, he is prudent in the image of himself that he projects. His appearance is calculated to express humility rather than vainglory.

Whereas the narrator describes the Knight in terms of abstract ideals and battles, he describes the Knight's son, the Squire, mostly in terms of his aesthetic attractiveness. The Squire prepares to occupy the same role as his father, but he envisions that role differently, supplementing his father's devotion to military prowess and the Christian cause with the ideals of courtly love (see discussion of courtly love under "Themes, Motifs, and Symbols"). He displays all of the accomplishments and behaviors prescribed for the courtly lover: he grooms and dresses himself carefully, he plays and sings, he tries to win favor with his "lady," and he doesn't sleep at night because of his overwhelming love. It is important to recognize, however, that the Squire isn't simply in love because he is young and handsome; he has picked up all of his behaviors and poses from his culture.

The description of the Knight's servant, the Yeoman, is limited to an account of his physical appearance, leaving us with little upon which to base an inference about him as an individual. He is, however, quite well attired for someone of his station, possibly suggesting a self-conscious attempt to look the part of a forester.

The Prioress, the Monk, and the Friar

With the descriptions of the Prioress, the Monk, and the Friar, the level of irony with which each character is presented gradually increases. Like the Squire, the Prioress seems to have redefined her own role, imitating the behavior of a woman of the royal court and supplementing her religious garb with a courtly love motto: Love Conquers All. This does not necessarily imply that she is corrupt: Chaucer's

satire of her is subtle rather than scathing. More than a personal culpability, the Prioress's devotion to courtly love demonstrates the universal appeal and influence of the courtly love tradition in Chaucer's time. Throughout The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer seems to question the popularity of courtly love in his own culture, and to highlight the contradictions between courtly love and Christianity.

The narrator focuses on the Prioress's table manners in minute detail, openly admiring her courtly manners. He seems mesmerized by her mouth, as he mentions her smiling, her singing, her French speaking, her eating, and her drinking. As if to apologize for dwelling so long on what he seems to see as her erotic manner, he moves to a consideration of her "conscience," but his decision to illustrate her great compassion by focusing on the way she treats her pets and reacts to a mouse is probably tongue-in-cheek. The Prioress emerges as a very realistically portrayed human being, but she seems somewhat lacking as a religious figure.

The narrator's admiring description of the Monk is more conspicuously satirical than that of the Prioress. The narrator zeroes in on the Monk with a vivid image: his bridle jingles as loud and clear as a chapel bell. This image is pointedly ironic, since the chapel is where the Monk should be but isn't. To a greater degree than the Squire or the Prioress, the Monk has departed from his prescribed role as defined by the founders of his order. He lives like a lord rather than a cleric. Hunting is an extremely expensive form of leisure, the pursuit of the upper classes. The narrator takes pains to point out that the Monk is aware of the rules of his order but scorns them.

Like the Monk, the Friar does not perform his function as it was originally conceived. Saint Francis, the prototype for begging friars, ministered specifically to beggars and lepers, the very people the Friar disdains. Moreover, the Friar doesn't just neglect his spiritual duties; he actually abuses them for his own profit. The description of his activities implies that he gives easy penance in order to get extra money, so that he can live well. Like the Monk, the Friar is ready with arguments justifying his reinterpretation of his role: beggars and lepers cannot help the Church, and giving money is a sure sign of penitence. The narrator strongly hints that the Friar is lecherous as well as greedy. The statement that he made many marriages at his own cost suggests that he found husbands for young women he had made pregnant. His white neck is a conventional sign of lecherousness.

The Merchant, the Clerk, and the Man of Law

The Merchant, the Clerk, and the Man of Law represent three professional types. Though the narrator valiantly keeps up the pretense of praising everybody, the Merchant evidently taxes his ability to do so. The Merchant is in debt, apparently a regular occurrence, and his supposed cleverness at hiding his indebtedness is undermined by the fact that even the naïve narrator knows about it. Though the

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narrator would like to praise him, the Merchant hasn't even told the company his name.

Sandwiched between two characters who are clearly devoted to money, the threadbare Clerk appears strikingly oblivious to worldly concerns. However, the ultimate purpose of his study is unclear. The Man of Law contrasts sharply with the Clerk in that he has used his studies for monetary gain.

Fragment 1, lines 331–714

The white-bearded Franklin is a wealthy gentleman farmer, possessed of lands but not of noble birth. His chief attribute is his preoccupation with food, which is so plenteous in his house that his house seemed to snow meat and drink (344–345). The narrator next describes the five Guildsmen, all artisans. They are dressed in the livery, or uniform, of their guild. The narrator compliments their shiny dress and mentions that each was fit to be a city official. With them is their skillful Cook, whom Chaucer would praise fully were it not for the ulcer on his shin. The hardy Shipman wears a dagger on a cord around his neck. When he is on his ship, he steals wine from the merchant he is transporting while he sleeps.

The taffeta-clad Physician bases his practice of medicine and surgery on a thorough knowledge of astronomy and the four humors. He has a good setup with his apothecaries, because they make each other money. He is well acquainted with ancient and modern medical authorities, but reads little Scripture. He is somewhat frugal, and the narrator jokes that the doctor's favorite medicine is gold.

Next, the narrator describes the slightly deaf Wife of Bath. This keen seamstress is always first to the offering at Mass, and if someone goes ahead of her she gets upset. She wears head coverings to Mass that the narrator guesses must weigh ten pounds. She has had five husbands and has taken three pilgrimages to Jerusalem. She has also been to Rome, Cologne, and other exotic pilgrimage sites. Her teeth have gaps between them, and she sits comfortably astride her horse. The Wife is jolly and talkative, and she gives good love advice because she has had lots of experience.

A gentle and poor village Parson is described next. Pure of conscience and true to the teachings of Christ, the Parson enjoys preaching and instructing his parishioners, but he hates excommunicating those who cannot pay their tithes. He walks with his staff to visit all his parishioners, no matter how far away. He believes that a priest must be pure, because he serves as an example for his congregation, his flock. The Parson is dedicated to his parish and does not seek a better appointment. He is even kind to sinners, preferring to teach them by example rather than scorn. The parson is accompanied by his brother, a Plowman, who works hard, loves God and his neighbor, labors "for Christ's sake" (537), and pays his tithes on time.

The red-haired Miller loves crude, bawdy jokes and drinking. He is immensely stout and strong, able to lift doors off their hinges or knock them down by running at them with his head. He has a wart on his nose with bright red hairs sticking out of it like bristles, black nostrils, and a mouth like a furnace. He wears a sword and buckler, and loves to joke around and tell dirty stories. He steals from his customers, and plays the bagpipes.

The Manciple stocks an Inn of Court (school of law) with provisions. Uneducated though he is, this manciple is smarter than most of the lawyers he serves. The spindly, angry Reeve has hair so short that he reminds the narrator of a priest. He manages his lord's estate so well that he is able to hoard his own money and property in a miserly fashion. The Reeve is also a good carpenter, and he always rides behind everybody else.

The Summoner arraigns those accused of violating Church law. When drunk, he ostentatiously spouts the few Latin phrases he knows. His face is bright red from an unspecified disease. He uses his power corruptly for his own gain. He is extremely lecherous, and uses his position to dominate the young women in his jurisdiction. In exchange for a quart of wine, he would let another man sleep with his girlfriend for a year and then pardon the man completely.

The Pardoner, who had just been in the court of Rome, rides with the Summoner. He sings with his companion, and has long, flowing, yellow hair. The narrator mentions that the Pardoner thinks he rides very fashionably, with nothing covering his head. He has brought back many souvenirs from his trip to Rome. The narrator compares the Pardoner's high voice to that of a goat, and mentions that he thinks the Pardoner might have been a homosexual. The narrator mocks the Pardoner for his disrespectful manipulation of the poor for his own material gain. In charge of selling papal indulgences, he is despised by the Church and most churchgoers for counterfeiting pardons and pocketing the money. The Pardoner is a good preacher, storyteller, and singer, the narrator admits, although he argues it is only because he cheats people of their money in that way.

Analysis

Again, the narrator describes many of the characters as though he had actually witnessed them doing things he has only heard them talk about. Other portraits, such as that of the Miller, are clearly shaped by class stereotypes.

The Franklin, the Guildsmen, and the Cook

The Franklin and the five Guildsmen share with the Merchant and the Man of Law a devotion to material wealth, and the narrator praises them in terms of their possessions. The description of the Franklin's table is a lavish poetic tribute to hospitality and luxury. The Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, and Tapestry-Weaver are not individualized, and they don't tell their own tales. The narrator's approval of their pride in material displays of wealth is clearly satirical. The

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Cook, with his disgusting physical defect, is himself a display of the Guildsmen's material worth and prosperity.

The Shipman and the Physician

The descriptions of the Shipman and the Physician are both barbed with keenly satiric turns of phrase implying dishonesty and avarice. The Shipman's theft of wine is slipped in among descriptions of his professional skills, and his brutality in battle is briefly noted in the midst of his other nautical achievements. The narrator gives an impressive catalog of the Physician's learning, but then interjects the startling comment that he neglects the Bible, implying that his care for the body comes at the expense of the soul. Moreover, the narrator's remarks about the Doctor's love of gold suggest that he is out to make money rather than to help others.

The Wife of Bath

cording to whether they infer Chaucer's implied attitude toward this fearless and outspoken woman as admiring or satirical, readers have interpreted the Wife of Bath as an expression either of Chaucer's proto-feminism or of his misogyny. Certainly, she embodies many of the traits that woman-hating writers of Chaucer's time attacked: she is vain, domineering, and lustful. But, at the same time, Chaucer portrays the Wife of Bath in such realistic and humane detail that it is hard to see her simply as a satire of an awful woman. Minor facets of her description, such as the gap between her teeth and her deafness, are expanded upon in the long prologue to her tale.

The Parson and the Plowman

Coming after a catalog of very worldly characters, these two brothers stand out as rare examples of Christian ideals. The Plowman follows the Gospel, loving God and his neighbor, working for Christ's sake, and faithfully paying tithes to the Church. Their "worth" is thus of a completely different kind from that assigned to the valorous Knight or to the skilled and wealthy characters. The Parson has a more complicated role than the Plowman, and a more sophisticated awareness of his importance.

The Miller, the Manciple, and the Reeve

The Miller, the Manciple, and the Reeve are all stewards, in the sense that other people entrust them with their property. All three of them abuse that trust.

Stewardship plays an important symbolic role in The Canterbury Tales, just as it does in the Gospels. In his parables, Jesus used stewardship as a metaphor for Christian life, since God calls the individual to account for his or her actions on the Day of Judgment, just as a steward must show whether he has made a profitable use of his master's property.

The Miller seems more demonic than Christian, with his violent and brutal habits, his mouth like a furnace, the angry red hairs sprouting from his wart, and his black nostrils. His "golden thumb" alludes to his practice of cheating his customers. The narrator ironically upholds the Manciple as a model of a good steward. The Manciple's employers are all lawyers, trained to help others to live within their means, but the Manciple is even shrewder than they are. The Reeve is depicted as a very skilled thief—one who can fool his own auditors, and who knows all the tricks of managers, servants, herdsmen, and millers because he is dishonest himself. Worst of all, he enjoys his master's thanks for lending his master the things he has stolen from him.

The Summoner and the Pardoner

The Summoner and Pardoner, who travel together, are the most corrupt and debased of all the pilgrims. They are not members of holy orders but rather lay officers of the Church. Neither believes in what he does for the Church; instead, they both pervert their functions for their own gain and the corruption of others. The Summoner is a lecher and a drunk, always looking for a bribe. His diseased face suggests a diseased soul. The Pardoner is a more complicated figure. He sings beautifully in church and has a talent for beguiling his somewhat horrified audience. Longhaired and beardless, the Pardoner's sexuality is ambiguous. The narrator remarks that he thought the Pardoner to be a gelding or a mare, possibly suggesting that he is either a eunuch or a homosexual. His homosexuality is further suggested by his harmonizing with the Summoner's "stif burdoun," which means the bass line of a melody but also hints at the male genitalia (673). The Pardoner will further disrupt the agreed-upon structure of the journey (friendly tale-telling) by launching into his indulgence-selling routine, turning his tale into a sermon he frequently uses to con people into feeding his greed. The narrator's disdain of the Pardoner may in part owe to his jealousy of the Pardoner's skill at mesmerizing an audience for financial gain—after all, this is a poet's goal as well.

Fragment 1, lines 715–858

After introducing all of the pilgrims, the narrator apologizes for any possible offense the reader may take from his tales, explaining that he feels that he must

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be faithful in reproducing the characters' words, even if they are rude or disgusting. He cites Christ and Plato as support for his argument that it is best to speak plainly and tell the truth rather than to lie. He then returns to his story of the first night he spent with the group of pilgrims.

After serving the pilgrims a banquet and settling the bill with them, the Host of the tavern speaks to the group. He welcomes and compliments the company, telling them they are the merriest group of pilgrims to pass through his inn all year. He adds that he would like to contribute to their happiness, free of charge. He says that he is sure they will be telling stories as they travel, since it would be boring to travel in silence. Therefore, he proposes to invent some entertainment for them if they will unanimously agree to do as he says. He orders the group to vote, and the narrator comments that the group didn't think it would be worthwhile to argue or deliberate over the Host's proposition and agreed immediately.

The Host congratulates the group on its good decision. He lays out his plan: each of the pilgrims will tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two more on the way back. Whomever the Host decides has told the most meaningful and comforting stories will receive a meal paid for by the rest of the pilgrims upon their return. The Host also declares that he will ride with the pilgrims and serve as their guide at his own cost. If anyone disputes his judgment, he says, that person must pay for the expenses of the pilgrimage.

The company agrees and makes the Host its governor, judge, and record keeper. They settle on a price for the supper prize and return to drinking wine. The next morning, the Host wakes everyone up and gathers the pilgrims together. After they have set off, he reminds the group of the agreement they made. He also reminds them that whoever disagrees with him must pay for everything spent along the way. He tells the group members to draw straws to decide who tells the first tale. The Knight wins and prepares to begin his tale.

Analysis

The Host shows himself to be a shrewd businessman. Once he has taken the pilgrims' money for their dinners, he takes their minds away from what they have just spent by flattering them, complimenting them for their mirth. Equally quickly, he changes the focus of the pilgrimage. In the opening lines of the General Prologue, the narrator says that people go on pilgrimages to thank the martyr, who has helped them when they were in need (17–18). But Bailey (as the Host is later called) tells the group, "Ye goon to Caunterbury—God yow speede, / The blissful martir quite yow youre meede!" (769–770). He sees the pilgrimage as an economic transaction: the pilgrims travel to the martyr, and in return the martyr rewards them. The word "quite" means "repay," and it will become a major motif throughout the tales, as each character is put in a sort of debt by the previous character's tale, and must repay him or her with a new tale. Instead of traveling

to reach a destination (the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket), the traveling becomes a contest, and the pilgrimage becomes about the journey itself rather than the destination. Bailey also stands to profit from the contest: the winner of the contest wins a free meal at his tavern, to be paid for by the rest of the contestants, all of whom will presumably eat with the winner and thus buy more meals from Bailey.

After creating the storytelling contest, Bailey quickly appoints himself its judge. Once the pilgrims have voted to participate in the contest, Bailey inserts himself as their ruler, and anyone who disagrees with him faces a strict financial penalty. Some have interpreted Bailey's speedy takeover of the pilgrimage as an allegory for the beginnings of absolute monarchy. The narrator refers to the Host as the group's "governour," "juge," and "reportour [record-keeper]"—all very legalistic terms (813–814).

The Knight's Tale, Parts 1–2

From the beginning through Theseus's decision to hold the tournament Fragment 1, lines 859–1880

Summary: Part 1

Long ago in Ancient Greece, a great conqueror and duke named Theseus ruled the city of Athens. One day, four women kneel in front of Theseus's horse and weep, halting his passage into the city. The eldest woman informs him that they are grieving the loss of their husbands, who were killed at the siege of the city of Thebes. Creon, the lord of Thebes, has dishonored them by refusing to bury or cremate their bodies. Enraged at the ladies' plight, Theseus marches on Thebes, which he easily conquers. After returning the bones of their husbands to the four women for the funeral rites, Theseus discovers two wounded enemy soldiers lying on the battlefield, nearing death. Rather than kill them, he mercifully heals the Theban soldiers' injuries, but condemns them to a life of imprisonment in an Athenian tower.

The prisoners, named Palamon and Arcite, are cousins and sworn brothers. Both live in the prison tower for several years. One spring morning, Palamon awakes early, looks out the window, and sees fair-haired Emelye, Theseus's sister-in-law. She is making flower garlands, "To doon honour to May" (1047). He falls in love and moans with heartache. His cry awakens Arcite, who comes to investigate the matter. As Arcite peers out the window, he too falls in love with the beautiful flower-clad maiden. They argue over her, but eventually realize the futility of such a struggle when neither can ever leave the prison.

One day, a duke named Perotheus, friend both to Theseus and Arcite, petitions for Arcite's freedom. Theseus agrees, on the condition that Arcite be banished permanently from Athens on pain of death. Arcite returns to Thebes, miserable and jealous of Palamon, who can still see Emelye every day from the tower. But Palamon, too, grows more sorrowful than ever; he believes that Arcite will lay

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siege to Athens and take Emelye by force. The knight poses the question to the listeners, rhetorically: who is worse off, Arcite or Palamon?

Summary: Part 2

Some time later, winged Mercury, messenger to the gods, appears to Arcite in a dream and urges him to return to Athens. By this time, Arcite has grown gaunt and frail from lovesickness. He realizes that he could enter the city disguised and not be recognized. He does so and takes on a job as a page in Emelye's chamber under the pseudonym Philostrate. This puts him close to Emelye but not close enough. Wandering in the woods one spring day, he fashions garlands of leaves and laments the conflict in his heart—his desire to return to Thebes and his need to be near his beloved. As it -happens, Palamon has escaped from seven years of imprisonment that very day and hears Arcite's song and monologue while -sneaking through the woods. They confront each other, each claiming the right to Emelye. Arcite challenges his old friend to a duel the next day. They meet in a field and bludgeon each other ruthlessly.

Theseus, out on a hunt, finds these two warriors brutally hacking away at each other. Palamon reveals their identities and love for Emelye. He implores the duke to justly decide their fate, suggesting that they both deserve to die. Theseus is about to respond by killing them, but the women of his court—especially his queen and Emelye—intervene, pleading for Palamon and Arcite's lives. The duke consents and decides instead to hold a tournament fifty weeks from that day. The two men will be pitted against one another, each with a hundred of the finest men he can gather. The winner will be awarded Emelye's hand.

Analysis

The Knight's Tale is a romance that encapsulates the themes, motifs, and ideals of courtly love: love is like an illness that can change the lover's physical appearance, the lover risks death to win favor with his lady, and he is inspired to utter eloquent poetic complaints. The lovers go without sleep because they are tormented by their love, and for many years they pine away hopelessly for an unattainable woman. The tale is set in mythological Greece, but Chaucer's primary source for it is Boccaccio's Teseida, an Italian poem written about thirty years before The Canterbury Tales. As was typical of medieval and Renaissance romances, ancient Greece is imagined as quite similar to feudal Europe, with knights and dukes instead of heroes, and various other medieval features.

Some critics have suggested that the Knight's Tale is an allegory, in which each character represents an abstract idea or theme. For example, Arcite and Palamon might represent the active and the contemplative life, respectively. But it is difficult to convincingly interpret the tale based on a distinction between the two lovers, or to find a moral based on their different actions. Palamon and

Arcite are quite similar, and neither one seems to have the stronger claim on Emelye.

The main theme of the tale is the instability of human life—joy and suffering are never far apart from one another, and nobody is safe from disaster. Moreover, when one person's fortunes are up, another person's are down. This theme is expressed by the pattern of the narrative, in which descriptions of good fortune are quickly followed by disasters, and characters are subject to dramatic reversals of fortune. When the supplicating widows interrupt Theseus's victory procession home to Athens, he senses that their grief is somehow connected to his joy and asks them if they grieve out of envy. But one of the widows formulates the connection differently, pointing out that they are on opposite sides of Fortune's "false wheel" (925).

Soon, the widows' husbands' remains are returned to them, and Theseus once again emerges victorious. But as soon as the widows are raised up by Fortune's wheel, Palamon and Arcite are discovered cast down, close to death, and Theseus imprisons them for life. But, no sooner are Palamon's and Arcite's fortunes dashed down than Emelye appears in the garden outside their prison as a symbol of spring and renewed life. When Arcite wins his freedom, each of the friends thinks that his condition is worse than the other's.

Good fortune and bad fortune seem connected to one another in a pattern, suggesting that some kind of cosmic or moral order underlies the apparently random mishaps and disasters of the narrative. There are other such repeated elements in the story. The widows who supplicate for their husbands' remains at the story's opening are mirrored by Emelye and Theseus's queen, who supplicate Theseus to spare Palamon and Arcite's lives. Palamon's appeal to Theseus to rightly judge their quarrel echoes the knight's appeal to the listeners to decide who is more miserable. Additionally, when Arcite wanders in the woods, singing and fashioning garlands, he echoes Palamon's first vision of Emelye through the tower window, when he saw her making garlands. Both acts take place in the month of May.

Theseus's construction of the stadium through the end of the tale

Fragment 1, lines 1881–3108

Summary: Part 3

Theseus prepares for the tournament by constructing an enormous stadium. By its gate, he erects three temples to the gods—one for Venus, the goddess of love; one for Mars, the god of war; and one for Diana, the goddess of chastity. The Knight provides a lengthy description of each temple. The tournament nears, spectators assemble, and both Palamon and Arcite arrive with impressive armies. The Sunday before the tournament, Palamon visits the temple of Venus and supplicates her in the night. He tells her of his desire for Emelye and requests

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that she bring him victory in the name of love. The statue of Venus makes an enigmatic "sign" (the reader isn't told what the sign is), which Palamon interprets as a positive answer, and he departs confident. That dawn, Emelye also rises and goes to the temple of Diana. Desirous to remain a virgin—"a mayden al my lyf" (2305)—she begs Diana to prevent the impending marriage. But an image of Diana appears and informs her that she must marry one of the Thebans. Obedient, Emelye retires to her chamber.

Arcite walks to the temple of Mars and begs the god of war for victory in the battle. He, too, receives a positive sign: the doors of the temple clang, and he hears the statue of Mars whisper, "Victorie!" (2433). Like Palamon, Arcite departs the temple in high hopes for the coming day. The scene then shifts to the gods themselves. Saturn, Venus's father, assures her cryptically that despite Mars's aid to Arcite, Palamon will have his lady in the end.

Summary: Part 4

The Firste Moevere of the cause above,

Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,

Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.

After much feasting, the spectators assemble in the stadium. The magnificent armies enter, appearing evenly matched. After Theseus has sternly delivered the rules, the bloody battle of flashing swords and maces begins. Though Palamon fights valiantly, Arcite sees his chance and brings Palamon "to the stake"—he claims him with a sword at his throat. Emelye rejoices as Theseus proclaims Arcite victorious. Venus, on the other hand, weeps with shame that her knight lost, until Saturn calms her and signals that all is not over. At Saturn's request, the earth shakes beneath Arcite as he rides toward Theseus. The knight's horse throws him, crushing his chest. Gravely wounded, the company transports Arcite to bed, where physicians attempt in vain to heal him. Arcite expresses his love to Emelye, and then tells her that if she decides to marry another, she should remember Palamon, who possesses the qualities of a worthy knight—"trouthe, honour, knyghthede, / Wysdom, humblesse" (2789–2790).

All of Athens mourns Arcite's death. Emelye, Theseus, and Palamon are inconsolable. Theseus's father, Egeus, takes Theseus aside and tells him that every man must live and die—life is a journey through woe that must, at some point, come to an end. After some years pass, the mourners heal, with the exception of Emelye and Palamon, who continue to go about sorrowfully, dressed in black. During one parliament at Athens, Theseus berates the two for grieving too much. He reminds them that God ordains that all must die, and refusal to accept death is therefore folly. He requests that they cease mourning, and that his wife's sister

take Palamon for her husband and lord. They obey, and as they realize the wisdom of Theseus's advice over many years, Emelye and Palamon enjoy a long, loving, and happy marriage.

Analysis

Because Egeus has lived long enough to witness Fortune's rising and falling pattern, he is the only human character in the Knight's Tale who understands that Fortune's wheel is the plot's driving force. Egeus is therefore the only man capable of comforting Theseus amid the general lament over Arcite's accidental death. In his final speech to Palamon and Emelye, Theseus shows that he has learned his lesson from Egeus. Echoing the old man's words, the duke argues that excessive mourning over disaster is inappropriate. His speech conveys a message of humility, instead of an attempt to explain the meaning of Arcite's death. A benevolent order may exist in the universe, Theseus asserts, but human beings should not seek to pry into it, or set themselves against it by prolonging mourning too long.

The gods, whose role is to develop instability in the lives of the characters, are the instruments of Fortune. The Knight's extensive descriptions of the symbolic decorations of the temples of Venus, Mars, and Diana help shed light on the gods' roles. The walls in Venus's temple depict the traditional sufferings of the courtly lover—sleeplessness, sighing, and burning desire. But they also portray the sinfulness that love can cause—lust, jealousy, idleness, and adultery—a more Christian, moralistic message. Moreover, these walls also present love's invincibility and irresistibility, in scenes taken from Ovid's Metamorphoses. The relationship among these three ideas of love is left unresolved.

Mars's temple is also remarkable. Instead of representing the glories of war or battle with which the Knight is well acquainted, the walls display hypocrites, traitors, and murderers, together with disasters that have nothing to do with war, such as the cook who is scalded despite his use of a long ladle. Diana's portrayal is the most ambivalent of the three. Traditionally, she is the goddess of chastity and protector of virgins, but everything depicted on her temple's walls suggests that she causes change. Many of the images are of friends or enemies that she transformed, as told in Ovid's Metamorphoses. Diana herself is symbolically represented by a moon that is waxing but that will soon begin to wane. The imagery in her temple, and her refusal to grant Emelye her prayer that she remain a virgin, indicate that there is no refuge, even in chastity, from the transformations human beings must undergo in life.

The decoration of each of the three temples, then, shows the wills of the gods as opposite to human desires. Venus and Mars are both represented as forces that cause catastrophe and suffering, rather than glory and happiness, in human life. Whereas Venus represents emotional and spiritual sources of suffering, Mars represents all of the violent and brutal physical perils that await humans, whether through accident or malice. And Diana is represented as a force who will not allow things to stay the same.

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Saturn is not depicted, but his decision about how to reconcile the conflict between Mars and Venus reveals his understanding of his role, as does his description of himself, which strongly echoes the description of Mars's temple. Saturn associates himself with drowning, strangling, imprisonment, secret poisoning, and other forms of vengeance. The major difference between Mars and Saturn is that Saturn claims that his journey through the zodiac is much longer than that of the others, and that his actions are part of an overall plan that emerges over a long period of time. Saturn's disasters represent a kind of correction, or balancing of the scales, ensuring that everything is overturned and transformed by the passage of time.

Yet, there is some suggestion in the Knight's Tale that humans can affect their own destinies. Several major shifts in the plot come about when one character intercedes on another's behalf. The weeping women in the opening intercede on behalf of their dead husbands, and Theseus conquers Thebes. Perotheus intercedes on Arcite's behalf, and Arcite is let out of prison. The court women interrupt to plead that Theseus spare the two soldiers' lives.

Some critics have suggested that in this pattern of intercession Chaucer presents us with an ideal form of government: no man can govern entirely on his own. Truly good government is accomplished with the help of an outside party that stops the ruler from behaving tyrannically. Twice, women prevent Theseus from acting entirely on his own, a good friend is able to intervene to rescue Arcite, and Arcite himself influences Theseus's desire to see Emelye and Palamon married. Some critics further interpret this need for counsel along gender lines. It is no accident, they suggest, that women stop Theseus from ignoring the burial rites of their husbands, and from killing Palamon and Arcite. These critics believe that this female intercession means that every good male governor needs and depends upon wifely counsel to keep him from becoming ruthless.

The Miller's Prologue and Tale

Fragment 1, lines 3109–3854

The pilgrims applaud the Knight's Tale, and the pleased Host asks the Monk to match it. Before the Monk can utter a word, however, the Miller interrupts. Drunk and belligerent, he promises that he has a "noble" tale that will repay the Knight's (3126). The Host tries to persuade the Miller to let some "bettre" man tell the next tale (3130). When the Miller threatens to leave, however, the Host acquiesces. After the Miller reminds everyone that he is drunk and therefore shouldn't be held accountable for anything he says, he introduces his tale as a legend and a life of a carpenter and of his wife, and of how a clerk made a fool of the carpenter, which everyone understands to mean that the clerk slept with the carpenter's

wife (3141–3143). The Reeve shouts out his immediate objection to such ridicule, but the Miller insists on proceeding with his tale. He points out that he is married himself, but doesn't worry whether some other man is sleeping with his wife, because it is none of his business. The narrator apologizes to us in advance for the tale's bawdiness, and warns that those who are easily offended should skip to another tale.

The Miller begins his story: there was once an Oxford student named Nicholas, who studied astrology and was well acquainted with the art of love. Nicholas boarded with a wealthy but ignorant old carpenter named John, who was jealous and highly possessive of his sexy eighteen-year-old wife, Alisoun. One day, the carpenter leaves, and Nicholas and Alisoun begin flirting. Nicholas grabs Alisoun, and she threatens to cry for help. He then begins to cry, and after a few sweet words, she agrees to sleep with him when it is safe to do so. She is worried that John will find out, but Nicholas is confident he can outwit the carpenter.

Nicholas is not alone in desiring Alisoun. A merry, vain parish clerk named Absolon also fancies Alisoun. He serenades her every night, buys her gifts, and gives her money, but to no avail—Alisoun loves Nicholas. Nicholas devises a plan that will allow him and Alisoun to spend an entire night together. He has Alisoun tell John that Nicholas is ill. John sends a servant to check on his boarder, who arrives to find Nicholas immobile, staring at the ceiling. When the servant reports back to John, John is not surprised, saying that madness is what one gets for inquiring into "Goddes pryvetee," which is what he believes Nicholas's astronomy studies amount to. Nevertheless, he feels sorry for the student and goes to check on him.

Nicholas tells John he has had a vision from God and offers to tell John about it. He explains that he has foreseen a terrible event. The next Monday, waters twice as great as Noah's flood will cover the land, exterminating all life. The carpenter believes him and fears for his wife, just what Nicholas had hoped would occur. Nicholas instructs John to fasten three tubs, each loaded with provisions and an ax, to the roof of the barn. On Monday night, they will sleep in the tubs, so that when the flood comes, they can release the tubs, hack through the roof, and float until the water subsides. Nicholas also warns John that it is God's commandment that they may do nothing but pray once they are in the tubs—no one is to speak a word.

Monday night arrives, and Nicholas, John, and Alisoun ascend by ladder into the hanging tubs. As soon as the carpenter begins to snore, Nicholas and Alisoun climb down, run back to the house, and sleep together in the carpenter's bed. In the early dawn, Absolon passes by. Hoping to stop in for a kiss, or perhaps more, from Alisoun, Absalon sidles up to the window and calls to her. She harshly replies that she loves another. Absolon persists, and Alisoun offers him one quick kiss in the dark.

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Absolon leaps forward eagerly, offering a lingering kiss. But it is not her lips he finds at the window, but her "naked ers [arse]" (3734). She and Nicholas collapse with laughter, while Absolon blindly tries to wipe his mouth. Determined to avenge Alisoun's prank, Absolon hurries back into town to the blacksmith and obtains a red-hot iron poker. He returns with it to the window and knocks again, asking for a kiss and promising Alisoun a golden ring. This time, Nicholas, having gotten up to relieve himself anyway, sticks his rear out the window and farts thunderously in Absolon's face. Absolon brands Nicholas's buttocks with the poker. Nicholas leaps up and cries out, "Help! Water! Water!" (3815). John, still hanging from the roof, wakes up and assumes Nicholas's cries mean that the flood has come. He grabs the ax, cuts free the tub, and comes crashing to the ground, breaking his arm. The noise and commotion attract many of the townspeople. The carpenter tells the story of the predicted flood, but Nicholas and Alisoun pretend ignorance, telling everyone that the carpenter is mad. The townspeople laugh that all have received their dues, and the Miller merrily asks that God save the company.

Analysis

Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf,

For al his kepyng and his jalousye;

And Absolon hath kist hir nether ye;

And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.

In the Miller's Prologue, we perceive tension between social classes for the first time in The Canterbury Tales. The Host clearly wants the Monk to tell the second tale, so that the storytelling proceeds according to social rank. By butting in, the Miller upsets the Host's plan. Like the Knight's Tale, which fits his honorable and virtuous personality, the Miller's Tale is stereotypical of the Miller's bawdy character and low station. However, nothing about the drunken, immoral, and brutal Miller could possibly prepare the reader for the Miller's elegant verse and beautiful imagery. The Miller's description of Alisoun draws on a completely different stock of images from the Knight's depiction of Emelye, but it is no less effective. Whereas Emelye is compared to a rose, a lily, the spring, and an angel, Alisoun's body is delicate and slender like a weasel, her apron is as white as morning milk, and her features are compared to plums and pear trees. The Miller's imagery is less conventional and less elevated than the Knight's, drawn instead from the details of village or farm life.

Although the narrator is unforgiving in his depiction of the drunk, rowdy Miller, whom he presents according to the stereotypes of the Miller's class and

profession, there are a few intriguing points of similarity between the narrator and the Miller. For instance, the Miller apologizes for the tale he is about to tell, and transfers all blame to the "ale of Southwerk"—in effect, to the Host himself (3140). Thirty lines later, the narrator himself makes a similar apology, and reminds his audience to blame the Miller if it finds the tale offensive. Also, the Miller begins his story by giving little portraits of each of his characters, just as the narrator begins his story of the pilgrimage by outlining each of its members.

The Host asks the Monk to "quite," or repay, the Knight's Tale (3119). But when the Miller interrupts and cries out that he can "quite the Knyghtes [Knight's] tale," he changes the word somewhat to mean "revenge" (3127). Indeed, the Miller does take "revenge" upon the Knight to an extent. Just as he transforms the meaning of the word "quite," the Miller takes several of the themes from the Knight's Tale and alters them. For instance, the Knight's Tale suggested that human suffering is part of a divine plan that mortals cannot hope to know. In a completely different tone and context, the Miller, too, cautions against prying into "God's pryvetee," meaning God's secrets (3164). He first raises this idea in his Prologue, arguing that a man shouldn't take it upon himself to assume that his wife is unfaithful. In the Miller's Tale, John repeats the caution against prying into "God's pryvetee." Several times, John scolds Nicholas for trying to know "God's pryvetee," but when Nicholas actually offers to let John in on his secret, John jumps at the chance. John also jealously tries to control his young wife, reminding us that the Miller equated an attempt to know God's "pryvetee" with a husband's attempt to know about his wife's "private parts." The two round tubs that the foolish carpenter hangs from the roof of his barn, one on either side of a long trough, suggest an obscene visual pun on this vulgar meaning of "God's pryvetee."

The Miller's Tale also responds to the Knight's by turning the Knight's courtly love into a burlesque farce. The Miller places his lovers' intrigues in a lower-class context, satirizing the pretensions of long-suffering courtly lovers by portraying Nicholas and Alisoun in a frank and sexually graphic manner—Nicholas seduces Alisoun by grabbing her by the pudendum, or "queynte" (3276). Absolon, the parish clerk, represents a parody of the conventional courtly lover. He stays awake at night, patiently woos his lady by means of go-betweens, sings and plays guitar, and aspires to be Alisoun's page or servant. For his pains, all he gets is the chance to kiss Alisoun's anus and to be farted on by Nicholas.

In addition to parodying tales of courtly love, the Miller's Tale also plays with the medieval genres of fabliaux and of mystery plays. Fabliaux are bawdy, comic tales that build to a ridiculous and complex climax usually hinging on some joke or trick. Nicholas is parody of the traditional clever cleric in a fabliau. As the deviser of the scheme to trick John, he seems to be attempting to write his own fabliau, although Absolon foils his plan. Yet, John is still the big loser in the end. The moral of the play is that John should not have married someone so young: "Men sholde wedden after hire estaat [their estate], / For youthe and elde

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[old age] is often at debaat" (3229–3230). Justice is served in the Miller's eyes when Alisoun commits adultery, because she revenges her husband "[f]or . . . his jalousye" (3851). Despite their differences, the two clerics ally at the story's end to dupe the carpenter, and so nobody believes John's story about Nicholas's trick.

The Miller's Tale also includes references to different scenes acted out in medieval mystery plays. Mystery plays, which typically enacted stories of God, Jesus, and the saints, were the main source of biblical education for lay folk in the Middle Ages. As John's gullibility shows, his education through mystery plays means that he has only a slight understanding of the Bible. The Miller begins his biblical puns in his Prologue, when he says that he will speak in "[Pontius] Pilates" place. His statement that he will tell "a legende and a lyf / Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf" is a reference to the story of Joseph and Mary. "Legends and lives" were written and told of the saints, and the story in which Joseph finds out that Mary is pregnant (and the many jokes that could be made about Mary being unfaithful) was a common subject of mystery plays. The stories of Noah's flood, and of Noah's wife, are also obviously twisted around by the Miller. These biblical puns work up to the climax of the tale. When he says that Nicholas's fart was as great as a "thonder-dent," the Miller aligns Nicholas—the creator of the action—with God (3807). Absolon, who cries out, "My soule bitake I unto Sathanas [Satan]" (3750), becomes a version of the devil, who damns God by sticking him with his red-hot poker. The result of Absolon's actions is that John falls from the roof in a pun on the fall of humanity.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue

From the beginning through the Wife of Bath's description of her first three husbands Fragment 3, lines 1–451

The Wife of Bath begins the Prologue to her tale by establishing herself as an authority on marriage, due to her extensive personal experience with the institution. Since her first marriage at the tender age of twelve, she has had five husbands. She says that many people have criticized her for her numerous marriages, most of them on the basis that Christ went only once to a wedding, at Cana in Galilee. The Wife of Bath has her own views of Scripture and God's plan. She says that men can only guess and interpret what Jesus meant when he told a Samaritan woman that her fifth husband was not her husband. With or without this bit of Scripture, no man has ever been able to give her an exact reply when she asks to know how many husbands a woman may have in her lifetime. God bade us to wax fruitful and multiply, she says, and that is the text that she wholeheartedly endorses. After all, great Old Testament figures, like Abraham,

Jacob, and Solomon, enjoyed multiple wives at once. She admits that many great Fathers of the Church have proclaimed the importance of virginity, such as the Apostle Paul. But, she reasons, even if virginity is important, someone must be procreating so that virgins can be created. Leave virginity to the perfect, she says, and let the rest of us use our gifts as best we may—and her gift, doubtless, is her sexual power. She uses this power as an "instrument" to control her husbands.

At this point, the Pardoner interrupts. He is planning to marry soon and worries that his wife will control his body, as the Wife of Bath describes. The Wife of Bath tells him to have patience and to listen to the whole tale to see if it reveals the truth about marriage. Of her five husbands, three have been "good" and two have been "bad." The first three were good, she admits, mostly because they were rich, old, and submissive. She laughs to recall the torments that she put these men through and recounts a typical conversation that she had with her older husbands. She would accuse her -husband of having an affair, launching into a tirade in which she would charge him with a bewildering array of accusations. If one of her husbands got drunk, she would claim he said that every wife is out to destroy her husband. He would then feel guilty and give her what she wanted. All of this, the Wife of Bath tells the rest of the pilgrims, was a pack of lies—her husbands never held these opinions, but she made these claims to give them grief. Worse, she would tease her husbands in bed, refusing to give them full satisfaction until they promised her money. She admits proudly to using her verbal and sexual power to bring her husbands to total submission.

Analysis

In her lengthy Prologue, the Wife of Bath recites her autobiography, announcing in her very first word that "experience" will be her guide. Yet, despite her claim that experience is her sole authority, the Wife of Bath apparently feels the need to establish her authority in a more scholarly way. She imitates the ways of churchmen and scholars by backing up her claims with quotations from Scripture and works of antiquity. The Wife carelessly flings around references as textual evidence to buttress her argument, most of which don't really correspond to her points. Her reference to Ptolemy's Almageste, for instance, is completely erroneous—the phrase she attributes to that book appears nowhere in the work. Although her many errors display her lack of real scholarship, they also convey Chaucer's mockery of the churchmen present, who often misused Scripture to justify their devious actions.

The text of the Wife of Bath's Prologue is based in the medieval genre of allegorical "confession." In a morality play, a personified vice such as Gluttony or Lust "confesses" his or her sins to the audience in a life story. The Wife is

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exactly what the medieval Church saw as a "wicked woman," and she is proud of it—from the very beginning, her speech has undertones of conflict with her patriarchal society. Because the statements that the Wife of Bath attributes to her husbands were taken from a number of satires published in Chaucer's time, which half-comically portrayed women as unfaithful, superficial, evil creatures, always out to undermine their husbands, feminist critics have often tried to portray the Wife as one of the first feminist characters in literature.

This interpretation is weakened by the fact that the Wife of Bath herself conforms to a number of these misogynist and misogamist (antimarriage) stereotypes. For example, she describes herself as sexually voracious but at the same time as someone who only has sex to get money, thereby combining two contradictory stereotypes. She also describes how she dominated her husband, playing on a fear that was common to men, as the Pardoner's nervous interjection reveals. Despite their contradictions, all of these ideas about women were used by men to support a hierarchy in which men dominated women.

From the Wife of Bath's description of her fourth husband through the end of her prologue Fragment 3, lines 452–856

The Wife of Bath begins her description of her two "bad" husbands. Her fourth husband, whom she married when still young, was a reveler, and he had a "paramour," or mistress (454). Remembering her wild youth, she becomes wistful as she describes the dancing and singing in which she and her fourth husband used to indulge. Her nostalgia reminds her of how old she has become, but she says that she pays her loss of beauty no mind. She will try to be merry, for, though she has lost her "flour," she will try to sell the "bran" that remains. Realizing that she has digressed, she returns to the story of her fourth husband. She confesses that she was his purgatory on Earth, always trying to make him jealous. He died while she was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Of her fifth husband, she has much more to say. She loved him, even though he treated her horribly and beat her. He was coy and flattering in bed, and always won her back. Women, the Wife says, always desire what is forbidden them, and run away from whatever pursues or is forced upon them. This husband was also different from the other four because she married him for love, not money. He was a poor ex-student who boarded with the Wife's friend and confidante.

When she first met this fifth husband, Jankyn, she was still married to her fourth. While walking with him one day, she told him that she would marry him if she were widowed. She lied to him and told him he had enchanted her, and that she had dreamed that he would kill her as she slept, filling her bed with blood, which signifies gold. But, she confides to her listeners, all of this was false: she never had such a dream. She loses her place in the story momentarily, then resumes with her fourth husband's funeral. She made a big show of crying, although, she admits, she actually cried very little since she already had a new husband lined up.

As she watched Jankyn carry her husband's casket, she fell in love with him. He was only twenty and she forty, but she was always a lusty woman and thought she could handle his youth. But, she says, she came to regret the age difference, because he would not suffer her abuse like her past husbands and gave some of his own abuse in return. He had a "book of wicked wives" she recalls, called Valerie and Theofraste. This book contained the stories of the most deceitful wives in history. It began with Eve, who brought all mankind into sin by first taking the apple in the Garden of Eden; from there, it chronicled Delilah's betrayal of Samson, Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, and other famous stories. Jankyn would torment the Wife of Bath (whom we learn in line 804 is named Alisoun) by reading out of this book at night.

One evening, out of frustration, the Wife tears three pages out of the book and punches Jankyn in the face. Jankyn repays her by striking her on the head, which is the reason, she explains in line 636, that she is now deaf in one ear. She cries out that she wants to kiss him before she dies, but when he comes over, she hits him again. They finally manage a truce, in which he hands over all of his meager estate to her, and she acts kindly and loving.

Her tale of her marriages finished, the Wife announces that she will tell her story, eliciting laughter from the Friar, who exclaims, "This is a long preamble of a tale!" (831). The Summoner tells him to shut up, and they exchange some angry words. The Host quiets everybody down and allows the Wife of Bath to begin her story.

Analysis

In her discussion of her fourth and fifth husbands, the Wife of Bath begins to let her true feelings show through her argumentative rhetoric. Her language becomes even less controlled, and she loses her place several times (at line 585, for instance), as she begins to react to her own story, allowing her words to affect her own train of thought. Her sensitivity about her age begins to show through, and, as she reveals psychological depth, she becomes a more realistic, sympathetic, and compelling character.

When the Wife of Bath describes how she fell in love with her fifth husband, despite her pragmatism, she reveals her softer side. She recognizes that he used the same tactics against her as she used against other men, but she cannot stop herself from desiring him. Jankyn even uses one of the satires against women to aggravate her, the kind of satire that the Wife mocked earlier in her Prologue. Despite all this, we can see that Jankyn, though the most aggravating of her husbands, is the only one that she admits she truly loved. Even as she brags about her shameless manipulation of her husbands and claims that her sexual powers can conquer anyone, she retains a deep fondness for the one man she could not control.

The Wife seems to enjoy the act of arguing more than the end of deriving an answer by logic. To explain why clerks (meaning church writers) treat wives so

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badly, for example, she employs three different arguments. First, she blames the entire religious establishment, claiming that church writings breed hostility toward wives because they were written by men (690–696). Then, she gives an astrological explanation, asserting that the children of Mercury (scholars) and of Venus (lovers) always contradict one another. A third reason she gives is that when clerks grow old, their impotence and decreased virility makes them hostile and slanderous toward wives (705–710).

Twice in her Prologue, the Wife calls attention to her habit of lying—"and al was fals," she states (382, 582). These statements certainly highlight our awareness of the fact that she's giving a performance, and they also put her entire life story in question. We are left wondering to what extent we should even believe the "experience" of the Wife of Bath, and whether she is not, in fact, a mean-spirited satire on Chaucer's part, meant to represent the fickleness of women.

The Wife of Bath's Tale

Fragment 3, lines 857–1264

In the days of King Arthur, the Wife of Bath begins, the isle of Britain was full of fairies and elves. Now, those creatures are gone because their spots have been taken by the friars and other mendicants that seem to fill every nook and cranny of the isle. And though the friars rape women, just as the incubi did in the days of the fairies, the friars only cause women dishonor—the incubi always got them pregnant.

In Arthur's court, however, a young, lusty knight comes across a beautiful young maiden one day. Overcome by lust and his sense of his own power, he rapes her. The court is scandalized by the crime and decrees that the knight should be put to death by decapitation. However, Arthur's queen and other ladies of the court intercede on his behalf and ask the king to give him one chance to save his own life. Arthur, wisely obedient to wifely counsel, grants their request. The queen presents the knight with the following challenge: if, within one year, he can discover what women want most in the world and report his findings back to the court, he will keep his life. If he cannot find the answer to the queen's question, or if his answer is wrong, he will lose his head.

The knight sets forth in sorrow. He roams throughout the country, posing the question to every woman he meets. To the knight's dismay, nearly every one of them answers differently. Some claim that women love money best, some honor, some jolliness, some looks, some sex, some remarriage, some flattery, and some say that women most want to be free to do as they wish. Finally, says the Wife, some say that women most want to be considered discreet and secretive, although she argues that such an answer is clearly untrue, since no woman can keep a secret. As proof, she retells Ovid's story of Midas. Midas had two ass's

ears growing under his hair, which he concealed from everybody except his wife, whom he begged not to disclose his secret. She swore she would not, but the secret burned so much inside her that she ran down to a marsh and whispered her husband's secret to the water. The Wife then says that if her listeners would like to hear how the tale ends, they should read Ovid.

She returns to her story of the knight. When his day of judgment draws near, the knight sorrowfully heads for home. As he rides near a forest, he sees a large group of women dancing and decides to approach them to ask his question. But as he approaches, the group vanishes, and all he can see is an ugly old woman. The woman asks if she can be of help, and the knight explains his predicament and promises to reward her if she can help him. The woman tells the knight that he must pledge himself to her in return for her help, and the knight, having no options left, gladly consents. She then guarantees that his life will be saved.

The knight and the old woman travel together to the court, where, in front of a large audience, the knight tells the queen the answer with which the old woman supplied him: what women most desire is to be in charge of their husbands and lovers. The women agree resoundingly that this is the answer, and the queen spares the knight's life. The old hag comes forth and publicly asks the knight to marry her. The knight cries out in horror. He begs her to take his material possessions rather than his body, but she refuses to yield, and in the end he is forced to consent. The two are married in a small, private wedding and go to bed together the same night. Throughout the entire ordeal, the knight remains miserable.

While in bed, the loathsome hag asks the knight why he is so sad. He replies that he could hardly bear the shame of having such an ugly, lowborn wife. She does not take offense at the insult, but calmly asks him whether real "gentillesse," or noble character, can be hereditary (1109). There have been sons of noble fathers, she argues, who were shameful and villainous, though they shared the same blood. Her family may be poor, but real poverty lies in covetousness, and real riches lie in having little and wanting nothing. She offers the knight a choice: either he can have her be ugly but loyal and good, or he can have her young and fair but also coquettish and unfaithful. The knight ponders in silence. Finally, he replies that he would rather trust her judgment, and he asks her to choose whatever she thinks best. Because the knight's answer gave the woman what she most desired, the authority to choose for herself, she becomes both beautiful and good. The two have a long, happy marriage, and the woman becomes completely obedient to her husband. The Wife of Bath concludes with a plea that Jesus Christ send all women husbands who are young, meek, and fresh in bed, and the grace to outlive their husbands.

Analysis

"Wommen desiren to have sovereyntee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,

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And for to been in maistrie hym above."

The tale the Wife of Bath tells about the transformation of an old hag into a beautiful maid was quite well known in folk legend and poetry. One of Chaucer's contemporaries, the poet John Gower, wrote a version of the same tale that was very popular in Chaucer's time. But whereas the moral of the folk tale of the loathsome hag is that true beauty lies within, the Wife of Bath arrives at such a conclusion only incidentally. Her message is that, ugly or fair, women should be obeyed in all things by their husbands.

The old hag might be intended to represent the Wife of Bath herself, at least as she would like others to see her. Though the hag has aged, she is capable of displaying all of the vigor and inner beauty of her youth if the right man comes along, just as the Wife did with her fifth and favorite husband, the youthful Jankyn. Although the old hag becomes a beautiful young woman in response to the young knight's well-timed response, it is unclear whether he truly had enough respect for the old woman that he allowed her to choose for herself, or whether he had simply learned how to supply her with the correct answer.

If we agree with the former, we may see the Wife as an idealistic character who believes that bad men can change. If we choose the latter, the Wife becomes a much more cynical character, inclined to mistrust all men. In the second interpretation, both transformations—the knight's shallow change in behavior (but not in soul) and the hag's transformation into the physical object of desires—are only skin deep. Perhaps she is giving him exactly what he deserves: superficiality.

The Wife begins her tale by depicting the golden age of King Arthur as one that was both more perilous and more full of opportunity for women. Every time a woman traveled alone, the Wife suggests, she was in danger of encountering an incubus, or an evil spirit who would seduce women (880). But the society is also highly matriarchal. After the knight commits a rape, the king hands him over to Arthur's queen, who decides to send him on an educational quest. His education comes through women, and the queen's challenge puts him in a situation where what is traditionally thought of as a shortcoming—a woman's inability to keep a secret—is the only thing that can save him. The Wife's digression about King Midas may also be slightly subversive. Instead of finishing the story, she directs the reader to Ovid. In Ovid's version of the story, the only person who knows about Midas's ass's ears is not his wife but his barber. The wife could, therefore, be slyly trying to point out that men, too, are gossips.

The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale

Fragment 6, lines 287–968

Introduction to the Pardoner's Tale

The Host reacts to the Physician's Tale, which has just been told. He is shocked at the death of the young Roman girl in the tale, and mourns the fact that her

beauty ultimately caused the chain of events that led her father to kill her. Wanting to cheer up, the Host asks the Pardoner to tell the group a merrier, farcical tale. The Pardoner agrees, but will continue only after he has food and drink in his stomach. Other pilgrims interject that they would prefer to hear a moral story, and the Pardoner again agrees.

Prologue to the Pardoner's Tale

My theme is alwey oon, and evere was—

Radix malorum est Cupiditas.

After getting a drink, the Pardoner begins his Prologue. He tells the company about his occupation—a combination of itinerant preaching and selling promises of salvation. His sermon topic always remains the same: Radix malorum est Cupiditas, or "greed is the root of all evil." He gives a similar sermon to every congregation and then breaks out his bag of "relics"—which, he readily admits to the listening pilgrims, are fake. He will take a sheep's bone and claim it has miraculous healing powers for all kinds of ailments. The parishioners always believe him and make their offerings to the relics, which the Pardoner quickly pockets.

The Pardoner admits that he preaches solely to get money, not to correct sin. He argues that many sermons are the product of evil intentions. By preaching, the Pardoner can get back at anyone who has offended him or his brethren. In his sermon, he always preaches about covetousness, the very vice that he himself is gripped by. His one and only interest is to fill his ever-deepening pockets. He would rather take the last penny from a widow and her starving family than give up his money, and the good cheeses, breads, and wines that such income brings him. Speaking of alcohol, he notes, he has now finished his drink of "corny ale" and is ready to begin his tale.

The Pardoner's Tale

The Pardoner describes a group of young Flemish people who spend their time drinking and reveling, indulging in all forms of excess. After commenting on their lifestyle of debauchery, the Pardoner enters into a tirade against the vices that they practice. First and foremost is gluttony, which he identifies as the sin that first caused the fall of mankind in Eden. Next, he attacks drunkenness, which makes a man seem mad and witless. Next is gambling, the temptation that ruins men of power and wealth. Finally, he denounces swearing. He argues that it so offends God that he forbade swearing in the Second Commandment—placing it

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higher up on the list than homicide. After almost two hundred lines of sermonizing, the Pardoner finally returns to his story of the lecherous Flemish youngsters.

As three of these rioters sit drinking, they hear a funeral knell. One of the revelers' servants tells the group that an old friend of theirs was slain that very night by a mysterious figure named Death. The rioters are outraged and, in their drunkenness, decide to find and kill Death to avenge their friend. Traveling down the road, they meet an old man who appears sorrowful. He says his sorrow stems from old age—he has been waiting for Death to come and take him for some time, and he has wandered all over the world. The youths, hearing the name of Death, demand to know where they can find him. The old man directs them into a grove, where he says he just left Death under an oak tree. The rioters rush to the tree, underneath which they find not Death but eight bushels of gold coins with no owner in sight.

At first, they are speechless, but, then, the slyest of the three reminds them that if they carry the gold into town in daylight, they will be taken for thieves. They must transport the gold under cover of night, and so someone must run into town to fetch bread and wine in the meantime. They draw lots, and the youngest of the three loses and runs off toward town. As soon as he is gone, the sly plotter turns to his friend and divulges his plan: when their friend returns from town, they will kill him and therefore receive greater shares of the wealth. The second rioter agrees, and they prepare their trap. Back in town, the youngest vagrant is having similar thoughts. He could easily be the richest man in town, he realizes, if he could have all the gold to himself. He goes to the apothecary and buys the strongest poison available, then puts the poison into two bottles of wine, leaving a third bottle pure for himself. He returns to the tree, but the other two rioters leap out and kill him.

They sit down to drink their friend's wine and celebrate, but each happens to pick up a poisoned bottle. Within minutes, they lie dead next to their friend. Thus, concludes the Pardoner, all must beware the sin of avarice, which can only bring treachery and death. He realizes that he has forgotten something: he has relics and pardons in his bag. According to his custom, he tells the pilgrims the value of his relics and asks for contributions—even though he has just told them the relics are fake. He offers the Host the first chance to come forth and kiss the relics, since the Host is clearly the most enveloped in sin (942). The Host is outraged and proposes to make a relic out of the Pardoner's genitals, but the Knight calms everybody down. The Host and Pardoner kiss and make up, and all have a good laugh as they continue on their way.

Analysis

We know from the General Prologue that the Pardoner is as corrupt as others in his profession, but his frankness about his own hypocrisy is nevertheless shocking. He bluntly accuses himself of fraud, avarice, and gluttony—the very things he

preaches against. And yet, rather than expressing any sort of remorse with his confession, he takes a perverse pride in the depth of his corruption. The Pardoner's earnestness in portraying himself as totally amoral seems almost too extreme to be accurate. His boasts about his corruption may represent his attempt to cover up his doubts or anxieties about the life of crime (in the name of religion) that he has adopted. It is possible to argue that the Pardoner sacrifices his own spiritual good to cure the sins of others. Yet he doesn't seem to really consider his spiritual corruption a real sacrifice, since he loves the money and the comforts it brings him. Either way, he quickly covers up his statement, which shows at least a flicker of interest in the good of other people, with a renewed proclamation of his own selfishness:

> "But that is nat my principal entente; /
>
> I preche nothyng but for coveitise" (432–433).

The Pardoner's Tale is an example, a type of story often used by preachers to emphasize a moral point to their audience. The Pardoner has told us in his Prologue that his main theme—"Greed is the root of all evil"—never changes. We can assume that the Pardoner is well practiced in the art of telling this specific tale, and he even inserts some of his sermon into it. The Pardoner's point is quite obvious—his tale shows the disastrous effects of greed. The hypocrisy he has described in his Prologue becomes evident in his tale, as all the vices he lists in his diatribe at the beginning—gluttony, drunkenness, gambling, and swearing—are faults that he himself has either displayed to the other pilgrims or proudly claimed to possess. Ridiculously, when he has finished his condemnation of swearing, he begins the tale swearing his own oath: "Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde . . . now wol I telle forth my tale" (658–660). Such an overtly hypocritical act is perfectly consistent with the character that the Pardoner has presented to us, and an example of Chaucer's typically wry comedy.

As if on automatic pilot, the Pardoner completes his tale just as he would when preaching in the villages, by displaying his false relics and asking for contributions. His act is intriguing, for he makes no acknowledgment of his hypocrisy. Only a few lines before, in his Prologue, he exposed to the entire company the fraudulence of his whole operation. It is inconceivable that he would now expect to get contributions from his fellow travelers—so why does he ask for them? Perhaps, like a professional actor, the Pardoner enjoys the challenge of telling his tale so convincingly that he tricks his audience into belief, even after he has explained to them his corrupt nature. Or perhaps he takes delight in showing the audience how his routine works, as an actor might enjoy showing people backstage. In any case, the Pardoner's attempt to sell pardons to the pilgrims is a source of rancor for the Host, because, in trying to swindle the other pilgrims, the Pardoner has violated the Host's notion of fellowship on which the storytelling pilgrimage is based.

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The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

The Prologue of the Nun's Priest

After the Monk has told his tale, the Knight pleads that no more tragedies be told. He asks that someone tell a tale that is the opposite of tragedy, one that narrates the extreme good fortune of someone previously brought low. The Host picks the Nun's Priest, the priest traveling with the Prioress and her nun, and demands that he tell a tale that will gladden the hearts of the company members. The Nun's Priest readily agrees, and begins his tale.

The Tale of the Nun's Priest

A poor, elderly widow lives a simple life in a cottage with her two daughters. Her few possessions include three sows, three cows, a sheep, and some chickens. One chicken, her rooster, is named Chanticleer, which in French means "sings clearly." True to his name, Chanticleer's "cock-a-doodle-doo" makes him the master of all roosters. He crows the hour more accurately than any church clock. His crest is redder than fine coral, his beak is black as jet, his nails whiter than lilies, and his feathers shine like burnished gold. Understandably, such an attractive cock would have to be the Don Juan of the barnyard. Chanticleer has many hen-wives, but he loves most truly a hen named Pertelote. She is as lovely as Chanticleer is magnificent.

As Chanticleer, Pertelote, and all of Chanticleer's ancillary hen-wives are roosting one night, Chanticleer has a terrible nightmare about an orange houndlike beast who threatens to kill him while he is in the yard. Fearless Pertelote berates him for letting a dream get the better of him. She believes the dream to be the result of some physical malady, and she promises him that she will find some purgative herbs. She urges him once more not to dread something as fleeting and illusory as a dream. In order to convince her that his dream was important, he tells the stories of men who dreamed of murder and then discovered it. His point in telling these stories is to prove to Pertelote that "Mordre will out" (3052)—murder will reveal itself—even and especially in dreams. Chanticleer cites textual examples of famous dream interpretations to further support his thesis that dreams are portentous. He then praises Pertelote's beauty and grace, and the aroused hero and heroine make love in barnyard fashion: "He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme, / And trad hire eke as ofte, er it was pryme [he clasped Pertelote with his wings twenty times, and copulated with her as often, before it was 6 a.m."

One day in May, Chanticleer has just declared his perfect happiness when a wave of sadness passes over him. That very night, a hungry fox stalks Chanticleer and his wives, watching their every move. The next day, Chanticleer notices the fox while watching a butterfly, and the fox confronts him with dissimulating courtesy, telling the rooster not to be afraid. Chanticleer relishes the fox's flattery of his singing. He beats his wings with pride, stands on his toes, stretches his neck, closes his eyes, and crows loudly. The fox reaches out and grabs Chanticleer

by the throat, and then slinks away with him back toward the woods. No one is around to witness what has happened. Once Pertelote finds out what has happened, she burns her feathers with grief, and a great wail arises from the henhouse.

The widow and her daughters hear the screeching and spy the fox running away with the rooster. The dogs follow, and pretty soon the whole barnyard joins in the hullabaloo. Chanticleer very cleverly suggests that the fox turn and boast to his pursuers. The fox opens his mouth to do so, and Chanticleer flies out of the fox's mouth and into a high tree. The fox tries to flatter the bird into coming down, but Chanticleer has learned his lesson. He tells the fox that flattery will work for him no more. The moral of the story, concludes the Nun's Priest, is never to trust a flatterer.

The Epilogue to the Nun's Priest's Tale

The Host tells the Nun's Priest that he would have been an excellent rooster—for if he has as much courage as he has strength, he would need hens. The Host points out the Nun's Priest's strong muscles, his great neck, and his large breast, and compares him to a sparrow-hawk. He merrily wishes the Nun's Priest good luck.

Analysis

The Nun's Priest's Tale is a fable, a simple tale about animals that concludes with a moral lesson. Stylistically, however, the tale is much more complex than its simple plot would suggest. Into the fable framework, the Nun's Priest brings parodies of epic poetry, medieval scholarship, and courtly romance. Most critics are divided about whether to interpret this story as a parody or as an allegory. If viewed as a parody, the story is an ironic and humorous retelling of the fable of the fox and the rooster in the guise of, alternately, a courtly romance and a Homeric epic. It is hilariously done, since into the squawkings and struttings of poultry life, Chaucer transposes scenes of a hero's dreaming of death and courting his lady love, in a manner that imitates the overblown, descriptive style of romances. For example, the rooster's plumage is described as shining like burnished gold. He also parodies epic poetry by utilizing apostrophes, or formal, imploring addresses: "O false mordrour, lurkynge in thy den!" (3226), and "O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe / That thou into the yerd flaugh fro the bemes!" (3230–3231). If we read the story as an allegory, Chanticleer's story is a tale of how we are all easily swayed by the smooth, flattering tongue of the devil, represented by the fox. Other scholars have read the tale as the story of Adam and Eve's (and consequently all humankind's) fall from grace told through the veil of a fable.

The Nun's Priest's Tale is the only one of all the tales to feature a specific reference to an actual late-fourteenth-century event. This reference occurs when the widow and her daughters begin to chase the fox, and the whole barnyard screeches and bellows, joining in the fray. The narrator notes that not even the

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crew of Jack Straw, the reputed leader of the English peasants' rebellion in 1381, made half as much noise as did this barnyard cacophony: "Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee / Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille / Whan that they wolden any Flemyng kille, /As thilke day was maad upon the fox" (3394–3397). This first and only contemporary reference in The Canterbury Tales dates at least the completion of the tale of Chanticleer to the 1380s, a time of great civil unrest and class turmoil.

3.7 IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

1. *Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote*
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.

(General Prologue, 1–12)

These are the opening lines with which the narrator begins the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*. The imagery in this opening passage is of spring's renewal and rebirth. April's sweet showers have penetrated the dry earth of March, hydrating the roots, which in turn coax flowers out of the ground. The constellation Taurus is in the sky; Zephyr, the warm, gentle west wind, has breathed life into the fields; and the birds chirp merrily. The verbs used to describe Nature's actions—piercing (2), engendering (4), inspiring (5), and pricking (11)—conjure up images of conception.

The natural world's reawakening aligns with the narrator's similarly "inspired" poetic sensibility. The classical (Latin and Ancient Greek) authors that Chaucer emulated and wanted to surpass would always begin their epic narrative poems by invoking a muse, or female goddess, to inspire them, quite literally to talk or breathe a story into them. Most of them begin "Sing in me, O muse," about a particular subject. Chaucer too begins with a moment of inspiration, but in this case it is the natural inspiration of the earth readying itself for spring rather than a supernatural being filling the poet's body with her voice.

After the long sleep of winter, people begin to stir, feeling the need to "goon on pilgrimages," or to travel to a site where one worships a saint's relics as a means of spiritual cleansing and renewal. Since winter ice and snow made

traveling long distances almost impossible (this was an age not only before automobiles but also before adequately developed horse-drawn carriages), the need to get up, stretch one's legs, and see the world outside the window must have been great. Pilgrimages combined spring vacations with religious purification.

The landscape in this passage also clearly situates the text in England. This is not a classical landscape like the Troy of Homer's *Iliad,* nor is it an entirely fictionalized space like the cool groves and rocky cliffs of imaginary Arcadia from pastoral poetry and romances. Chaucer's landscape is also accessible to all types of people, but especially those who inhabit the countryside, since Chaucer speaks of budding flowers, growing crops, and singing birds.

2. *The Firste Moevere of the cause above,*
Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
. . .
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.
(The Knight's Tale, 2987–2993)

This passage is from the conclusion of the Knight's Tale, as Duke Theseus explains why Emelye must marry the knight Palamon. Theseus bases his argument on concepts drawn from the fifth-century A.D. Roman philosopher Boethius, whose ideas appealed to medieval Christians because he combined Plato's theory of an ideal world with Christian teachings of a moral universe. Chaucer took it upon himself to translate and provide a commentary for Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy.* Chaucer's translation, a long prose text, is informally known as his *Boece.*

The "Firste Moevere" (first mover) is the Aristotelian notion of God. The story the Knight tells takes place long before Christ. Although medieval Christians could not condemn classical writers and philosophers, since much of Virgil's poetry and Plato's philosophy formed the basis for Christian literature, they had difficulty imagining a time before people believed in Christ. Chaucer (or the Knight) has carefully given Theseus a pagan notion of God that nevertheless resonates with Christianity. Having a supreme ancient Greek or Roman god would be idolatrous and therefore immoral (although the gods appear as lesser entities in the second half of the tale), because, according to medieval Christians, there was only one god and that god was the Trinity.

The "faire cheyne of love" is a medieval view of cosmology, or the natural order of things. It is the idea that every thing has its place in the hierarchy of the world, from the smallest flea to the hand of God. The fifty lines or so that follow this passage contain ideas that are taken almost word for word from Chaucer's

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Boece. Theseus argues that Emelye's overly long mourning threatens to disrupt the great chain of love, and that the only way to maintain the chain's balance is for her to marry Palamon and be happy.

3. *Thus swyved was this carpenteris wyf,*
For al his kepyng and his jalousye;
And Absolon hath kist hir nether ye;
And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.
This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!
(The Miller's Tale, 3850–3854)

This passage, the rhyming conclusion to the Miller's Tale, neatly resolves the story by offering a reckoning of accounts. Everyone in the story has learned his or her lesson and gotten the physical punishment he or she deserves. The carpenter's wife, Alisoun, was "swyved," or possessed in bed by another man, in this case, Nicholas. John, the ignorant and jealous carpenter, has been made a cuckold, despite his watchful and possessive eye.

Absolon, the foolish and foppish parish clerk, has kissed Alisoun's behind, fair punishment for evading his clerical duties. Nicholas, the smart-alecky student who cheated on the carpenter with Alisoun, has been burned on his bottom with a red-hot poker as payback for farting in Absolon's face. Still, the distribution of punishments is not entirely equal. John is dealt the worst lot—he ends up with a broken arm and the whole town believing he has gone insane. Alisoun's "swyving" is a double punishment for John, while Alisoun herself escapes unscathed.

3.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Why are the pilgrims going to Canterbury?
   (a) To meet King Henry III
   (b) To see a medieval mystery play
   (c) To worship the relics of Saint Thomas Becket
   (d) Because they are tourists
2. What does the Squire wear?
   (a) A velvet doublet and hose
   (b) Cloth embroidered with flowers
   (c) Green and peacock-blue hunting gear
   (d) A beaver hat
3. Who marries Emelye in the Knight's Tale?
   (a) Theseus (b) Arcite
   (c) Saturn (d) Palamon
4. According to the Wife of Bath, what do women most desire?

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(a) Sovereignty over their husbands
(b) True love
(c) Perfect beauty
(d) Great wealth

5. What does Chanticleer dream?
(a) That he will be killed by a wolf
(b) That Pertelote will desert him
(c) That he will be taken away by an orange, houndlike creature
(d) That his friend will be murdered

6. Who are the three men searching for in the Pardoner's Tale?
(a) The Wandering Jew (b) Greed
(c) Jesus Christ (d) Death

7. Who is branded by a red-hot poker in the Miller's Tale?
(a) Absolon (b) Alisoun
(c) Nicholas (d) John

8. Which of the following tales is a fabliau?
(a) The Knight's Tale (b) The Nun's Priest's Tale
(c) The Wife of Bath's Tale (d) The Miller's Tale

9. Which pilgrim has a forked beard?
(a) The Summoner (b) The Merchant
(c) The Reeve (d) The Physician

10. What is the moral of the Nun's Priest's Tale?
(a) Slow and easy wins the race. (b) Greed is the root of all evil.
(c) Beauty lies within. (d) Never trust a flatterer.

11. What is the Wife of Bath's Prologue about?
(a) Her life with her five different husbands
(b) Ovid's Metamorphoses
(c) How women deserve to hold high public offices just like men
(d) A philosophical treatise on the astrolabe

12. When does The Canterbury Tales take place?
(a) In the Renaissance (b) In pre-Christian Britain
(c) During the Norman invasion (d) In the late fourteenth century

13. For which social classes did Chaucer write?
(a) The nobility (b) All levels of society
(c) Illiterate peasants (d) Merchants

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14. What was Chaucer's profession?

(a) Poet (b) Noble

(c) Merchant (d) Civil servant

15. How many Canterbury Tales are there?

(a) 80 (b) 24

(c) 16 (d) 50

3.9 SUMMARY

At the Tabard Inn, a tavern in Southwark, near London, the narrator joins a company of twenty-nine pilgrims. The pilgrims, like the narrator, are traveling to the shrine of the martyr Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury. The narrator gives a descriptive account of twenty-seven of these pilgrims, including a Knight, Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk, Man of Law, Franklin, Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, Tapestry-Weaver, Cook, Shipman, Physician, Wife, Parson, Plowman, Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, and Host. (He does not describe the Second Nun or the Nun's Priest, although both characters appear later in the book.) The Host, whose name, we find out in the Prologue to the Cook's Tale, is Harry Bailey, suggests that the group ride together and entertain one another with stories. He decides that each pilgrim will tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back. Whomever he judges to be the best storyteller will receive a meal at Bailey's tavern, courtesy of the other pilgrims. The pilgrims draw lots and determine that the Knight will tell the first tale.

The Knight's Tale

Theseus, duke of Athens, imprisons Arcite and Palamon, two knights from Thebes (another city in ancient Greece). From their prison, the knights see and fall in love with Theseus's sister-in-law, Emelye. Through the intervention of a friend, Arcite is freed, but he is banished from Athens. He returns in disguise and becomes a page in Emelye's chamber. Palamon escapes from prison, and the two meet and fight over Emelye. Theseus apprehends them and arranges a tournament between the two knights and their allies, with Emelye as the prize. Arcite wins, but he is accidentally thrown from his horse and dies. Palamon then marries Emelye.

The Miller's Prologue and Tale

The Host asks the Monk to tell the next tale, but the drunken Miller interrupts and insists that his tale should be the next. He tells the story of an impoverished student named Nicholas, who persuades his landlord's sexy young wife, Alisoun, to spend the night with him. He convinces his landlord, a carpenter named John, that the second flood is coming, and tricks him into spending the night in a tub hanging from the ceiling of his barn. Absolon, a young parish clerk who is also

in love with Alisoun, appears outside the window of the room where Nicholas and Alisoun lie together. When Absolon begs Alisoun for a kiss, she sticks her rear end out the window in the dark and lets him kiss it. Absolon runs and gets a red-hot poker, returns to the window, and asks for another kiss; when Nicholas sticks his bottom out the window and farts, Absolon brands him on the buttocks. Nicholas's cries for water make the carpenter think that the flood has come, so the carpenter cuts the rope connecting his tub to the ceiling, falls down, and breaks his arm.

The Reeve's Prologue and Tale

Because he also does carpentry, the Reeve takes offense at the Miller's tale of a stupid carpenter, and counters with his own tale of a dishonest miller. The Reeve tells the story of two students, John and Alayn, who go to the mill to watch the miller grind their corn, so that he won't have a chance to steal any. But the miller unties their horse, and while they chase it, he steals some of the flour he has just ground for them. By the time the students catch the horse, it is dark, so they spend the night in the miller's house. That night, Alayn seduces the miller's daughter, and John seduces his wife. When the miller wakes up and finds out what has happened, he tries to beat the students. His wife, thinking that her husband is actually one of the students, hits the miller over the head with a staff. The students take back their stolen goods and leave.

The Cook's Prologue and Tale

The Cook particularly enjoys the Reeve's Tale, and offers to tell another funny tale. The tale concerns an apprentice named Perkyn who drinks and dances so much that he is called "Perkyn Reveler." Finally, Perkyn's master decides that he would rather his apprentice leave to revel than stay home and corrupt the other servants. Perkyn arranges to stay with a friend who loves drinking and gambling, and who has a wife who is a prostitute. The tale breaks off, unfinished, after fifty-eight lines.

The Man of Law's Introduction, Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

The Host reminds his fellow pilgrims to waste no time, because lost time cannot be regained. He asks the Man of Law to tell the next tale. The Man of Law agrees, apologizing that he cannot tell any suitable tale that Chaucer has not already told—Chaucer may be unskilled as a poet, says the Man of Law, but he has told more stories of lovers than Ovid, and he doesn't print tales of incest as John Gower does (Gower was a contemporary of Chaucer). In the Prologue to his tale, the Man of Law laments the miseries of poverty. He then remarks how fortunate merchants are, and says that his tale is one told to him by a merchant.

In the tale, the Muslim sultan of Syria converts his entire sultanate (including himself) to Christianity in order to persuade the emperor of Rome to give him his daughter, Custance, in marriage. The sultan's mother and her attendants remain

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secretly faithful to Islam. The mother tells her son she wishes to hold a banquet for him and all the Christians. At the banquet, she massacres her son and all the Christians except for Custance, whom she sets adrift in a rudderless ship. After years of floating, Custance runs ashore in Northumberland, where a constable and his wife, Hermengyld, offer her shelter. She converts them to Christianity.

One night, Satan makes a young knight sneak into Hermengyld's chamber and murder Hermengyld. He places the bloody knife next to Custance, who sleeps in the same chamber. When the constable returns home, accompanied by Alla, the king of Northumberland, he finds his slain wife. He tells Alla the story of how Custance was found, and Alla begins to pity the girl. He decides to look more deeply into the murder. Just as the knight who murdered Hermengyld is swearing that Custance is the true murderer, he is struck down and his eyes burst out of his face, proving his guilt to Alla and the crowd. The knight is executed, Alla and many others convert to Christianity, and Custance and Alla marry.

While Alla is away in Scotland, Custance gives birth to a boy named Mauricius. Alla's mother, Donegild, intercepts a letter from Custance to Alla and substitutes a counterfeit one that claims that the child is disfigured and bewitched. She then intercepts Alla's reply, which claims that the child should be kept and loved no matter how malformed. Donegild substitutes a letter saying that Custance and her son are banished and should be sent away on the same ship on which Custance arrived. Alla returns home, finds out what has happened, and kills Donegild.

After many adventures at sea, including an attempted rape, Custance ends up back in Rome, where she reunites with Alla, who has made a pilgrimage there to atone for killing his mother. She also reunites with her father, the emperor. Alla and Custance return to England, but Alla dies after a year, so Custance returns, once more, to Rome. Mauricius becomes the next Roman emperor.

Following the Man of Law's Tale, the Host asks the Parson to tell the next tale, but the Parson reproaches him for swearing, and they fall to bickering.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

The Wife of Bath gives a lengthy account of her feelings about marriage. Quoting from the Bible, the Wife argues against those who believe it is wrong to marry more than once, and she explains how she dominated and controlled each of her five husbands. She married her fifth husband, Jankyn, for love instead of money. After the Wife has rambled on for a while, the Friar butts in to complain that she is taking too long, and the Summoner retorts that friars are like flies, always meddling. The Friar promises to tell a tale about a summoner, and the Summoner promises to tell a tale about a friar. The Host cries for everyone to quiet down and allow the Wife to commence her tale.

In her tale, a young knight of King Arthur's court rapes a maiden; to atone for his crime, Arthur's queen sends him on a quest to discover what women want

most. An ugly old woman promises the knight that she will tell him the secret if he promises to do whatever she wants for saving his life. He agrees, and she tells him women want control of their husbands and their own lives. They go together to Arthur's queen, and the old woman's answer turns out to be correct. The old woman then tells the knight that he must marry her. When the knight confesses later that he is repulsed by her appearance, she gives him a choice: she can either be ugly and faithful, or beautiful and unfaithful. The knight tells her to make the choice herself, and she rewards him for giving her control of the marriage by rendering herself both beautiful *and* faithful.

The Friar's Prologue and Tale

The Friar speaks approvingly of the Wife of Bath's Tale, and offers to lighten things up for the company by telling a funny story about a lecherous summoner. The Summoner does not object, but he promises to pay the Friar back in his own tale. The Friar tells of an archdeacon who carries out the law without mercy, especially to lechers. The archdeacon has a summoner who has a network of spies working for him, to let him know who has been lecherous. The summoner extorts money from those he's sent to summon, charging them more money than he should for penance. He tries to serve a summons on a yeoman who is actually a devil in disguise. After comparing notes on their treachery and extortion, the devil vanishes, but when the summoner tries to prosecute an old wealthy widow unfairly, the widow cries out that the summoner should be taken to hell. The devil follows the woman's instructions and drags the summoner off to hell.

The Summoner's Prologue and Tale

The Summoner, furious at the Friar's Tale, asks the company to let him tell the next tale. First, he tells the company that there is little difference between friars and fiends, and that when an angel took a friar down to hell to show him the torments there, the friar asked why there were no friars in hell; the angel then pulled up Satan's tail and 20,000 friars came out of his ass.

In the Summoner's Tale, a friar begs for money from a dying man named Thomas and his wife, who have recently lost their child. The friar shamelessly exploits the couple's misfortunes to extract money from them, so Thomas tells the friar that he is sitting on something that he will bequeath to the friars. The friar reaches for his bequest, and Thomas lets out an enormous fart. The friar complains to the lord of the manor, whose squire promises to divide the fart evenly among all the friars.

The Clerk's Prologue and Tale

The Host asks the Clerk to cheer up and tell a merry tale, and the Clerk agrees to tell a tale by the Italian poet Petrarch. Griselde is a hardworking peasant who marries into the aristocracy. Her husband tests her fortitude in several ways, including pretending to kill her children and divorcing her. He punishes her one final time by forcing her to prepare for his wedding to a new wife. She does all

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this dutifully, her husband tells her that she has always been and will always be his wife (the divorce was a fraud), and they live happily ever after.

The Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

The Merchant reflects on the great difference between the patient Griselde of the Clerk's Tale and the horrible shrew he has been married to for the past two months. The Host asks him to tell a story of the evils of marriage, and he complies. Against the advice of his friends, an old knight named January marries May, a beautiful young woman. She is less than impressed by his enthusiastic sexual efforts, and conspires to cheat on him with his squire, Damien. When blind January takes May into his garden to copulate with her, she tells him she wants to eat a pear, and he helps her up into the pear tree, where she has sex with Damien. Pluto, the king of the faeries, restores January's sight, but May, caught in the act, assures him that he must still be blind. The Host prays to God to keep him from marrying a wife like the one the Merchant describes.

The Squire's Introduction and Tale

The Host calls upon the Squire to say something about his favorite subject, love, and the Squire willingly complies. King Cambyuskan of the Mongol Empire is visited on his birthday by a knight bearing gifts from the king of Arabia and India. He gives Cambyuskan and his daughter Canacee a magic brass horse, a magic mirror, a magic ring that gives Canacee the ability to understand the language of birds, and a sword with the power to cure any wound it creates. She rescues a dying female falcon that narrates how her consort abandoned her for the love of another. The Squire's Tale is either unfinished by Chaucer or is meant to be interrupted by the Franklin, who interjects that he wishes his own son were as eloquent as the Squire. The Host expresses annoyance at the Franklin's interruption, and orders him to begin the next tale.

The Franklin's Prologue and Tale

The Franklin says that his tale is a familiar Breton lay, a folk ballad of ancient Brittany. Dorigen, the heroine, awaits the return of her husband, Arveragus, who has gone to England to win honor in feats of arms. She worries that the ship bringing her husband home will wreck itself on the coastal rocks, and she promises Aurelius, a young man who falls in love with her, that she will give her body to him if he clears the rocks from the coast. Aurelius hires a student learned in magic to create the illusion that the rocks have disappeared. Arveragus returns home and tells his wife that she must keep her promise to Aurelius. Aurelius is so impressed by Arveragus's honorable act that he generously absolves her of the promise, and the magician, in turn, generously absolves Aurelius of the money he owes.

The Physician's Tale

Appius the judge lusts after Virginia, the beautiful daughter of Virginius. Appius persuades a churl named Claudius to declare her his slave, stolen from him by

Virginius. Appius declares that Virginius must hand over his daughter to Claudius. Virginius tells his daughter that she must die rather than suffer dishonor, and she virtuously consents to her father's cutting her head off. Appius sentences Virginius to death, but the Roman people, aware of Appius's hijinks, throw him into prison, where he kills himself.

The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale

The Host is dismayed by the tragic injustice of the Physician's Tale, and asks the Pardoner to tell something merry. The other pilgrims contradict the Host, demanding a moral tale, which the Pardoner agrees to tell after he eats and drinks. The Pardoner tells the company how he cheats people out of their money by preaching that money is the root of all evil. His tale describes three riotous youths who go looking for Death, thinking that they can kill him. An old man tells them that they will find Death under a tree. Instead, they find eight bushels of gold, which they plot to sneak into town under cover of darkness. The youngest goes into town to fetch food and drink, but brings back poison, hoping to have the gold all to himself. His companions kill him to enrich their own shares, then drink the poison and die under the tree. His tale complete, the Pardoner offers to sell the pilgrims pardons, and singles out the Host to come kiss his relics. The Host infuriates the Pardoner by accusing him of fraud, but the Knight persuades the two to kiss and bury their differences.

The Shipman's Tale

The Shipman's Tale features a monk who tricks a merchant's wife into having sex with him by borrowing money from the merchant, then giving it to the wife so she can repay her own debt to her husband, in exchange for sexual favors. When the monk sees the merchant next, he tells him that he returned the merchant's money to his wife. The wife realizes she has been duped, but she boldly tells her husband to forgive her debt: she will repay it in bed. The Host praises the Shipman's story, and asks the Prioress for a tale.

The Prioress's Prologue and Tale

The Prioress calls on the Virgin Mary to guide her tale. In an Asian city, a Christian school is located at the edge of a Jewish ghetto. An angelic seven-year-old boy, a widow's son, attends the school. He is a devout Christian, and loves to sing *Alma Redemptoris* (Gracious Mother of the Redeemer). Singing the song on his way through the ghetto, some Jews hire a murderer to slit his throat and throw him into a latrine. The Jews refuse to tell the widow where her son is, but he miraculously begins to sing *Alma Redemptoris,* so the Christian people recover his body, and the magistrate orders the murdering Jews to be drawn apart by wild horses and then hanged.

The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas

The Host, after teasing Chaucer the narrator about his appearance, asks him to tell a tale. Chaucer says that he only knows one tale, then launches into a parody

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of bad poetry—the Tale of Sir Thopas. Sir Thopas rides about looking for an elf-queen to marry until he is confronted by a giant. The narrator's doggerel continues in this vein until the Host can bear no more and interrupts him. Chaucer asks him why he can't tell his tale, since it is the best he knows, and the Host explains that his rhyme isn't worth a turd. He encourages Chaucer to tell a prose tale.

The Tale of Melibee

Chaucer's second tale is the long, moral prose story of Melibee. Melibee's house is raided by his foes, who beat his wife, Prudence, and severely wound his daughter, Sophie, in her feet, hands, ears, nose, and mouth. Prudence advises him not to rashly pursue vengeance on his enemies, and he follows her advice, putting his foes' punishment in her hands. She forgives them for the outrages done to her, in a model of Christian forbearance and forgiveness.

The Monk's Prologue and Tale

The Host wishes that his own wife were as patient as Melibee's, and calls upon the Monk to tell the next tale. First he teases the Monk, pointing out that the Monk is clearly no poor cloisterer. The Monk takes it all in stride and tells a series of tragic falls, in which noble figures are brought low: Lucifer, Adam, Sampson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Zenobia, Pedro of Castile, and down through the ages.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue

After seventeen noble "falls" narrated by the Monk, the Knight interrupts, and the Host calls upon the Nun's Priest to deliver something more lively. The Nun's Priest tells of Chanticleer the Rooster, who is carried off by a flattering fox who tricks him into closing his eyes and displaying his crowing abilities. Chanticleer turns the tables on the fox by persuading him to open his mouth and brag to the barnyard about his feat, upon which Chanticleer falls out of the fox's mouth and escapes. The Host praises the Nun's Priest's Tale, adding that if the Nun's Priest were not in holy orders, he would be as sexually potent as Chanticleer.

The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale

In her Prologue, the Second Nun explains that she will tell a saint's life, that of Saint Cecilia, for this saint set an excellent example through her good works and wise teachings. She focuses particularly on the story of Saint Cecilia's martyrdom. Before Cecilia's new husband, Valerian, can take her virginity, she sends him on a pilgrimage to Pope Urban, who converts him to Christianity. An angel visits Valerian, who asks that his brother Tiburce be granted the grace of Christian conversion as well. All three—Cecilia, Tiburce, and Valerian—are put to death by the Romans.

The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale

When the Second Nun's Tale is finished, the company is overtaken by a black-clad Canon and his Yeoman, who have heard of the pilgrims and their tales and

wish to participate. The Yeoman brags to the company about how he and the Canon create the illusion that they are alchemists, and the Canon departs in shame at having his secrets discovered. The Yeoman tells a tale of how a canon defrauded a priest by creating the illusion of alchemy using sleight of hand.

The Manciple's Prologue and Tale

The Host pokes fun at the Cook, riding at the back of the company, blind drunk. The Cook is unable to honor the Host's request that he tell a tale, and the Manciple criticizes him for his drunkenness. The Manciple relates the legend of a white crow, taken from the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and one of the tales in *The Arabian Nights.* In it, Phoebus's talking white crow informs him that his wife is cheating on him. Phoebus kills the wife, pulls out the crow's white feathers, and curses it with blackness.

The Parson's Prologue and Tale

As the company enters a village in the late afternoon, the Host calls upon the Parson to give them a fable. Refusing to tell a fictional story because it would go against the rule set by St. Paul, the Parson delivers a lengthy treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins, instead.

3.10 KEY-WORDS

1. Major conflict : The struggles between characters, manifested in the links between tales, mostly involve clashes between social classes, differing tastes, and competing professions. There are also clashes between the sexes, and there is resistance to the Host's somewhat tyrannical leadership.

2. Rising action : As he sets off on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, the narrator encounters a group of other pilgrims and joins them. That night, the Host of the tavern where the pilgrims are staying presents them with a storytelling challenge and appoints himself judge of the competition and leader of the company.

3. Falling action : After twenty-three tales have been told, the Parson delivers a long sermon. Chaucer then makes a retraction, asking to be forgiven for his sins, including having written The Canterbury Tales.

4. Themes : The pervasiveness of courtly love, the importance of company, the corruption of the church

3.11 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Compare the Miller's Tale with either the Reeve's Tale or the Summoner's Tale. What are the different characteristics that make each tale a fabliau?

Notes

Consider comic timing, plot intricacy, and the cast of characters within the tale.

2. Is the Wife of Bath meant to contradict the misogynist (woman-hating) ideas of her time, or to uphold them? Use the text to back up your argument.
3. Compare the ideals of courtly love in the Knight's Tale with those in the Wife of Bath's Tale. How are they different? How are they the same? Is there a difference in the way the female characters act in the two **tales?**
4. How does Chaucer conceive of ancient history and belief systems in the Knight's Tale? How is his vision anachronistic? How does he attempt to make it less so? What is the function of time and the seasons in the tale?
5. Why is the Knight first in the General Prologue and first to tell a tale?
6. What makes the Pardoner so offensive?

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (c) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (a) 5.(c) 6. (d) 7. (c) 8. (d) 9. (b) 10. (d) 11. (a) 12. (d) 13. (b) 14. (d) 15. (b)

3.12 FURTHER READINGS

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2. CHAUCER, GEOFFREY. *The Riverside Chaucer.* Ed. Larry Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
3. COOPER, HELEN. *The Structure of* THE CANTERBURY TALES. London: Duckworth time.

UNIT - 4

19TH CENTURY: POETRY AND NOVELS

STRUCTURE

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Precursors of Romantic Revival
4.3 Pre-Raphaelite Movement
4.4 Women Novelists of the 19th Century
4.5 Self-Assessment
4.6 Summary
4.7 Key-Words
4.8 Review Questions
4.9 Further Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Introduce 19th century novelists
- Discuss the precursors of romantic revival

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Using a combination of poetry and essay sources, discuss the evolution of aesthetic criticism and theory from the Romantics through the Aesthetic Movement near the end of the century. Remembering that a novel's meaning arises out of the particular social context in which it is written and read, discuss the evolution of the heroine from the 18th-century Pamelas and Moll Flanders, who rise above their situation via marital/sexual conquests, to the 19th-century Emmas and Esthers who find fulfillment in traditional domestic roles. At the same time, examine the ways in which changing social definitions of women's roles led to bitterness towards marriage in the work of other 19th-century women writers.

If the 18th-century novel is seen as participating in the rise of bourgeois society, to what degree is the 19th-century novel concerned with maintaining the status quo? In what ways were writers like Keats and Byron critics of the very Romanticism they professed? In your answer, concentrate on particular poems by each (you may also want to draw comparisons with Wordsworth or Coleridge).

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Novelists in the nineteenth century reveal similarities in the conventions of their art (i.e., practices in point of view, characterization, subject matter, the use of realism, and so on). They share thematic values as well. In other words, we can discover associations between technique and philosophical (or ideological) approach. But that generalization is also qualified by recognizable differences in both technique and theme. Discuss at least three different novels, examining selected aspects of technique and theme. Choose from the following works: *Vanity Fair*, *North and South*, *Barchester Towers*, *Middlemarch*, *Bleak House*, and *The Odd Women*.

Imagine a dialogue between Mill and Dickens on the proper place of women in Victorian culture. What might they say to each other? How might their views, their language, and their values differ? Could they agree on anything or would they merely talk past each other?

Whatever its origins, the bildungsroman (also called the apprenticeship novel or the novel of maturation) was a mainstay of the 19th-century novelists, Dickens's *David Copperfield* being one obvious example. Compose a thesis and discuss what you deem important qualities in the bildungsroman and how they are employed in two of the following novels: *Emma*, *Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

You have on your list two monologues of the Italian Renaissance by Browning ("Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi") as well as Pater's preface and conclusion to his famous collection of essays. Both Browning and Pater use the Renaissance as a canvas on which to paint their own ideas about art. What are these ideas? Why is the Renaissance their chosen canvas? On what would they agree and disagree?

Using Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* and two texts of your own choosing, discuss how 19th-century writers represent "common life." Wordsworth argues for the importance of the "ordinary language of men," especially of those situated in "low and rustic life." Do other writers share his faith in the low and rustic as a touchstone of value? Does he thoroughly believe this himself? (Possible choices of texts include, but are not limited to Arnold's "Function of Criticism," Hopkins' "Felix Randall," Hardy's poems or Tess, Ruskin, Eliot, and Dickens.)

If you were to teach the survey of English literature to undergraduates, focusing heavily on 19th-century poetry, what elements of technique and aesthetics, of social context, of historical difference would guide your work? Which poets would be indispensable to your course? What would be the central questions that guide your approach? Finally, choose one poet from the latter part of the Victorian period and discuss how you would present that poet's work in a way that furthers the larger goals of your course.

Even before Harold Bloom promulgated his notions of literary inheritance and misprision and certainly since that time, critics examined the importance of

precursors for later writers. Choose two of the following pairs of writers (or suggest your own) and examine the complex legacy of the earlier writer for the later one: Charlotte Bronte and Byron; Tennyson and Keats; Browning and Shelley; Arnold and Wordsworth; Hopkins and Browning (or Pater); Hardy and Keats.

A range of critics, from G.K. Chesterton to the Marxists, have focused on the effects of industrialization and urbanization portrayed in the 19th-century novel. More recently we have turned particular interest to how gender is represented in the urban and industrial world of the Victorian age. Questions come to mind: how are women portrayed? What differences emerge between their representation and other characters? What do such differences (or similarities) tell us about the 19th-century novel? Discuss this issue of gender in the industrial-urban setting in at least three different works: *North and South*, *The Odd Women*, *Hard Times*, and *Jude the Obscure*. You may add to or substitute from this suggested list if you wish.

Notes The intro to the novella, presented in the first episode shows the contrast between light and darkness which can also reflects man's enterprise. Light : civilization, "enlightenment", knowledge Darkness : wilderness, ignorance, evil.

It is useful to talk about the pervading characteristics of the Victorian age: the belief in progress; the reliance on the laissez-faire approach to individual improvement in a class-oriented society; the spirit of compromise and reform. But hovering all about this splendid confidence was a sense of division, a double-mindedness. England was the New Eden; England was an industrial wasteland. In other words in the midst of the glories of the High Victorian there was the Anti-Victorian. This binary positioning of terms pertains to historical, cultural, or literary subject matter. Take a thesis and discuss what you see as key aspects of the Victorian and the Anti-Victorian equation in terms of the 19th-century novel.

In many ways we see in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood an invention of the avant-garde. Discuss how you see the movement in the wider context of Victorian culture. In what ways did the PRB (including Christina Rossetti, at least in an honorary way) contest Victorian culture? In what ways were the PRB dependent upon the very elements of the culture that they deplored? Does this formulation—of an avant-garde contesting a dominant culture—adequately capture the complexities of the movement?

Matthew Arnold lamented that his was an unpoetic age; yet this refrain was not really novel. Carlyle and Wordsworth in their different ways had said much the same thing. Choose at least one poet from the beginning of the nineteenth century and one who came later and discuss how their work or aesthetic theory

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addresses the notion that their culture might be fundamentally inimical to poetry. What does "poetry" stand for in this kind of thinking? Do you see any poet who might object to Arnold's formulation? (Be sure to discuss particular poems as well as poets' theoretical statements.)

The role of women in 19th-century England has been a position fraught with complicating, sometimes impossibly conflicting, factors. Yet, one might also see this as a time of expanding agency for women—in keeping with a general trend in the 19th-century to empower the disenfranchised. Choose three to four texts and discuss the shifting role of female agency in 19th-century England.

With the 1832 Reform Bill, the nineteenth century can be viewed as a period when concern for the poor and disenfranchised manifested itself in political changes that were meant to legally improve the material conditions of certain classes. Resented and resisted by those who had traditionally monopolized political, economic, and social power, these changes nonetheless involved shifts in how the "haves" were distinguished from the "have nots." Choose three to four texts and discuss how class markers shifted during this time of political and social reform. (You may choose to focus on the connections between aesthetic discourse and changing class definitions and relationships.)

In many ways, the rhetorical philosophy of Thomas Sheridan, Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and others, was in dialogue with the social and political upheavals of the enlightenment, and these rhetorical texts continued to inflect and be inflected by their relationship with the novel into the nineteenth century. Using two or three literary texts, examine the implications of their selection, reflection, and deflection of the late 18th- and early 19th-century rhetorical theories.

4.2 PRECURSORS OF ROMANTIC REVIVAL

The eighteenth century is usually known as the century of "prose and reason," the age in which neoclassicism reigned supreme and in which all romantic tendencies lay dormant, if not extinct. But that is a verdict too sweeping to be true. In this century-especially the later part of it-we can see numerous cracks in the classical edifice through which seems to be peeping the multicoloured light of romanticism. In the later years of this century a large number of new influences were at work on English sensibility and temper. The change signalized a change in the ethos of poetry and, in fact, literature as a whole. The younger poets started breaking away from the "school" of Dryden and Pope, even though some poets, like Churchill and Dr. Johnson, still elected to remain in the old groove. There were very few poets, indeed, who set themselves *completely* free from the old traditional influences. Most of them are, as it were, like Mr. Facing both ways, looking simultaneously at the neoclassical past and the romantic future. They seem to be Placed on this isthmus of a middle state.

In the selection of subjects for poetic treatment, in the choice of verse patterns,

and in the manner of treatment we meet with perceptible changes from the conventions of the Popean school. Those eighteenth century poets who show some elements associated with romanticism, while not altogether ignoring the old conventions, are called transitional poets or the precursors of the Romantic Revival.

Let us sum up the *romantic* qualities of the poetry of these transitional poets.

(i) These poets believe in what Victor Hugo describes as "liberalism in literature". Not much worried about rules and conventions, they believe in individual poetic inspiration.

(ii) Their poetry is not altogether intellectual in content and treatment. Passion, emotion, and the imagination are valued by them above the cold light of intellectuality. They naturally return to the lyric.

(iii) They have, to quote Hudson, "a love of the wild, fantastic, abnormal, and supernatural."

(iv) They show a new appreciation of the world of Nature which the neoclassical poetry had mostly neglected. Their poetry is no longer "drawing-room poetry." They do not limit their attention to urban life and manners only, as Pope almost always did.

(v) They place more importance on the individual than on society. In them, therefore, is to be seen at work a stronger democratic spirit, a greater concern for the oppressed and the poor, and a greater emphasis on individualism in poetry, in society, everywhere. Their poetry becomes much more subjective.

(vi) They show a much greater interest in the Middle Ages which Dryden and Pope had neglected on account on their alleged barbarousness. Dryden and Pope admired the Renaissancermuch more and had many a spiritual link with it.

(vii) Lastly, there is a strong reaction against the heroic couplet as the only eligible verse unit. They make experiments with new measures and stanzaic forms. It is said that every hero ends as a bore. The same was the case with the heroic couplet.

While exhibiting all these above-listed tendencies in their poetic works, the transitional poets are not, however, altogether free from Popean influences. That is exactly why they are not full-fledged romantics but only "transitional" poets. Nevertheless, their work proves: "The eighteenth century was an age of reason but the channels of Romanticism were never dry."

Let us now consider the work of the most important of the transitional poets of the eighteenth century.

James Thomson (1700-48):

He is a typical transitional poet, though he chronologically belongs to the first half of the eighteenth century. Though he was contemporaneous with Pope yet

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he broke away from the traditions of his school to explore "fresh woods and pastures new." He bade good-bye to the heroic couplet and expressed himself in other verse-Tieasures—blank verse and the Spenserian stanza. He would have acknowledged Spenser and Milton as his guides rather than Dryden and Pope. His *Seasons* (1726-30) is important for accurate and sympathetic descriptions of natural scenes. It is entirely different from such poems as Pope's *Windsor Forest* on account of the poet's first-hand knowledge of what he is describing and his intimate rapport with it. The poem is in blank verse written obviously after the manner of Milton', but sometimes it seems to be over-strained, "always labouring uphill," in the words of Hazlitt. Thomson's *Liberty* is a very long poem. In it Liberty herself is made to narrate her chequered career through the ages in Greece, Rome, and England. The theme is dull and abstract, the narration uninteresting, and the blank verse ponderous. His *Castle of Indolence* (1748) is in Spenserian stanzas, and it captures much of the luxuriant, imaginative colour of the Elizabethan poet. As a critic puts it, for languid suggestiveness, in dulcet and harmonious versification, and "for subtly woven vowel music it need not shirk comparison with the best of Spenser himself." Thomson looks forward to the romantics in his interest in nature, in treating of new subjects, his strong imagination, and his giving up of the heroic couplet. But he is capable of some very egregious examples of poetic diction. Even Dr. Johnson was constrained to observe: "His diction is in the highest degree florid and luxuriant. It is too exuberant and sometimes may be charged with filling the ear more than the mind."

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74):

Goldsmith was as friendly with Dr. Johnson had been with Pope, but that did not curb the individual genius of either. Goldsmith was as essentially a conservative in literary theory as Dr. Johnson of whose "Club" he was an eminent member. Both of his important poems, *The Traveller* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770) are in heroic couplets. The first poem is, didactic (after Johnson's visual practice) and is concerned with the description and criticism of the places and people in Europe which Goldsmith had visited as a tramp. The second poem is rich in natural descriptions and is vibrant with a peculiar note of sentiment and melancholy which foreshadows nineteenth-century romantics. As in the first poem, Goldsmith exhibits the tenderness of his feelings for poor villagers.

Thomas Percy (1728-1811):

Percy is known in the history of English literature not for original poetry but for his compilation of ballads, sonnets, historical songs, and metrical romances which he published in 1765 under the title *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.* The work .did a lot to revive public interest in that kind of poetry which had gone out of vogue in the age of Dryden and Pope. The book contained poetry from different ages-from the Middle Ages to the reign of Charles. The work had a tremendous

and lasting popularity. About its influence on the poets who were to come, we may quote Wordsworth: "I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligation to the Reliques." Even Dr. Johnson favoured Percy's venture and earned his thanks by lending him a hand in the compilation.

Thomas Chatterton (1752-70):

Chatterton is referred to by Wordsworth in his poem *Resolution and Independence* as :

The marvellous boy

The sleepless soul that perished in his pride.

Chatterton, indeed, was a "marvellous boy" who shot into fame, and then, before he was eighteen, poisoned himself with arsenic getting sick of his poverty. Some of his poems are quite Augustan in their matter and from but the most characteristic poems are the ones he published as the work of Thomas Rowley, a fifteenth-century monk who lived in Bristol, Chattertdn's native place. Chatterton gave out that he had discovered them in a box lying in a Bristol church. His hoax was soon seen through, but that does not detract from the merit of the Rowley poems. The poems like *Aella* and the *Ballad of Charity* are, according to Hudson, quite remarkable for two reasons-'because they are probably the most wonderful things ever written by a boy of Chatterton's age, and because they are another clear indication of the fast growing curiosity of critics and the public regarding everything belonging to the middle ages." Chatterton's work considerably influenced the romantic poets-who were intensely interested in everything medieval.

James Macpherson (1736-96):

He was another forgerer like Chatterton, though his work was not altogether baseless. He first achieved fame with *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language which were given out to be "genuine remains of ancient Scottish poetry." Later he produced *Fingal, an Epic Poem in six books* (1762), and then *Temora, an Epic Poem in eight books* (1763). Macpherson asserted ttyat these two poems were the genuine work of a Gaelic bard of the third century, names Ossian and that he had given their literal translation in prose. His claims.provoked an acrimonious controversy as to their genuineness. "Fortunately," says Hudson, "we need not enter ihto the discussion in order to appreciate the epoch-making character of Macpherson's work. In the loosely rhythmical prose which he adopted for his so-called translations he carried to an extreme the formal reaction of the time against the classic couplet. In matter and spirit he is wildly romantic." His poems transport the reader to a new world of heroism and super-naturalism tinged with melancholy, a world which is altogether different from the spruce and reasonable world of Pope.

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Thomas Gray (1716-71):

Gray was one of the most learned men of the Europe of his day. He was also a genuine poet but his poetic production is lamentably small-just a few odes, some miscellaneous poems, and the *Elegy.* He started his career as a strait-jacketted classicist and ended as a genuine romantic. His work, according to Hudson, is "a kind of epitome of the changes which were coming over the literature of his time." His first attempts, *The Alliance of Education and Government* and the ode *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College* were classical in spirit, and the first mentioned, even in its use of the heroic couplet. *ElegyWritten in a Country Churchyard* is Gray's finest poem which earned him the praise of even Johnson who condemned most of Gray's poetry.

Hudson observes about this poem:

"There is, first, the use of nature, which though employed only as a background, is still handled with fidelity and sympathy i There is, next, the churchyard scene, the twilight atmosphere, and the brooding melancholy of the poem, which at once connect it...with one side of the romantic movement The seventeenth century "character" was a new English prose form. Sir Thomas Overbury, one of the important seventeenth century character writers, defined it as a picture, real or personal, quaintly drawn in various colours, all of them brightened by one shadowing." A "character" is very short—a thamb-nail sketch of an individual who is much more a type than an individual. The intention of the character-writer is, generally, reformative, and his instruments are satire and wit. The character, says David Daiches in *A Critical History of English Literature.* Vol. 1, "is essentially a portrait of a tvpe rather than an individual, often done with an. almost exhibitionist wit." The progress of the character in England is marked by a gradual shift of emphasis from the typical to the individual qualities of the persons dealt with.

Theophrastus:

Like most English literary genres, the character was imported from abroad. The model for the English character writers was the Greek psychologist Theophrastus (372-287 B.C.) whose *Ethical Characters* comprised brief character-sketches of some thirty vicious or unpleasant Athenian types done in witty but bitter prose. Theophrastus first came to be known in Latin translation in 1592 and in English in 1616. It is possible that Theophrastus wrote some characters of virtuous types also: however, only the characters of evil or unpleasant types have come down to us. He composed his characters in accordance with a set formula. He starts every character with a very brief description of the vice he is going to handle-flattery, cowardice, talkativeness, superstitiousness, etc. After that he goes on to describe a typical possessor of that vice and his actions under its influence. Any reference to the strictly individual peculiarities of the person concerned is conspicuous by its absence. For illustration let us quote here the beginning of his

character of *The Distrustful Man:*

"Distrustfulness is a disposition to suspect all men of dishonesty. The Distrustful Man is this sort of man. When he has sent one of his slaves to buy provisions he sends another one after the first to find out exactly what they cost. In travelling he carries his own money and sits down every few hundred years to count it..."

The vogue of character writing was initiated in English by Joseph Hall, and was carried forward by the distinguished character writers uverbury and Earle. right upto the age of the Restoration when it died a natural death after having outlived its appeal and utility. Let us now discuss briefly the work of the more important of seventeenth-century character writers.

Joseph Hall (1574-1656):

Joseph Hall is credited with the naturalisation of the new prose form of the character in English literature. His work entitled *Characters of Virtues and Vices* came out in 1608. He doubtlessly took Theophrastus for his model, but it is possible that, as Tucker Brooke observes, "his immediate inspiration was found in the incidental character-sketches that Ben Jonson had introduced in *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599) and *Cynthia's Revels* (1600). Ben Jonson's "humours" are also predominantly types, but whereas he adopts the dynamic method of the dramatist in unfolding them, the character writer, like Hall, uses the static or descriotive method". But the moral aim is shared equally earnestly by the dramatist and the prose writer.

Hall's *Characters of Virtues and Vices* consists of two books: Book I deals with virtuous types (such as the wise man, the honest man, and the true friend) and Book II with their vicious counterparts (such as the malcontent, the flatterer, and the unshrift). On the whole, Hall is more successful with vices than with virtues.

Let us now compare Hall's approach and execution with those of Theophrastus.

(1) Hall's sketches are somewhat longer than Theophrastus's. In spite of the fact that he was called by his contemporaries "our English Seneca" for his packed and rhetorical expression, it has to be admitted that his characters lack compression as also trie artistic selection and rejection of traits which distinguish Theophrastus's work.

(2) Secondly, Hall, as Tucker Brooke says, "intensified the moral tone." He was a clergyman. David Daiches observes: "He is less the witty observer of men than the Christian moralist seeking to improve his readers by warning or example." His egregious moral bias finds expression in his Poem to Book I "Virtue is not loved enough because her loveliness is secret... What need we more, than to discover the two to the world? This work shall save the labour of exhorting and dissuasion."

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(3) Thirdly, his characters are rich in a peculiar kind of wit which is entirely his own. For illustration, see the end of the character of the busybody: "He knows not why, but his custom is to go a little about and to leave the cross still on the right hand. One event is enough to make a rule; out of these rules he concludes fashions, proper to himself; and nothing can turn him out of his course. If he has done his task, he is safe: it matters not with what affection, finally, if God would let him be the carver of his own obedience, he could not have a better subject as he is, he cannot have a worse."

(4) Lastly, Hall's sketches are characterised by crude and unpolished vigour-the same which we find in his satirical verse *Virgidemiarum.*

Sir Thomas Overbury (1581-1613):

Hall's work did not achieve any notable popularity. It was Overbury who first distinguished himself in the field of character writing. He died in the Tower of London in 1613 in quite mysterious circumstances. A year after his death a publisher brought out his poem *A Wife.* The second edition of the poem was supplemented by twenty-two prose characters said to be the work of Overbury "and other learned gentlemen his friends." The next three months saw the publication of no fewer than four more editions and the number of characters increase from twenty-two to eighty-three. Among the anonymous contributors were famous writers of their times, such as John Donne, the poet and Dekker and Webster the dramatists. This work achieved and maintained remarkable popularity. Fourteen editions were published in the following half-century. Let us now discuss some of the important features of Overbury's characters.

(1) Overbury's characters are considerably shorter in length than Hall's. Most of them run to under three hundred words.

(2) Overbury does not portray his characters to view them from an abstract moral position. Nor is his aim pre-eminently reformative. He is interested rather in the presentation of contemporary types. However, he was a courtier and, as such, had open contempt for the commonalty. Hardin Craig observes in *A History of English Literature* edited by himself: "Overbury was a courtier and an acute and acrimonious observer of men and manners. His essays are the product of a circle of wits who profess scorn of the ordinary and the commonplace in human life."

(3) Overbury, unlike Hall, did not make any formal division between virtue and vice. This, as Tucker Brooke observes in *A Literary History of England* edited by Albert C. Baugh, helped him in "achieving greater naturalness and a more pleasant diversity." However, that does not mean that he is blind to moral considerations. He does, like Theophrastus and Hall before him, have a didactic and reformative aim which he tries to realise through witty satire.

(4) His satire and wit are more sophisticated than Hall's. They have much more

of literary and artistic quality. According to Legouis it was Overbury who "gave this genre [the character] a really literary character." Mark the telling pungency in his description of a uritan: "A Puritan is a diseased piece of Apocrypha: bind him to the Bible, and he corrupts the whole text : ignorance and fat feed are his founders; his nurses railing rabies and round breeches : his life is but aborrowed blast of wind; for between two religions, as between twodoors, he is ever whistling."

(5) Lastly, Overbury practised a novelty in including somewomen also among his characters. The most striking, fresh, andrefreshing of his characters is "The Fair and Happy Milkmaid." As acourtier disgusted with the artificial beauty aids used by sophisticatedwomen of the highest circles of society he celebrates in glowing termsthe natural beauty and innocence of a milkmaid. Here is an extractfrom that character:

"…though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silk-worm, she is decked in innocence, a far better wearing...In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk whiter or sweeter; for never came almond-gloss or aromatic ointment on her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet, when she reaps them as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them."

John Earle (16017-1665):

Overbury's work gave a considerable fillip to character writing in English. Among those who practised this genre may be mentioned the following:

(i) John *Stephens-Satirical Essays, Characters and Others* (1615)

(ii) Nicholas Breton (1555-1626) and Richard Barthwait (1588-1673)

(iii) Geoffrey Minshull (c. 1594-1*668)—Essays and*

***Characters of a Prison and Prisoners* (1618).**

Character sequences followed almost as thickly as sonnet sequences. But out of all of them John Earle's *Microcosmography* is the most important and the most interesting. It was first published in 1628, and achieved immediate and well deserved fame. Earle's seventy-eight portraits have lived on till today for he is easily the most attractive of all the character writers. Given below are some important features of his work.

(1) Earle has a greater variety of material. His treatment ranges over such diverse characters as "A Young Raw Preacher", "A Mere Formal Man", "A She Precise Hypocrite", and "The Common Singing Men in Cathedral Churches". Overbury as a courtier had better opportunities to see the world than Earle who was a clergyman and for nearly twenty years a fellow of Merton College, Oxford. His clerical and scholarly bias is apparent in his frequent selection of types connected with the church and the university-"An Old College

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Butler," "A Young Gentleman of the University", "A Downright Scholar," "A Plodding Student," "An University Don," "A Pretender to Learning," and so forth.

(2) Earle is not very exhibitive of his wit which is generally unobtrusive and polished. However, it sharpens up whenever he deals with hypocrisy, as when he chastises "A Pretender to Learning!' who, as he says, "is one that would make others more fools than himself; for though he know nothing, he would not have the world know so much."

(3) A novel feature initiated by Earle was the treatment of some inanimate objects among his characters. One such "character" is "A Tavern". Earle says about it: "A house of sin you may call it, but not ahouse of darkness, for the candles are never out, and it is like those countries far in the north where it is as clear at midnight as at midday."

(4) Much of the charm of Earle's characters lies in his style. Tucker Brooke observes: "Earle has a neat epigrammatic style which, if he had lived a century later, would have been called Addisonian..." One of the most remarkable of his portraits is that of "A Child", which curiously foreshadows Wordsworth's exaltation of childhood. Mark these words: "The elder he grows, he is a stair lower from God, and like his first father much worse in his breeches...Could he put off his body with his little coat, he had got eternity without a burthen, and exchanged but one heaven for another."

After Earle:

After Earle we find the character shifting from the type to the individual. Samuel Butler's large collection of characters was written in the late 1660's but not published until 1759. Butler was pungently satirical and was chiefly concerned with contemporary follies and fads. However, it is not his characters but the characters of Earle which have a clear affinity with the spirit of the *Taller* and *the Spectator.* Thereafter the character, as David Daiches puts it in *A Critical History of English Literature,* Vol. I, was "ready to join the other streams that flowed into the English novel."

In the development of the distinctive romantic mood. The contrast drawn between the country and the town the peasant's simple life and 'the madding crowd's ignoble strife'-is a third particular which will be noted. Finally, in the tender feeling shown for 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet' and the sense of the human value of the little things that are written 'in the short and simple annals of the poor', we see poetry, under the influence of the spreading democratic spirit reaching out to include humble aspects of life hitherto ignored." Gray's next poems, The Progress of Poesy and The Bard, present a new conception of the poet not as a clever versifier but a genuinely inspired and prophetic genius. His last poems like The Fatal Sisters and The Descent of Odin are romantic fragments with which we step out of the eighteenth century and find ourselves in the full stream of romanticism.

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William Collins (1721-59):

Collin's work is as thin in bulk as Gray's-it does not extend to much more than 1500 lines. He combines in himself the neoclassic and romantic elements, though he is not without a specific manner which is all his own. On the one hand, he provides numerous examples of poetic diction at its worst, and, on the other, he delights in the highly romantic world of shadows and the supernatural. His *Ode on the Popular Superstions of the Highlands* foreshadows the world in which Coleridge delighted. He is chiefly known for his odes. *To Liberty and* the one mentioned above are the lengthiest of Collins' odes, but he is at his best in shorter flights. He is exquisite when he eschews poetic diction without losing his delightful singing quality. Referring to Collins, Swinburne maintains that in "purity of music" and "clarity of style" there is "no parallel in English verse from the death of Marvell to the birth of William Blake."

William Cowper (1731-1800):

"He", says Compton-Rickett, "is a blend of the old and the new, with much of the form of the old and something of the spirit of the new. In his satires he imitated the manner of Pope, but his greatest poem *The Task* is all his own. It is written in blank verse and contains the famous line:

God made the country and man made the town

which indicates his love of Nature and simplicity. However, the classical element in him is more predominant than the romantic. Compton-Rickett maintains: "We shall find in his work neither the passion nor the strangeness of the Romantic school. Much in his nature disposed to shape him as a poet of Classicism, and with occasional reserves he is far more of a classical poet than a romantic. Yet throughout Cowper's work we feel from time to time a note of something that is certainly not the note of Pope or Dryden, something deeper in feeling that meets us even in Thomson, Collins, or Gray. There is a tenderness in poems like *My Mother's Picture,* that not even Goldsmith in his verse can quite equal; while his fresh and intimate nature pictures point to a stage in the development of poetic naturalism, more considerable than we find in Thomson and his immediate succesors."

George Crabbe (1754-1832):

He mostly continued the neoclassic tradition and was derisively dubbed as "a Pope in worsted stockings." In his poetry, which is mostly descriptive of the miseries of poor villagers, he was an uncompromising unromantic realist. He asserted :

I paint the Cot
As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not.

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He showed much concern for villagers, but he left for Wordsworth to glorify their simplicity and, even, penury. Crabbe's excessive, boldness as a realist alienates him from the polish.of the neoclassic school. However, he tenaciously adhered to the heroic couplet, even when he was a contemporary of Blake and the romantic poets.

Robert Burns (1759-95):

He was a Scottish peasant who took to poetry and became the truly national poet of Scotland. His work *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) sky-rocketed him to fame. All these poems are imbued with the spirit of romantic lyricism in its untutored spontaneity, humour, pathos and sympathy wjth nature and her lowly creatures including the sons of the soil. Sometimes indeed Bums tries to write in the "correct" manner of the Popean school but then he becomes unimpressive and insipid. A critic observes : "Burns was a real peasant who drove the plough as he hummed his songs, and who knew all the wretchedness and joys and sorrows of the countryman's life. Sincerity and passion are the chief keys of his verse. Burns can utter a piercing lyric cry as in *A Fond Kiss and then we Sever,* can be gracefully sentimental as in *My love is like a Red, Red Rose,* can be coarsely witty as in *The Jolly Beggars,* but he is always sincere and passionate, and that is why his words go straight into the heart." Bums was influenced a great deal by the spirit of the French Revolution. His fellow-feeling extended even to the lower animals whom he studied minutely and treated sympathetically.

William Blake (1757-1827):

Blake was an out and out rebel against all the social, political, and literary conventions of the eighteenth century. It is with considerable inaccuracy that he can be included among the transitional poets or the precursors of the Romantic Revival, as in many ways he is even more romantic than the romantic poets! The most undisciplined and the most lonely of all poets, he lived in his own world peopled by phantoms and spectres whom he treated as more real than the humdrum realities of the physical world. His glorification of childhood and feeling for nature make him akin to the romantic poets. He is best known for his three thin *volumes-Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and *Songs of Experience* (1794), which contain some of the most orient gems of English lyricism. A critic observes: "His passion for freedom was, also, akin to that which moved Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey in their earlier years, though in its later form, it came nearer to Shelley's revolt against convention. There is, indeed, an unusual degree of fellowship between these two : the imagery and symbolism, as well as the underlying spirit, *of The Revolt of Islam, Alastor* and *Prometheus Unbound find* their nearest parallel in Blake's prophetic books. Both had visions of a world regenerated by a gospel of universal brotherhood, transcending law."

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4.3 PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT

The **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood** (also known as the **Pre-Raphaelites**) was a group of English painters, poets, and critics, founded in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The three founders were joined by William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens and Thomas Woolner to form the seven-member "brotherhood".

The group's intention was to reform art by rejecting what it considered the mechanistic approach first adopted by Mannerist artists who succeeded Raphael and Michelangelo. Its members believed the Classical poses and elegant compositions of Raphael in particular had been a corrupting influence on the academic teaching of art, hence the name "Pre-Raphaelite". In particular, the group objected to the influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds, founder of the English Royal Academy of Arts, whom they called "Sir Sloshua".

To the Pre-Raphaelites, according to William Michael Rossetti, "sloshy" meant "anything lax or scamped in the process of painting ... and hence ... any thing or person of a commonplace or conventional kind". In contrast, the brotherhood wanted a return to the abundant detail, intense colours and complex compositions of Quattrocento Italian art. The group associated their work with John Ruskin, an English artist whose influences were driven by his religious background.

Through the PRB initials, the brotherhood announced in coded form the arrival of a new movement in British art. The group continued to accept the concepts of history painting and mimesis, imitation of nature, as central to the purpose of art. The Pre-Raphaelites defined themselves as a reform movement, created a distinct name for their form of art, and published a periodical, *The Germ*, to promote their ideas. The group's debates were recorded in the *Pre-Raphaelite Journal*.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in John Millais's parents' house on Gower Street, London in 1848. At the first meeting, the painters John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and William Holman Hunt were present. Hunt and Millais were students at the Royal Academy of Arts and had met in another loose association, the Cyclographic Club, a sketching society. At his own request Rossetti became a pupil of Ford Madox Brown in 1848. At that date, Rossetti and Hunt shared lodgings in Cleveland Street, Fitzrovia, Central London. Hunt had started painting *The Eve of St. Agnes* based on Keats's poem of the same name, but it was not completed until 1867.

As an aspiring poet, Rossetti wished to develop the links between Romantic poetry and art. By autumn, four more members, painters James Collinson and Frederic George Stephens, Rossetti's brother, poet and critic William Michael Rossetti, and sculptor Thomas Woolner, had joined to form a seven-member-strong brotherhood. Ford Madox Brown was invited to join, but the more senior

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artist remained independent but supported the group throughout the PRB period of Pre-Raphaelitism and contributed to *The Germ*. Other young painters and sculptors became close associates, including Charles Allston Collins, Thomas Tupper, and Alexander Munro. The PRB intended to keep the existence of the brotherhood secret from members of the Royal Academy.

4.4 WOMEN NOVELISTS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Jane Austen

Jane Austen was an English novelist whose works of romantic fiction, set among the landed gentry, earned her a place as one of the most widely read writers in English literature. Her realism, biting irony and social commentary have gained her historical importance among scholars and critics.

Austen lived her entire life as part of a close-knit family located on the lower fringes of the English landed gentry. She was educated primarily by her father and older brothers as well as through her own reading. The steadfast support of her family was critical to her development as a professional writer. From her teenage years into her thirties she experimented with various literary forms, including an epistolary novel which she then abandoned, wrote and extensively revised three major novels and began a fourth. From 1811 until 1816, with the release of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1815), she achieved success as a published writer. She wrote two additional novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, both published posthumously in 1818, and began a third, which was eventually titled *Sanditon*, but died before completing it.

Austen's works critique the novels of sensibility of the second half of the 18th century and are part of the transition to 19th-century realism. Her plots, though fundamentally comic, highlight the dependence of women on marriage to secure social standing and economic security. Her works, though usually popular, were first published anonymously and brought her little personal fame and only a few positive reviews during her lifetime, but the publication in 1869 of her nephew's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* introduced her to a wider public, and by the 1940s she had become widely accepted in academia as a great English writer. The second half of the 20th century saw a proliferation of Austen scholarship and the emergence of a Janeite fan culture.

Perhaps as early as 1787, Austen began to write poems, stories, and plays for her own and her family's amusement. Austen later compiled "fair copies" of 29 of these early works into three bound notebooks, now referred to as the *Juvenilia*, containing pieces originally written between 1787 and 1793. There is manuscript evidence that Austen continued to work on these pieces as late as the period 1809–1811, and that her niece and nephew, Anna and James Edward

Austen, made further additions as late as 1814. Among these works are a satirical novel in letters titled *Love and Freindship* , in which she mocked popular novels of sensibility, and *The History of England*, a manuscript of 34 pages accompanied by 13 watercolour miniatures by her sister Cassandra.

Austen's *History* parodied popular historical writing, particularly Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England* (1764). Austen wrote, for example: "Henry the 4th ascended the throne of England much to his own satisfaction in the year 1399, after having prevailed on his cousin & predecessor Richard the 2nd, to resign it to him, & to retire for the rest of his Life to Pomfret Castle, where he happened to be murdered." Austen's *Juvenilia* are often, according to scholar Richard Jenkyns, "boisterous" and "anarchic"; he compares them to the work of 18th-century novelist Laurence Sterne and the 20th-century comedy group Monty Python.

As Austen grew into adulthood, she continued to live at her parents' home, carrying out those activities normal for women of her age and social standing: she practised the fortepiano, assisted her sister and mother with supervising servants, and attended female relatives during childbirth and older relatives on their deathbeds. She sent short pieces of writing to her newborn nieces Fanny Catherine and Jane Anna Elizabeth. Austen was particularly proud of her accomplishments as a seamstress. She also attended church regularly, socialized frequently with friends and neighbours, and read novels—often of her own composition—aloud with her family in the evenings. Socializing with the neighbours often meant dancing, either impromptu in someone's home after supper or at the balls held regularly at the assembly rooms in the town hall. Her brother Henry later said that "Jane was fond of dancing, and excelled in it".

In 1793, Austen began and then abandoned a short play, later entitled *Sir Charles Grandison or the happy Man, a comedy in 6 acts*, which she returned to and completed around 1800. This was a short parody of various school textbook abridgments of Austen's favourite contemporary novel, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), by Samuel Richardson. Honan speculates that at some point not long after writing *Love and Freindship* in 1789, Austen decided to "write for profit, to make stories her central effort", that is, to become a professional writer. Beginning in about 1793, she began to write longer, more sophisticated works.

Between 1793 and 1795, Austen wrote *Lady Susan*, a short epistolary novel, usually described as her most ambitious and sophisticated early work. It is unlike any of Austen's other works. Austen biographer Claire Tomalin describes the heroine of the novella as a sexual predator who uses her intelligence and charm to manipulate, betray, and abuse her victims, whether lovers, friends or family. Tomalin writes:

"Told in letters, it is as neatly plotted as a play, and as cynical in tone as any of the most outrageous of the Restoration dramatists who may have provided

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some of her inspiration ... It stands alone in Austen's work as a study of an adult woman whose intelligence and force of character are greater than those of anyone she encounters."

Early novels

After finishing *Lady Susan*, Austen attempted her first full-length novel — *Elinor and Marianne*. Her sister Cassandra later remembered that it was read to the family "before 1796" and was told through a series of letters. Without surviving original manuscripts, there is no way to know how much of the original draft survived in the novel published in 1811 as *Sense and Sensibility*.

Thomas Langlois Lefroy, Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, by W. H. Mote (1855); in old age, Lefroy admitted to a nephew that he had been in love with Jane Austen: "It was boyish love."]

When Austen was twenty, Tom Lefroy, a nephew of neighbours, visited Steventon from December 1795 to January 1796. He had just finished a university degree and was moving to London to train as a barrister. Lefroy and Austen would have been introduced at a ball or other neighbourhood social gathering, and it is clear from Austen's letters to Cassandra that they spent considerable time together: "I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together." The Lefroy family intervened and sent him away at the end of January. Marriage was impractical, as both Lefroy and Austen must have known. Neither had any money, and he was dependent on a great-uncle in Ireland to finance his education and establish his legal career. If Tom Lefroy later visited Hampshire, he was carefully kept away from the Austens, and Jane Austen never saw him again. The sentimental relationship between Jane and Tom is at the centre of the 2007 biographical film *Becoming Jane*.

Austen began work on a second novel, *First Impressions*, in 1796. She completed the initial draft in August 1797 when she was only 21 (it later became *Pride and Prejudice*); as with all of her novels, Austen read the work aloud to her family as she was working on it and it became an "established favourite". At this time, her father made the first attempt to publish one of her novels. In November 1797, George Austen wrote to Thomas Cadell, an established publisher in London, to ask if he would consider publishing "a Manuscript Novel, comprised in three Vols. about the length of Miss Burney's Evelina" (*First Impressions*) at the author's financial risk. Cadell quickly returned Mr. Austen's letter, marked "Declined by Return of Post". Austen may not have known of her father's efforts. Following the completion of *First Impressions*, Austen returned to *Elinor and Marianne* and from November 1797 until mid-1798, revised it heavily; she eliminated the epistolary format in favour of third-person narration and produced something close to *Sense and Sensibility*.

During the middle of 1798, after finishing revisions of *Elinor and Marianne*,

Austen began writing a third novel with the working title *Susan* — later *Northanger Abbey* — a satire on the popular Gothic novel. Austen completed her work about a year later. In early 1803, Henry Austen offered *Susan* to Benjamin Crosby, a London publisher, who paid £10 for the copyright. Crosby promised early publication and went so far as to advertise the book publicly as being "in the press", but did nothing more. The manuscript remained in Crosby's hands, unpublished, until Austen repurchased the copyright from him in 1816.

Emily Dickinson

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson (December 10, 1830 – May 15, 1886) was an American poet. Born in Amherst, Massachusetts, to a successful family with strong community ties, she lived a mostly introverted and reclusive life. After she studied at the Amherst Academy for seven years in her youth, she spent a short time at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary before returning to her family's house in Amherst. Considered an eccentric by the locals, she became known for her penchant for white clothing and her reluctance to greet guests or, later in life, even leave her room. Most of her friendships were therefore carried out by correspondence.

While Dickinson was a prolific private poet, fewer than a dozen of her nearly 1800 poems were published during her lifetime. The work that was published during her lifetime was usually altered significantly by the publishers to fit the conventional poetic rules of the time. Dickinson's poems are unique for the era in which she wrote; they contain short lines, typically lack titles, and often use slant rhyme as well as unconventional capitalization and punctuation. Many of her poems deal with themes of death and immortality, two recurring topics in letters to her friends.

Although most of her acquaintances were probably aware of Dickinson's writing, it was not until after her death in 1886—when Lavinia, Dickinson's younger sister, discovered her cache of poems—that the breadth of Dickinson's work became apparent. Her first collection of poetry was published in 1890 by personal acquaintances Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, both of whom heavily edited the content. A complete and mostly unaltered collection of her poetry became available for the first time in 1955 when scholar Thomas H. Johnson published *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Despite some unfavorable reviews and some skepticism during the late 19th and early 20th century about Dickinson's literary prowess, Dickinson is now almost universally considered to be one of the most important American poets

Family and early childhood

The Dickinson children (Emily on the left), ca. 1840. From the Dickinson Room at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born at the family's homestead in Amherst,

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Massachusetts, on December 10, 1830, into a prominent, but not wealthy, family. Two hundred years earlier, her patrilineal ancestors had arrived in the New World—in the Puritan Great Migration—where they prospered. Emily Dickinson's paternal grandfather, Samuel Dickinson, had almost single-handedly founded Amherst College. In 1813, he built the homestead, a large mansion on the town's Main Street, that became the focus of Dickinson family life for the better part of a century. Samuel Dickinson's eldest son, Edward, was treasurer of Amherst College for nearly forty years, served numerous terms as a State Legislator, and represented the Hampshire district in the United States Congress. On May 6, 1828, he married Emily Norcross from Monson.

Did u know?

They had three children:

William Austin (1829–1895), known as Austin, Aust or Awe

Emily Elizabeth

Lavinia Norcross (1833–1899), known as Lavinia or Vinnie

When she was eighteen, Dickinson's family befriended a young attorney by the name of Benjamin Franklin Newton. According to a letter written by Dickinson after Newton's death, he had been "with my Father two years, before going to Worcester – in pursuing his studies, and was much in our family." Although their relationship was probably not romantic, Newton was a formative influence and would become the second in a series of older men (after Humphrey) that Dickinson referred to, variously, as her tutor, preceptor or master.

Newton likely introduced her to the writings of William Wordsworth, and his gift to her of Ralph Waldo Emerson's first book of collected poems had a liberating effect. She wrote later that he, "whose name my Father's Law Student taught me, has touched the secret Spring". Newton held her in high regard, believing in and recognizing her as a poet. When he was dying of tuberculosis, he wrote to her, saying that he would like to live until she achieved the greatness he foresaw. Biographers believe that Dickinson's statement of 1862—"When a little Girl, I had a friend, who taught me Immortality – but venturing too near, himself – he never returned"—refers to Newton.

Dickinson was familiar not only with the Bible but also with contemporary popular literature. She was probably influenced by Lydia Maria Child's *Letters from New York,* another gift from Newton (after reading it, she gushed "This then is a book! And there are more of them!". Her brother smuggled a copy of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Kavanagh* into the house for her (because her father might disapprove) and a friend lent her Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in late 1849. *Jane Eyre's* influence cannot be measured, but when Dickinson acquired her first and only dog, a Newfoundland, she named him "Carlo" after the character St. John Rivers' dog. William Shakespeare was also a potent

influence in her life. Referring to his plays, she wrote to one friend "Why clasp any hand but this?" and to another, "Why is any other book need

4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. In which poem does the following line occur:

   "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought"

   (a) Ulysses (b) Faery Queene

   (c) Ode to Skylark (d) The Wasteland

2. Who is said to have first used the term ' Metaphysics' ?

   (a) Matthew Arnold (b) Sidney

   (c) Donne (d) Dr. Johnson

3. The writer of Volpone is

   (a) Johnson (b) Milton

   (c) Jonson (d) Shelley

4. Which is the correct chronological sequence

   (a) Spenser ———Chaucer ——Milton——Donne

   (b) Spenser——Wordsworth——Tennyson——T.S. Eliot

   (c) Milton—Shakespeare—Philip Larkin—Keats

   (d) Auden—Eliot——Shelley—Keats

5. Pilgrim's progress was written by

   (a) Milton (b) Shelley

   (c) Swinburne (d) John Bunyan

4.6 SUMMARY

If the 18th-century novel is seen as participating in the rise of bourgeois society, to what degree is the 19th-century novel concerned with maintaining the status quo? In what ways were writers like Keats and Byron critics of the very Romanticism they professed? In your answer, concentrate on particular poems by each (you may also want to draw comparisons with Wordsworth or Coleridge).

Novelists in the nineteenth century reveal similarities in the conventions of their art (i.e., practices in point of view, characterization, subject matter, the use of realism, and so on). They share thematic values as well. In other words, we can discover associations between technique and philosophical (or ideological) approach. But that generalization is also qualified by recognizable differences in both technique and theme. Discuss at least three different novels, examining selected aspects of technique and theme. Choose from the following works: *Vanity Fair*, *North and South*, *Barchester Towers*, *Middlemarch*, *Bleak House*, and *The Odd Women*.

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Imagine a dialogue between Mill and Dickens on the proper place of women in Victorian culture. What might they say to each other? How might their views, their language, and their values differ? Could they agree on anything or would they merely talk past each other?

Whatever its origins, the bildungsroman (also called the apprenticeship novel or the novel of maturation) was a mainstay of the 19th-century novelists, Dickens's *David Copperfield* being one obvious example. Compose a thesis and discuss what you deem important qualities in the bildungsroman and how they are employed in two of the following novels: *Emma*, *Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

You have on your list two monologues of the Italian Renaissance by Browning ("Andrea del Sarto" and "Fra Lippo Lippi") as well as Pater's preface and conclusion to his famous collection of essays. Both Browning and Pater use the Renaissance as a canvas on which to paint their own ideas about art. What are these ideas? Why is the Renaissance their chosen canvas? On what would they agree and disagree?

Using Wordsworth's "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* and two texts of your own choosing, discuss how 19th-century writers represent "common life." Wordsworth argues for the importance of the "ordinary language of men," especially of those situated in "low and rustic life." Do other writers share his faith in the low and rustic as a touchstone of value? Does he thoroughly believe this himself? (Possible choices of texts include, but are not limited to Arnold's "Function of Criticism," Hopkins' "Felix Randall," Hardy's poems or Tess, Ruskin, Eliot, and Dickens.)

If you were to teach the survey of English literature to undergraduates, focusing heavily on 19th-century poetry, what elements of technique and aesthetics, of social context, of historical difference would guide your work? Which poets would be indispensable to your course? What would be the central questions that guide your approach? Finally, choose one poet from the latter part of the Victorian period and discuss how you would present that poet's work in a way that furthers the larger goals of your course.

Even before Harold Bloom promulgated his notions of literary inheritance and misprision and certainly since that time, critics examined the importance of precursors for later writers. Choose two of the following pairs of writers (or suggest your own) and examine the complex legacy of the earlier writer for the later one: Charlotte Bronte and Byron; Tennyson and Keats; Browning and Shelley; Arnold and Wordsworth; Hopkins and Browning (or Pater); Hardy and Keats.

A range of critics, from G.K. Chesterton to the Marxists, have focused on the effects of industrialization and urbanization portrayed in the 19th-century novel. More recently we have turned particular interest to how gender is represented in the urban and industrial world of the Victorian age. Questions

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come to mind: how are women portrayed? What differences emerge between their representation and other characters? What do such differences (or similarities) tell us about the 19th-century novel? Discuss this issue of gender in the industrial-urban setting in at least three different works: *North and South*, *The Odd Women*, *Hard Times*, and *Jude the Obscure*. You may add to or substitute from this suggested list if you wish.

As the novel's popular and critical fortunes continued to rise through the nineteenth century, poets made many attempts to either reserve special fields of activity for their own art once narrative had been lost to it, or to regain narrative for poetry through the practice of the long poem (or other generic accommodations). Not infrequently, the same poets were involved in both alternatives. Discuss the strategic and formal responses to the novel in the poetry of three of the following: Smith, W. Wordsworth, Byron, Hemans, Arnold, Tennyson, R. Browning, E. B. Browning, D. Rossetti, C. Rossetti. (You may substitute other poets you've studied if you wish.)

The *Bildungsroman* remains a perennial topic in the scholarship. As recently as 2008, *Comparative Literature Studies* published an article entitled "Apprenticeship of the Novel: The *Bildungsroman* and the Invention of History, ca. 1770–1820." In our discussions you showed interest in the subject. Identify what you see as key characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* and how they work in three exemplary texts from your list, which may be novels and/or long poems: one from the early nineteenth century, one from the High-Victorian era, one from the late-Victorian era.

Choose a Romantic poet and trace his/her influence in the works of two Victorian writers, one a novelist and one a poet. "Influence" may be understood to include emulation, reaction, or a mixture of both; it might involve politics, aesthetics, or both. Through this exercise, speculate on the relationship between Romantic poetics and Victorian writing. Examples might be Hemans into Barrett Browning and Gaskell, Keats into Tennyson and Wilde, Wordsworth into Arnold and Eliot.

Wordsworth's Preface (1802) to *Lyrical Ballads* has often been referred to as a revolutionary manifesto on poetry. Wordsworth discusses a number of goals, his "principal object" being to "choose incidents and situations from common life" and relate them "as far as possible" in a "selection of language really used by men." He also offers an interesting examination of how "the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry." How are these revolutionary goals of the Preface addressed (directly or indirectly) by poets other than Wordsworth in the nineteenth century? For example, what are some of the changes in poetic language and subject matter? Your discussion should have the scope of the century: poetry or prose treatises on poetry from the Romantic, Victorian, and late-Victorian eras. You should focus on three writers, though you may briefly draw in other examples.

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The Woman Question pervaded the high-Victorian age and eventually morphed into what the late-Victorians debated as the New Woman. Discuss what you see as important changes in the issue, the various categories and markers of femininity as revealed in different genres from the nineteenth century.

Is there such a thing as a female bildungsroman? How might it be distinct from a regular bildungsroman and why? Make your argument with reference to at least three literary examples from your nineteenth-century reading list.

The growth of female professions and professionals over the course of the nineteenth century challenged separate sphere ideology. Discuss several texts (at least one from the Romantic Period) in regards to their treatment of the relationship between women, work, and money.

The development of prisons and insane asylum, including new definitions of and treatments for madness, was, as many historians have noted, a significant feature of nineteenth-century culture. Choose three texts from your list and discuss how the prison, the workhouse (as a kind of prison), or the madhouse became a focus for other cultural anxieties—about class, about masculinity and femininity, about sexuality, or about empire. Be sure you discuss at least one text which is NOT a novel. You need not, however, restrict your discussion to actual madhouses and prisons—metaphorical ones will also do.

4.7 KEY-WORDS

1. Act and Scene : An act is a major division in the action of a play. In Englandthis division was introduced by Elizabethan dramatists, who imitated ancient Aestheticism Roman plays by structuring the action into five acts. Late in the nineteenth century a number of writers followed the example of Chekhov and Ibsen by constructing plays in four acts. In the present century the most common form for nonmusical dramas has been three acts.

2. Allegory : An allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the "literal," or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification.

3. Parable : A **parable** is a very short narrative about human beings presented so as to stress the tacit analogy, or parallel, with a general thesis or lesson that the narrator is trying to bring home to his audience.

4. Heroic Drama : He was a form mainly specific to the *Restoration*

Period, though instances continued to be written in the early eighteenth century.

4.8 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by Rephalite Movement? Discuss.
2. Who are the Precursors of romantic revival? Explain.
3. Briefly describe the 19th century novel.
4. Discuss women novelists of the 19th century.

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (c) 4. (b) 5. (d)

4.9 FURTHER READINGS

1. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Marlow.* New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992.

2. Cheng, Yuan-Jung. *Heralds of the Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf, and Lessing.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999.

3. Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory.* London: Verso, reprint edition 2006.

UNIT - 5

20TH CENTURY LITERATURE

STRUCTURE

5.0 Objectives
5.1 Introduction
5.2 The Modernist revolution
5.3 The literature of World War I and The Interwar Period
5.4 The literature of World War II (1939-45)
5.5 Fiction
5.6 Poetry
5.7 Drama
5.8 Self-Assessment
5.9 Summary
5.10 Key –Words
5.11 Review Questions
5.12 Further Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss 20th century drama and fiction
- Explain the poetry of 20th Century

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The 20th century opened with great hope but also with some apprehension, for the new century marked the final approach to a new millennium. For many, humankind was entering upon an unprecedented era. H.G. Wells's utopian studies captured and qualified this optimistic mood and gave expression to a common conviction that science and technology would transform the world in the century ahead. To achieve such transformation, outmoded institutions and ideals had to be replaced by ones more suited to the growth and liberation of the human spirit. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the accession of Edward VII seemed to confirm that a franker, less inhibited era had begun.Many writers of the Edwardian period, drawing widely upon the realistic and naturalistic conventions of the 19th century (upon Ibsen in drama and Balzac, Turgenev, Flaubert, Zola, Eliot, and Dickens in fiction) and in tune with the anti-Aestheticism unleashed by the

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trial of the archetypal Aesthete, Oscar Wilde, saw their task in the new century to be an unashamedly didactic one. In a series of wittily iconoclastic plays, of which *Man and Superman* (performed 1905, published 1903) and *Major Barbara* (performed 1905, published 1907) are the most substantial, George Bernard Shaw turned the Edwardian theatre into an arena for debate upon the principal concerns of the day: the question of political organization, the morality of armaments and war, the function of class and of the professions, the validity of the family and of marriage, and the issue of female emancipation. Nor was he alone in this, even if he was alone in the brilliance of his comedy. John Galsworthy made use of the theatre in *Strife* (1909) to explore the conflict between capital and labour, and in *Justice* (1910) he lent his support to reform of the penal system, while Harley Granville-Barker, whose revolutionary approach to stage direction did much to change theatrical production in the period, dissected in *The Voysey Inheritance* (performed 1905, published 1909) and *Waste* (performed 1907, published 1909) the hypocrisies and deceit of upper-class and professional life.

Many Edwardian novelists were similarly eager to explore the shortcomings of English social life. Wells—in *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900); *Kipps* (1905); *Ann Veronica* (1909), his pro-suffragist novel; and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910)—captured the frustrations of lower- and middle-class existence, even though he relieved his accounts with many comic touches. In *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), Arnold Bennett detailed the constrictions of provincial life among the self-made business classes in the area of England known as the Potteries; in *The Man of Property* (1906), the first volume of *The Forsyte Saga*, Galsworthy described the destructive possessiveness of the professional bourgeoisie; and, in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *The Longest Journey* (1907), E.M. Forster portrayed with irony the insensitivity, self-repression, and philistinism of the English middle classes.

Did u know?

Ezra Pound believed that poetry is the highest of arts.
He was a great admirer of the poet William Butler Yeats.
He became known for his role in developing Imagism.
He was a noted translator of Asian literature.

These novelists, however, wrote more memorably when they allowed themselves a larger perspective. In *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), Bennett showed the destructive effects of time on the lives of individuals and communities and evoked a quality of pathos that he never matched in his other fiction; in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), Wells showed the ominous consequences of the uncontrolled developments taking place within a British society still dependent upon the institutions of a long-defunct landed aristocracy; and in *Howards End* (1910), Forster showed how little the rootless and self-important world of contemporary commerce cared for the more rooted world of culture, although he acknowledged that commerce was a necessary evil. Nevertheless, even as they perceived the

difficulties of the present, most Edwardian novelists, like their counterparts in the theatre, held firmly to the belief not only that constructive change was possible but also that this change could in some measure be advanced by their writing.

Other writers, including Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling, who had established their reputations during the previous century, and Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and Edward Thomas, who established their reputations in the first decade of the new century, were less confident about the future and sought to revive the traditional forms—the ballad, the narrative poem, the satire, the fantasy, the topographical poem, and the essay—that in their view preserved traditional sentiments and perceptions. The revival of traditional forms in the late 19th and early 20th century was not a unique event. There were many such revivals during the 20th century, and the traditional poetry of A.E. Housman (whose book *A Shropshire Lad*, originally published in 1896, enjoyed huge popular success during World War I), Walter de la Mare, John Masefield, Robert Graves, and Edmund Blunden represents an important and often neglected strand of English literature in the first half of the century.

The most significant writing of the period, traditionalist or modern, was inspired by neither hope nor apprehension but by bleaker feelings that the new century would witness the collapse of a whole civilization. The new century had begun with Great Britain involved in the South African War (the Boer War; 1899–1902), and it seemed to some that the British Empire was as doomed to destruction, both from within and from without, as had been the Roman Empire. In his poems on the South African War, Hardy (whose achievement as a poet in the 20th century rivaled his achievement as a novelist in the 19th) questioned simply and sardonically the human cost of empire building and established a tone and style that many British poets were to use in the course of the century, while Kipling, who had done much to engender pride in empire, began to speak in his verse and short stories of the burden of empire and the tribulations it would bring.

No one captured the sense of an imperial civilization in decline more fully or subtly than the expatriate American novelist Henry James. In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), he had briefly anatomized the fatal loss of energy of the English ruling class and, in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), had described more directly the various instabilities that threatened its paternalistic rule. He did so with regret: the patrician American admired in the English upper class its sense of moral obligation to the community. By the turn of the century, however, he had noted a disturbing change. In *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897) and *What Maisie Knew* (1897), members of the upper class no longer seem troubled by the means adopted to achieve their morally dubious ends. Great Britain had become indistinguishable from the other nations of the Old World, in which an ugly rapacity had never been far from the surface. James's dismay at this condition gave to his subtle and compressed late fiction, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902),

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The Ambassadors (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), much of its gravity and air of disenchantment.

James's awareness of crisis affected the very form and style of his writing, for he was no longer assured that the world about which he wrote was either coherent in itself or unambiguously intelligible to its inhabitants. His fiction still presented characters within an identifiable social world, but he found his characters and their world increasingly elusive and enigmatic and his own grasp upon them, as he made clear in *The Sacred Fount* (1901), the questionable consequence of artistic will.

Another expatriate novelist, Joseph Conrad (pseudonym of Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, born in the Ukraine of Polish parents), shared James's sense of crisis but attributed it less to the decline of a specific civilization than to human failings. Man was a solitary, romantic creature of will who at any cost imposed his meaning upon the world because he could not endure a world that did not reflect his central place within it. In *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *Lord Jim* (1900), he had seemed to sympathize with this predicament; but in "Heart of Darkness" (1902), *Nostromo* (1904), *The Secret Agent* (1907), and *Under Western Eyes* (1911), he detailed such imposition, and the psychological pathologies he increasingly associated with it, without sympathy. He did so as a philosophical novelist whose concern with the mocking limits of human knowledge affected not only the content of his fiction but also its very structure. His writing itself is marked by gaps in the narrative, by narrators who do not fully grasp the significance of the events they are retelling, and by characters who are unable to make themselves understood. James and Conrad used many of the conventions of 19th-century realism but transformed them to express what are considered to be peculiarly 20th-century preoccupations and anxieties.

5.2 THE MODERNIST REVOLUTION

Anglo-American Modernism: Pound, Lewis, Lawrence, and Eliot

From 1908 to 1914 there was a remarkably productive period of innovation and experiment as novelists and poets undertook, in anthologies and magazines, to challenge the literary conventions not just of the recent past but of the entire post-Romantic era. For a brief moment, London, which up to that point had been culturally one of the dullest of the European capitals, boasted an avant-garde to rival those of Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, even if its leading personality, Ezra Pound, and many of its most notable figures were American.

The spirit of Modernism—a radical and utopian spirit stimulated by new ideas in anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political theory, and psychoanalysis—was in the air, expressed rather mutedly by the pastoral and often anti-Modern poets of the Georgian movement (1912–22; *see* Georgian poetry) and more authentically by the English and American poets of the Imagist movement, to which Pound first drew attention in *Ripostes* (1912), a volume of

his own poetry, and in *Des Imagistes* (1914), an anthology. Prominent among the Imagists were the English poets T.E. Hulme, F.S. Flint, and Richard Aldington and the Americans Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and Amy Lowell.

Reacting against what they considered to be an exhausted poetic tradition, the Imagists wanted to refine the language of poetry in order to make it a vehicle not for pastoral sentiment or imperialistic rhetoric but for the exact description and evocation of mood. To this end they experimented with free or irregular verse and made the image their principal instrument. In contrast to the leisurely Georgians, they worked with brief and economical forms.

Meanwhile, painters and sculptors, grouped together by the painter and writer Wyndham Lewis under the banner of Vorticism, combined the abstract art of the Cubists with the example of the Italian Futurists who conveyed in their painting, sculpture, and literature the new sensations of movement and scale associated with modern developments such as automobiles and airplanes. With the typographically arresting *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* (two editions, 1914 and 1915) Vorticism found its polemical mouthpiece and in Lewis, its editor, its most active propagandist and accomplished literary exponent. His experimental play *Enemy of the Stars,* published in *Blast* in 1914, and his experimental novel *Tarr* (1918) can still surprise with their violent exuberance.

World War I brought this first period of the Modernist revolution to an end and, while not destroying its radical and utopian impulse, made the Anglo-American Modernists all too aware of the gulf between their ideals and the chaos of the present. Novelists and poets parodied received forms and styles, in their view made redundant by the immensity and horror of the war, but, as can be seen most clearly in Pound's angry and satirical *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), with a note of anguish and with the wish that writers might again make form and style the bearers of authentic meanings.

In his two most innovative novels, *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920), D.H. Lawrence traced the sickness of modern civilization—a civilization in his view only too eager to participate in the mass slaughter of the war—to the effects of industrialization upon the human psyche. Yet as he rejected the conventions of the fictional tradition, which he had used to brilliant effect in his deeply felt autobiographical novel of working-class family life, *Sons and Lovers* (1913), he drew upon myth and symbol to hold out the hope that individual and collective rebirth could come through human intensity and passion.

On the other hand, the poet and playwright T.S. Eliot, another American resident in London, in his most innovative poetry, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land* (1922), traced the sickness of modern civilization—a civilization that, on the evidence of the war, preferred death or death-in-life to life—to the spiritual emptiness and rootlessness of modern existence. As he rejected the conventions of the poetic tradition, Eliot, like Lawrence, drew upon myth and symbol to hold out the hope of individual and

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collective rebirth, but he differed sharply from Lawrence by supposing that rebirth could come through self-denial and self-abnegation. Even so, their satirical intensity, no less than the seriousness and scope of their analyses of the failings of a civilization that had voluntarily entered upon the First World War, ensured that Lawrence and Eliot became the leading and most authoritative figures of Anglo-American Modernism in England in the whole of the postwar period.

During the 1920s Lawrence (who had left England in 1919) and Eliot began to develop viewpoints at odds with the reputations they had established through their early work. In *Kangaroo* (1923) and *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), Lawrence revealed the attraction to him of charismatic, masculine leadership, while, in *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (1928), Eliot (whose influence as a literary critic now rivaled his influence as a poet) announced that he was a "classicist in literature, royalist in politics and anglo-catholic in religion" and committed himself to hierarchy and order. Elitist and paternalistic, they did not, however, adopt the extreme positions of Pound (who left England in 1920 and settled permanently in Italy in 1925) or Lewis. Drawing upon the ideas of the left and of the right, Pound and Lewis dismissed democracy as a sham and argued that economic and ideological manipulation was the dominant factor. For some, the antidemocratic views of the Anglo-American Modernists simply made explicit the reactionary tendencies inherent in the movement from its beginning; for others, they came from a tragic loss of balance occasioned by World War I. This issue is a complex one, and judgments upon the literary merit and political status of Pound's ambitious but immensely difficult Imagist epic *The Cantos* (1917–70) and Lewis's powerful sequence of politico-theological novels *The Human Age* (*The Childermass*, 1928; *Monstre Gai* and *Malign Fiesta*, both 1955) are sharply divided.

Celtic Modernism: Yeats, Joyce, Jones, and MacDiarmid

Pound, Lewis, Lawrence, and Eliot were the principal male figures of Anglo-American Modernism, but important contributions also were made by the Irish poet and playwright William Butler Yeats and the Irish novelist James Joyce. By virtue of nationality, residence, and, in Yeats's case, an unjust reputation as a poet still steeped in Celtic mythology, they had less immediate impact upon the British literary intelligentsia in the late 1910s and early 1920s than Pound, Lewis, Lawrence, and Eliot, although by the mid-1920s their influence had become direct and substantial. Many critics today argue that Yeats's work as a poet and Joyce's work as a novelist are the most important Modernist achievements of the period

In his early verse and drama, Yeats, who had been influenced as a young man by the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite movements, evoked a legendary and supernatural Ireland in language that was often vague and grandiloquent. As an adherent of the cause of Irish nationalism, he had hoped to instill pride in the Irish past. The poetry of *The Green Helmet* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914),

however, was marked not only by a more concrete and colloquial style but also by a growing isolation from the nationalist movement, for Yeats celebrated an aristocratic Ireland epitomized for him by the family and country house of his friend and patron, Lady Gregory.

The grandeur of his mature reflective poetry in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), and *The Winding Stair* (1929) derived in large measure from the way in which (caught up by the violent discords of contemporary Irish history) he accepted the fact that his idealized Ireland was illusory. At its best his mature style combined passion and precision with powerful symbol, strong rhythm, and lucid diction; and even though his poetry often touched upon public themes, he never ceased to reflect upon the Romantic themes of creativity, selfhood, and the individual's relationship to nature, time, and history.

Joyce, who spent his adult life on the continent of Europe, expressed in his fiction his sense of the limits and possibilities of the Ireland he had left behind. In his collection of short stories, *Dubliners* (1914), and his largely autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), he described in fiction at once realist and symbolist the individual cost of the sexual and imaginative oppressiveness of life in Ireland. As if by provocative contrast, his panoramic novel of urban life, *Ulysses* (1922), was sexually frank and imaginatively profuse. (Copies of the first edition were burned by the New York postal authorities, and British customs officials seized the second edition in 1923.) Employing extraordinary formal and linguistic inventiveness, including the stream-of-consciousness method, Joyce depicted the experiences and the fantasies of various men and women in Dublin on a summer's day in June 1904.

Yet his purpose was not simply documentary, for he drew upon an encyclopaedic range of European literature to stress the rich universality of life buried beneath the provincialism of pre-independence Dublin, in 1904 a city still within the British Empire. In his even more experimental *Finnegans Wake* (1939), extracts of which had already appeared as *Work in Progress* from 1928 to 1937, Joyce's commitment to cultural universality became absolute. By means of a strange, polyglot idiom of puns and portmanteau words, he not only explored the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious but also suggested that the languages and myths of Ireland were interwoven with the languages and myths of many other cultures.

The example of Joyce's experimentalism was followed by the Anglo-Welsh poet David Jones and by the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid (pseudonym of Christopher Murray Grieve). Whereas Jones concerned himself, in his complex and allusive poetry and prose, with the Celtic, Saxon, Roman, and Christian roots of Great Britain, MacDiarmid sought not only to recover what he considered to be an authentically Scottish culture but also to establish, as in his *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955), the truly cosmopolitan nature of Celtic consciousness and achievement. MacDiarmid's masterpiece in the vernacular,

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A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926), helped to inspire the Scottish renaissance of the 1920s and '30s.

5.3 THE LITERATURE OF WORLD WAR I AND THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The impact of World War I upon the Anglo-American Modernists has been noted. In addition the war brought a variety of responses from the more-traditionalist writers, predominantly poets, who saw action. Rupert Brooke caught the idealism of the opening months of the war (and died in service); Siegfried Sassoon and Ivor Gurney caught the mounting anger and sense of waste as the war continued; and Isaac Rosenberg (perhaps the most original of the war poets), Wilfred Owen, and Edmund Blunden not only caught the comradely compassion of the trenches but also addressed themselves to the larger moral perplexities raised by the war (Rosenberg and Owen were killed in action).

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Pound was not the creator of this poem; he translated it from the original Chinese version by Li Po. The Chinese original likely had a specific form and identifiable meter, but Pound did not know enough about Chinese poetry to preserve it in his translation.

It was not until the 1930s, however, that much of this poetry became widely known. In the wake of the war the dominant tone, at once cynical and bewildered, was set by Aldous Huxley's satirical novel *Crome Yellow* (1921). Drawing upon Lawrence and Eliot, he concerned himself in his novels of ideas—*Antic Hay* (1923), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), and *Point Counter Point* (1928)—with the fate of the individual in rootless modernity. His pessimistic vision found its most complete expression in the 1930s, however, in his most famous and inventive novel, the anti-utopian fantasy *Brave New World* (1932), and his account of the anxieties of middle-class intellectuals of the period, *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936).

Huxley's frank and disillusioned manner was echoed by the dramatist Noël Coward in *The Vortex* (1924), which established his reputation; by the poet Robert Graves in his autobiography, *Good-Bye to All That* (1929); and by the poet Richard Aldington in his *Death of a Hero* (1929), a semiautobiographical novel of prewar bohemian London and the trenches. Exceptions to this dominant mood were found among writers too old to consider themselves, as did Graves and Aldington, members of a betrayed generation. In *A Passage to India* (1924), E.M. Forster examined the quest for and failure of human understanding among various ethnic and social groups in India under British rule. In *Parade's End* (1950; comprising *Some Do Not*, 1924; *No More Parades*, 1925; *A Man Could Stand Up,* 1926; and *Last Post*, 1928) Ford Madox Ford, with an obvious debt to James and Conrad, examined the demise of aristocratic England in the course of the war, exploring

on a larger scale the themes he had treated with brilliant economy in his short novel *The Good Soldier* (1915). And in *Wolf Solent* (1929) and *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932), John Cowper Powys developed an eccentric and highly erotic mysticism.

These were, however, writers of an earlier, more confident era. A younger and more contemporary voice belonged to members of the Bloomsbury group. Setting themselves against the humbug and hypocrisy that, they believed, had marked their parents' generation in upper-class England, they aimed to be uncompromisingly honest in personal and artistic life. In Lytton Strachey's iconoclastic biographical study *Eminent Victorians* (1918), this amounted to little more than amusing irreverence, even though Strachey had a profound effect upon the writing of biography; but in the fiction of Virginia Woolf the rewards of this outlook were both profound and moving. In short stories and novels of great delicacy and lyrical power, she set out to portray the limitations of the self, caught as it is in time, and suggested that these could be transcended, if only momentarily, by engagement with another self, a place, or a work of art. This preoccupation not only charged the act of reading and writing with unusual significance but also produced, in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931)—perhaps her most inventive and complex novel—and *Between the Acts* (1941), her most sombre and moving work, some of the most daring fiction produced in the 20th century.

Woolf believed that her viewpoint offered an alternative to the destructive egotism of the masculine mind, an egotism that had found its outlet in World War I, but, as she made clear in her long essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), she did not consider this viewpoint to be the unique possession of women. In her fiction she presented men who possessed what she held to be feminine characteristics, a regard for others and an awareness of the multiplicity of experience; but she remained pessimistic about women gaining positions of influence, even though she set out the desirability of this in her feminist study *Three Guineas* (1938). Together with Joyce, who greatly influenced her *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Woolf transformed the treatment of subjectivity, time, and history in fiction and helped create a feeling among her contemporaries that traditional forms of fiction—with their frequent indifference to the mysterious and inchoate inner life of characters—were no longer adequate. Her eminence as a literary critic and essayist did much to foster an interest in the work of other female Modernist writers of the period, such as Katherine Mansfield (born in New Zealand) and Dorothy Richardson.

Indeed, as a result of late 20th-century rereadings of Modernism, scholars now recognize the central importance of women writers to British Modernism, particularly as manifested in the works of Mansfield, Richardson, May Sinclair, Mary Butts, Rebecca West (pseudonym of Cicily Isabel Andrews), Jean Rhys (born in the West Indies), and the American poet Hilda Doolittle (who spent her adult life mainly in England and Switzerland). Sinclair, who produced 24 novels

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in the course of a prolific literary career, was an active feminist and an advocate of psychical research, including psychoanalysis. These concerns were evident in her most accomplished novels, *Mary Olivier: A Life* (1919) and *Life and Death of Harriett Frean* (1922), which explored the ways in which her female characters contributed to their own social and psychological repression. West, whose pen name was based on one of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's female characters, was similarly interested in female self-negation. From her first and greatly underrated novel, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), to later novels such as *Harriet Hume* (1929), she explored how and why middle-class women so tenaciously upheld the division between private and public spheres and helped to sustain the traditional values of the masculine world. West became a highly successful writer on social and political issues—she wrote memorably on the Balkans and on the Nürnberg trials at the end of World War II—but her public acclaim as a journalist obscured during her lifetime her greater achievements as a novelist.

In her 13-volume *Pilgrimage* (the first volume, *Pointed Roofs*, appeared in 1915; the last, *March Moonlight*, in 1967), Richardson was far more positive about the capacity of women to realize themselves. She presented events through the mind of her autobiographical persona, Miriam Henderson, describing both the social and economic limitations and the psychological and intellectual possibilities of a young woman without means coming of age with the new century. Other women writers of the period also made major contributions to new kinds of psychological realism. In *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920) and *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), Mansfield (who went to England at age 19) revolutionized the short story by rejecting the mechanisms of plot in favour of an impressionistic sense of the flow of experience, punctuated by an arresting moment of insight. In *Postures* (1928, reprinted as *Quartet* in 1969), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), Rhys depicted the lives of vulnerable women adrift in London and Paris, vulnerable because they were poor and because the words in which they innocently believed—honesty in relationships, fidelity in marriage—proved in practice to be empty.

Creating heavily symbolic novels based on the quest-romance, such as *Ashe of Rings* (1925) and *Armed with Madness* (1928), Butts explored a more general loss of value in the contemporary wasteland (T.S. Eliot was an obvious influence on her work), while Doolittle (whose reputation rested upon her contribution to the Imagist movement in poetry) used the quest-romance in a series of autobiographical novels—including *Paint It Today* (written in 1921 but first published in 1992) and *Bid Me to Live* (1960)—to chart a way through the contemporary world for female characters in search of sustaining, often same-sex relationships. Following the posthumous publication of her strikingly original prose, Doolittle's reputation was revised and enhanced

The 1930s

World War I created a profound sense of crisis in English culture, and this became even more intense with the worldwide economic collapse of the late 1920s and

early '30s, the rise of fascism, the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), and the approach of another full-scale conflict in Europe. It is not surprising, therefore, that much of the writing of the 1930s was bleak and pessimistic: even Evelyn Waugh's sharp and amusing satire on contemporary England, *Vile Bodies* (1930), ended with another, more disastrous war.

Divisions of class and the burden of sexual repression became common and interrelated themes in the fiction of the 1930s. In his trilogy *A Scots Quair* (*Sunset Song* [1932], *Cloud Howe* [1933], and *Grey Granite* [1934]), the novelist Lewis Grassic Gibbon (pseudonym of James Leslie Mitchell) gives a panoramic account of Scottish rural and working-class life. The work resembles Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* in its historical sweep and intensity of vision. Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* (1933) is a bleak record, in the manner of Bennett, of the economic depression in a northern working-class community; and Graham Greene's *It's a Battlefield* (1934) and *Brighton Rock* (1938) are desolate studies, in the manner of Conrad, of the loneliness and guilt of men and women trapped in a contemporary England of conflict and decay. *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), by George Orwell, are evocations—in the manner of Wells and, in the latter case unsuccessfully, of Joyce—of contemporary lower-middle-class existence, and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) is a report of northern working-class mores. Elizabeth Bowen's *Death of the Heart* (1938) is a sardonic analysis, in the manner of James, of contemporary upper-class values.

Yet the most characteristic writing of the decade grew out of the determination to supplement the diagnosis of class division and sexual repression with their cure. It was no accident that the poetry of W.H. Auden and his Oxford contemporaries C. Day-Lewis, Louis MacNeice, and Stephen Spender became quickly identified as the authentic voice of the new generation, for it matched despair with defiance. These self-styled prophets of a new world envisaged freedom from the bourgeois order being achieved in various ways. For Day-Lewis and Spender, technology held out particular promise. This, allied to Marxist precepts, would in their view bring an end to poverty and the suffering it caused. For Auden especially, sexual repression was the enemy, and here the writings of Sigmund Freud and D.H. Lawrence were valuable. Whatever their individual preoccupations, these poets produced in the very play of their poetry, with its mastery of different genres, its rapid shifts of tone and mood, and its strange juxtapositions of the colloquial and esoteric, a blend of seriousness and high spirits irresistible to their peers.

The adventurousness of the new generation was shown in part by its love of travel (as in Christopher Isherwood's novels *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* [1935] and *Goodbye to Berlin* [1939], which reflect his experiences of postwar Germany), in part by its readiness for political involvement, and in part by its openness to the writing of the avant-garde of the Continent. The verse dramas coauthored by Auden and Isherwood, of which *The Ascent of F6* (1936) is the most notable,

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owed much to Bertolt Brecht; the political parables of Rex Warner, of which *The Aerodrome* (1941) is the most accomplished, owed much to Franz Kafka; and the complex and often obscure poetry of David Gascoyne and Dylan Thomas owed much to the Surrealists. Even so, Yeats's mature poetry and Eliot's *Waste Land*, with its parodies, its satirical edge, its multiplicity of styles, and its quest for spiritual renewal, provided the most significant models and inspiration for the young writers of the period.

The writing of the interwar period had great breadth and diversity, from Modernist experimentation to new documentary modes of realism and from art as propaganda (particularly in the theatre) to conventional fiction, drama, and poetry produced for the popular market. Two trends stand out: first, the impact of film on the writing of the decade, not least on styles of visual realization and dialogue, and, second, the ubiquitous preoccupation with questions of time, on the psychological, historical, and even cosmological levels. As the world became less stable, writers sought both to reflect this and to seek some more-fundamental grounding than that provided by contemporary circumstances.

5.4 THE LITERATURE OF WORLD WAR II (1939–45)

The outbreak of war in 1939, as in 1914, brought to an end an era of great intellectual and creative exuberance. Individuals were dispersed; the rationing of paper affected the production of magazines and books; and the poem and the short story, convenient forms for men under arms, became the favoured means of literary expression. It was hardly a time for new beginnings, although the poets of the New Apocalypse movement produced three anthologies (1940–45) inspired by Neoromantic anarchism. No important new novelists or playwrights appeared.

In fact, the best fiction about wartime—Evelyn Waugh's *Put Out More Flags* (1942), Henry Green's *Caught* (1943), James Hanley's *No Directions* (1943), Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947), and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949)—was produced by established writers. Only three new poets (all of whom died on active service) showed promise: Alun Lewis, Sidney Keyes, and Keith Douglas, the latter the most gifted and distinctive, whose eerily detached accounts of the battlefield revealed a poet of potential greatness. Lewis's haunting short stories about the lives of officers and enlisted men are also works of very great accomplishment.

It was a poet of an earlier generation, T.S. Eliot, who produced in his *Four Quartets* (1935–42; published as a whole, 1943) the masterpiece of the war. Reflecting upon language, time, and history, he searched, in the three quartets written during the war, for moral and religious significance in the midst of destruction and strove to counter the spirit of nationalism inevitably present in a nation at war. The creativity that had seemed to end with the tortured religious poetry and verse drama of the 1920s and '30s had a rich and extraordinary late

flowering as Eliot concerned himself, on the scale of *The Waste Land* but in a very different manner and mood, with the well-being of the society in which he lived.

Hugh Alistair Davies

Literature after 1945

Increased attachment to religion most immediately characterized literature after World War II. This was particularly perceptible in authors who had already established themselves before the war. W.H. Auden turned from Marxist politics to Christian commitment, expressed in poems that attractively combine classical form with vernacular relaxedness. Christian belief suffused the verse plays of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. While Graham Greene continued the powerful merging of thriller plots with studies of moral and psychological ambiguity that he had developed through the 1930s, his Roman Catholicism loomed especially large in novels such as *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) and *The End of the Affair* (1951). Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and his *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1965; published separately as *Men at Arms* [1952], *Officers and Gentlemen* [1955], and *Unconditional Surrender* [1961]) venerate Roman Catholicism as the repository of values seen as under threat from the advance of democracy. Less-traditional spiritual solace was found in Eastern mysticism by Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood and by Robert Graves, who maintained an impressive output of taut, graceful lyric poetry behind which lay the creed he expressed in *The White Goddess* (1948), a matriarchal mythology revering the female principle.

5.5 FICTION

The two most innovatory novelists to begin their careers soon after World War II were also religious believers—William Golding and Muriel Spark. In novels of poetic compactness, they frequently return to the notion of original sin—the idea that, in Golding's words, "man produces evil as a bee produces honey." Concentrating on small communities, Spark and Golding transfigure them into microcosms. Allegory and symbol set wide resonances quivering, so that short books make large statements. In Golding's first novel, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), schoolboys cast away on a Pacific island during a nuclear war reenact humanity's fall from grace as their relationships degenerate from innocent camaraderie to totalitarian butchery. In Spark's satiric comedy, similar assumptions and techniques are discernible. Her best-known novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), for example, makes events in a 1930s Edinburgh classroom replicate in miniature the rise of fascism in Europe. In form and atmosphere, *Lord of the Flies* has affinities with George Orwell's examinations of totalitarian nightmare, the fable *Animal Farm* (1945) and the novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949). Spark's astringent portrayal of behaviour in confined little worlds is partly indebted to Dame Ivy Compton-Burnett, who, from the 1920s to the 1970s, produced a

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remarkable series of fierce but decorous novels, written almost entirely in mordantly witty dialogue, that dramatize tyranny and power struggles in secluded late-Victorian households.

The stylized novels of Henry Green, such as *Concluding* (1948) and *Nothing* (1950), also seem to be precursors of the terse, compressed fiction that Spark and Golding brought to such distinction. This kind of fiction, it was argued by Iris Murdoch, a philosopher as well as a novelist, ran antiliberal risks in its preference for allegory, pattern, and symbol over the social capaciousness and realistic rendition of character at which the great 19th-century novels excelled. Murdoch's own fiction, typically engaged with themes of goodness, authenticity, selfishness, and altruism, oscillates between these two modes of writing. *A Severed Head* (1961) is the most incisive and entertaining of her elaborately artificial works; *The Bell* (1958) best achieves the psychological and emotional complexity she found so valuable in classic 19th-century fiction.

While restricting themselves to socially limited canvases, novelists such as Elizabeth Bowen, Elizabeth Taylor, and Barbara Pym continued the tradition of depicting emotional and psychological nuance that Murdoch felt was dangerously neglected in mid-20th-century novels. In contrast to their wry comedies of sense and sensibility and to the packed parables of Golding and Spark was yet another type of fiction, produced by a group of writers who became known as the Angry Young Men. From authors such as John Braine, John Wain (also a notable poet), Alan Sillitoe, Stan Barstow, and David Storey (also a significant dramatist) came a spate of novels often ruggedly autobiographical in origin and near documentary in approach. The predominant subject of these books was social mobility, usually from the northern working class to the southern middle class.

Social mobility was also inspected, from an upper-class vantage point, in Anthony Powell's 12-novel sequence *A Dance to the Music of Time* (1951–75), an attempt to apply the French novelist Marcel Proust's mix of irony, melancholy, meditativeness, and social detail to a chronicle of class and cultural shifts in England from World War I to the 1960s. Satiric watchfulness of social change was also the specialty of Kingsley Amis, whose deriding of the reactionary and pompous in his first novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954), led to his being labeled an Angry Young Man. As Amis grew older, though, his irascibility vehemently swiveled toward left-wing and progressive targets, and he established himself as a Tory satirist in the vein of Waugh or Powell. C.P. Snow's earnest 11-novel sequence, *Strangers and Brothers* (1940–70), about a man's journey from the provincial lower classes to London's "corridors of power," had its admirers. But the most inspired fictional cavalcade of social and cultural life in 20th-century Britain was Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter* (1967), a book that set a triumphant seal on his progress from a writer of acidic short stories to a major novelist whose work unites 19th-century breadth and gusto with 20th-century formal versatility and experiment.

The parody and pastiche that Wilson brilliantly deploys in *No Laughing Matter* and the book's fascination with the sources and resources of creativity constitute a rich, imaginative response to what had become a mood of growing self-consciousness in fiction. Thoughtfulness about the form of the novel and relationships between past and present fiction showed itself most stimulatingly in the works—generally campus novels—of the academically based novelists Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge.

From the late 1960s onward, the outstanding trend in fiction was enthrallment with empire. The first phase of this focused on imperial disillusion and dissolution. In his vast, detailed *Raj Quartet* (*The Jewel in the Crown* [1966], *The Day of the Scorpion* [1968], *The Towers of Silence* [1971], and *A Division of the Spoils* [1975]), Paul Scott charted the last years of the British in India; he followed it with *Staying On* (1977), a poignant comedy about those who remained after independence. Three half-satiric, half-elegiac novels by J.G. Farrell (*Troubles* [1970], *The Siege of Krishnapur* [1973], and *The Singapore Grip* [1978]) likewise spotlighted imperial discomfiture. Then, in the 1980s, postcolonial voices made themselves audible. Salman Rushdie's crowded comic saga about the generation born as Indian independence dawned, *Midnight's Children* (1981), boisterously mingles material from Eastern fable, Hindu myth, Islamic lore, Bombay cinema, cartoon strips, advertising billboards, and Latin American magic realism. (Such eclecticism, sometimes called "postmodern," also showed itself in other kinds of fiction in the 1980s. Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in* $10^1/_2$ *Chapters* [1989], for example, inventively mixes fact and fantasy, reportage, art criticism, autobiography, parable, and pastiche in its working of fictional variations on the Noah's Ark myth.) For Rushdie, as *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) further demonstrate, stylistic miscellaneousness—a way of writing that exhibits the vitalizing effects of cultural cross-fertilization—is especially suited to conveying postcolonial experience. (*The Satanic Verses* was understood differently in the Islamic world, to the extent that the Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini pronounced a fatwa, in effect a death sentence [later suspended], on Rushdie.) However, not all postcolonial authors followed Rushdie's example.

Vikram Seth's massive novel about India after independence, *A Suitable Boy* (1993), is a prodigious feat of realism, resembling 19th-century masterpieces in its combination of social breadth and emotional and psychological depth. Nor was India alone in inspiring vigorous postcolonial writing. Timothy Mo's novels report on colonial predicaments in East Asia with a political acumen reminiscent of Joseph Conrad. Particularly notable is *An Insular Possession* (1986), which vividly harks back to the founding of Hong Kong. Kazuo Ishiguro's spare, refined novel *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) records how a painter's life and work became insidiously coarsened by the imperialistic ethos of 1930s Japan. Novelists such as Buchi Emecheta and Ben Okri wrote of postcolonial Africa, as did V.S. Naipaul in his most ambitious novel, *A Bend in the River* (1979). Naipaul

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also chronicled aftermaths of empire around the globe and particularly in his native Caribbean. Nearer England, the strife in Northern Ireland provoked fictional response, among which the bleak, graceful novels and short stories of William Trevor and Bernard MacLaverty stand out.

Widening social divides in 1980s Britain were also registered in fiction, sometimes in works that purposefully imitate the Victorian "Condition of England" novel (the best is David Lodge's elegant, ironic *Nice Work* [1988]). The most thoroughgoing of such "Two Nations" panoramas of an England cleft by regional gulfs and gross inequities between rich and poor is Margaret Drabble's *The Radiant Way* (1987). With less documentary substantiality, Martin Amis's novels, angled somewhere between scabrous relish and satiric disgust, offer prose that has the lurid energy of a strobe light playing over vistas of urban sleaze, greed, and debasement. *Money* (1984) is the most effectively focused of his books.

Just as some postcolonial novelists used myth, magic, and fable as a stylistic throwing-off of what they considered the alien supremacy of Anglo-Saxon realistic fiction, so numerous feminist novelists took to Gothic, fairy tale, and fantasy as countereffects to the "patriarchal discourse" of rationality, logic, and linear narrative. The most gifted exponent of this kind of writing, which sought immediate access to the realm of the subconscious, was Angela Carter, whose exotic and erotic imagination unrolled most eerily and resplendently in her short-story collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979). Jeanette Winterson also wrote in this vein. Having distinguished herself earlier in a realistic mode, as did authors such as Drabble and Pat Barker, Doris Lessing published a sequence of science fiction novels about issues of gender and colonialism, *Canopus in Argos—Archives* (1979–83).

Typically, though, fiction in the 1980s and '90s was not futuristic but retrospective. As the end of the century approached, an urge to look back—at starting points, previous eras, fictional prototypes—was widely evident. The historical novel enjoyed an exceptional heyday. One of its outstanding practitioners was Barry Unsworth, the settings of whose works range from the Ottoman Empire (*Pascali's Island* [1980], *The Rage of the Vulture* [1982]) to Venice in its imperial prime and its decadence (*Stone Virgin* [1985]) and northern England in the 14th century (*Morality Play* [1995]). Patrick O'Brian attracted an ardent following with his series of meticulously researched novels about naval life during the Napoleonic era, a 20-book sequence starting with *Master and Commander* (1969) and ending with *Blue at the Mizzen* (1999). Beryl Bainbridge, who began her fiction career as a writer of quirky black comedies about northern provincial life, turned her attention to Victorian and Edwardian misadventures: *The Birthday Boys* (1991) retraces Captain Robert Falcon Scott's doomed expedition to the South Pole; *Every Man for Himself* (1996) accompanies the Titanic as it steamed toward disaster; and *Master Georgie* (1998) revisits the Crimean War.

Many novels juxtaposed a present-day narrative with one set in the past. A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) did so with particular intelligence. It also made extensive use of period pastiche, another enthusiasm of novelists toward the end of the 20th century. Adam Thorpe's striking first novel, *Ulverton* (1992), records the 300-year history of a fictional village in the styles of different epochs. Golding's veteran fiction career came to a bravura conclusion with a trilogy whose story is told by an early 19th-century narrator (*To the Ends of the Earth* [1991]; published separately as *Rites of Passage* [1980], *Close Quarters* [1987], and *Fire Down Below* [1989]). In addition to the interest in remote and recent history, a concern with tracing aftereffects became dominatingly present in fiction. Most subtly and powerfully exhibiting this, Ian McEwan—who came to notice in the 1970s as an unnervingly emotionless observer of contemporary decadence—grew into imaginative maturity with novels set largely in Berlin in the 1950s (*The Innocent* [1990]) and in Europe in 1946 (*Black Dogs* [1992]). These novels' scenes set in the 1990s are haunted by what McEwan perceives as the continuing repercussions of World War II. These repercussions are also felt in *Last Orders* (1996), a masterpiece of quiet authenticity by Graham Swift, a novelist who, since his acclaimed *Waterland* (1983), showed himself to be acutely responsive to the atmosphere of retrospect and of concern with the consequences of the past that suffused English fiction as the second millennium neared.

5.6 POETRY

The last flickerings of New Apocalypse poetry—the flamboyant, surreal, and rhetorical style favoured by Dylan Thomas, George Barker, David Gascoyne, and Vernon Watkins—died away soon after World War II. In its place emerged what came to be known with characteristic understatement as The Movement. Poets such as D.J. Enright, Donald Davie, John Wain, Roy Fuller, Robert Conquest, and Elizabeth Jennings produced urbane, formally disciplined verse in an antiromantic vein characterized by irony, understatement, and a sardonic refusal to strike attitudes or make grand claims for the poet's role.

The preeminent practitioner of this style was Philip Larkin, who had earlier displayed some of its qualities in two novels: *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947). In Larkin's poetry (*The Less Deceived* [1955], *The Whitsun Weddings* [1964], *High Windows* [1974]), a melancholy sense of life's limitations throbs through lines of elegiac elegance. Suffused with acute awareness of mortality and transience, Larkin's poetry is also finely responsive to natural beauty, vistas of which open up even in poems darkened by fear of death or sombre preoccupation with human solitude. John Betjeman, poet laureate from 1972 to 1984, shared both Larkin's intense consciousness of mortality and his gracefully versified nostalgia for 19th- and early 20th-century life.

In contrast to the rueful traditionalism of their work is the poetry of Ted Hughes, who succeeded Betjeman as poet laureate (1984–98). In extraordinarily vigorous verse, beginning with his first collection, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957),

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Hughes captured the ferocity, vitality, and splendour of the natural world. In works such as *Crow* (1970), he added a mythic dimension to his fascination with savagery (a fascination also apparent in the poetry Thom Gunn produced through the late 1950s and '60s). Much of Hughes's poetry is rooted in his experiences as a farmer in Yorkshire and Devon (as in his collection *Moortown* [1979]). It also shows a deep receptivity to the way the contemporary world is underlain by strata of history. This realization, along with strong regional roots, is something Hughes had in common with a number of poets writing in the second half of the 20th century. The work of Geoffrey Hill (especially *King Log* [1968], *Mercian Hymns* [1971], *Tenebrae* [1978], and *The Triumph of Love* [1998]) treats Britain as a palimpsest whose superimposed layers of history are uncovered in poems, which are sometimes written in prose. Basil Bunting's *Briggflatts* (1966) celebrates his native Northumbria. The dour poems of R.S. Thomas commemorate a harsh rural Wales of remote hill farms where gnarled, inbred celibates scratch a subsistence from the thin soil.

Britain's industrial regions received attention in poetry too. In collections such as *Terry Street* (1969), Douglas Dunn wrote of working-class life in northeastern England. Tony Harrison, the most arresting English poet to find his voice in the later decades of the 20th century (*The Loiners* [1970], *From the School of Eloquence and Other Poems* [1978], *Continuous* [1981]), came, as he stresses, from a working-class community in industrial Yorkshire. Harrison's social and cultural journey away from that world by means of a grammar school education and a degree in classics provoked responses in him that his poetry conveys with imaginative vehemence and caustic wit: anger at the deprivations and humiliations endured by the working class; guilt over the way his talent had lifted him away from these. Trenchantly combining colloquial ruggedness with classic form, Harrison's poetry—sometimes innovatively written to accompany television films—kept up a fiercely original and socially concerned commentary on such themes as inner-city dereliction (*V* [1985]), the horrors of warfare (*The Gaze of the Gorgon* [1992] and *The Shadow of Hiroshima* [1995]), and the evils of censorship (*The Blasphemers' Banquet* [1989], a verse film partly written in reaction to the fatwa on Salman Rushdie for *The Satanic Verses*).

Also from Yorkshire was Blake Morrison, whose finest work, "The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper" (1987), was composed in taut, macabre stanzas thickened with dialect. Morrison's work also displayed a growing development in late 20th-century British poetry: the writing of narrative verse. Although there had been earlier instances of this verse after 1945 (Betjeman's blank-verse autobiography *Summoned by Bells* [1960] proved the most popular), it was in the 1980s and '90s that the form was given renewed prominence by poets such as the Kipling-influenced James Fenton. An especially ambitious exercise in the narrative genre was Craig Raine's *History: The Home Movie* (1994), a huge semifictionalized saga, written in three-line stanzas, chronicling several generations of his and his

wife's families. Before this, three books of dazzling virtuosity (*The Onion, Memory* [1978], *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home* [1979], and *Rich* [1984]) established Raine as the founder and most inventive exemplar of what came to be called the Martian school of poetry. The defining characteristic of this school was a poetry rife with startling images, unexpected but audaciously apt similes, and rapid, imaginative tricks of transformation that set the reader looking at the world afresh.

From the late 1960s onward Northern Ireland, convulsed by sectarian violence, was particularly prolific in poetry. From a cluster of significant talents—Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon—Seamus Heaney soon stood out. Born into a Roman Catholic farming family in County Derry, he began by publishing verse—in his collections *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *Door into the Dark* (1969)—that combines a tangible, tough, sensuous response to rural and agricultural life, reminiscent of that of Ted Hughes, with meditation about the relationship between the taciturn world of his parents and his own communicative calling as a poet. Since then, in increasingly magisterial books of poetry—*Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Field Work* (1979), *Station Island* (1984), *The Haw Lantern* (1987), *Seeing Things* (1991), *The Spirit Level* (1996)—Heaney has become arguably the greatest poet Ireland has produced, eventually winning the Nobel Prize for Literature (1995). Having spent his formative years amid the murderous divisiveness of Ulster, he wrote poetry particularly distinguished by its fruitful bringing together of opposites.

Sturdy familiarity with country life goes along with delicate stylistic accomplishment and sophisticated literary allusiveness. Present and past coalesce in Heaney's verses: Iron Age sacrificial victims exhumed from peat bogs resemble tarred-and-feathered victims of the atrocities in contemporary Belfast; elegies for friends and relatives slaughtered during the outrages of the 1970s and '80s are embedded in verses whose imagery and metrical forms derive from Dante. Surveying carnage, vengeance, bigotry, and gentler disjunctions such as that between the unschooled and the cultivated, Heaney made himself the master of a poetry of reconciliations.

The closing years of the 20th century witnessed a remarkable last surge of creativity from Ted Hughes (after his death in 1998, Andrew Motion, a writer of more subdued and subfusc verses, became poet laureate). In *Birthday Letters* (1998), Hughes published a poetic chronicle of his much-speculated-upon relationship with Sylvia Plath, the American poet to whom he was married from 1956 until her suicide in 1963. With *Tales from Ovid* (1997) and his versions of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (1999) and Euripides' *Alcestis* (1999), he looked back even further. These works—part translation, part transformation—magnificently reenergize classic texts with Hughes's own imaginative powers and preoccupations. Heaney impressively effected a similar feat in his fine translation of *Beowulf* (1999).

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5.7 DRAMA

Apart from the short-lived attempt by T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry to bring about a renaissance of verse drama, theatre in the late 1940s and early 1950s was most notable for the continuing supremacy of the well-made play, which focused upon, and mainly attracted as its audience, the comfortable middle class. The most accomplished playwright working within this mode was Terence Rattigan, whose carefully crafted, conventional-looking plays—in particular, *The Winslow Boy* (1946), *The Browning Version* (1948), *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952), and *Separate Tables* (1954)—affectingly disclose desperations, terrors, and emotional forlornness concealed behind reticence and gentility. In 1956 John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* forcefully signaled the start of a very different dramatic tradition. Taking as its hero a furiously voluble working-class man and replacing staid mannerliness on stage with emotional rawness, sexual candour, and social rancour, *Look Back in Anger* initiated a move toward what critics called "kitchen-sink" drama. Shelagh Delaney (with her one influential play, *A Taste of Honey* [1958]) and Arnold Wesker (especially in his politically and socially engaged trilogy, *Chicken Soup with Barley* [1958], *Roots* [1959], and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* [1960]) gave further impetus to this movement, as did Osborne in subsequent plays such as *The Entertainer* (1957), his attack on what he saw as the tawdriness of postwar Britain. Also working within this tradition was John Arden, whose dramas employ some of Bertold Brecht's theatrical devices. Arden wrote historical plays (*Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* [1959], *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* [1964]) to advance radical social and political views and in doing so provided a model that several later left-wing dramatists followed.

An alternative reaction against drawing-room naturalism came from the Theatre of the Absurd. Through increasingly minimalist plays—from *Waiting for Godot* (1953) to such stark brevities as his 30-second-long drama, *Breath* (1969)—Samuel Beckett used character pared down to basic existential elements and symbol to reiterate his Stygian view of the human condition (something he also conveyed in similarly gaunt and allegorical novels such as *Molloy* [1951], *Malone Dies* [1958], and *The Unnamable* [1960], all originally written in French). Some of Beckett's themes and techniques are discernible in the drama of Harold Pinter. Characteristically concentrating on two or three people maneuvering for sexual or social superiority in a claustrophobic room, works such as *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Caretaker* (1960), *The Homecoming* (1965), *No Man's Land* (1975), and *Moonlight* (1993) are potent dramas of menace in which a slightly surreal atmosphere contrasts with and undermines dialogue of tape-recorder authenticity. Joe Orton's anarchic black comedies—*Entertaining Mr. Sloane* (1964), *Loot* (1967), and *What the Butler Saw* (1969)—put theatrical procedures pioneered by Pinter at the service of outrageous sexual farce (something for which Pinter himself also showed a flair in television plays such as *The Lover* [1963] and later stage works such as *Celebration* [2000]). Orton's taste for

dialogue in the epigrammatic style of Oscar Wilde was shared by one of the wittiest dramatists to emerge in the 1960s, Tom Stoppard. In plays from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966) to later triumphs such as *Arcadia* (1993) and *The Invention of Love* (1997), Stoppard set intellectually challenging concepts ricocheting in scenes glinting with the to-and-fro of polished repartee. The most prolific comic playwright from the 1960s onward was Alan Ayckbourn, whose often virtuoso feats of stagecraft and theatrical ingenuity made him one of Britain's most popular dramatists. Ayckbourn's plays showed an increasing tendency to broach darker themes and were especially scathing (for instance, in *A Small Family Business* [1987]) on the topics of the greed and selfishness that he considered to have been promoted by Thatcherism, the prevailing political philosophy in 1980s Britain.

Irish dramatists other than Beckett also exhibited a propensity for combining comedy with something more sombre. Their most recurrent subject matter during the last decades of the 20th century was small-town provincial life. Brian Friel (*Dancing at Lughnasa* [1990]), Tom Murphy (*Conversations on a Homecoming* [1985]), Billy Roche (*Poor Beast in the Rain* [1990]), Martin McDonagh (*The Beauty Queen of Leenane* [1996]), and Conor McPherson (*The Weir* [1997]) all wrote effectively on this theme.

Playwrights who had much in common with Arden's ideological beliefs and his admiration for Brechtian theatre—Edward Bond, Howard Barker, Howard Brenton—maintained a steady output of parable-like plays dramatizing radical left-wing doctrine. Their scenarios were remarkable for an uncompromising insistence on human cruelty and the oppressiveness and exploitativeness of capitalist class and social structures. In the 1980s agitprop theatre—antiestablishment, feminist, black, and gay—thrived. One of the more-durable talents to emerge from it was Caryl Churchill, whose *Serious Money* (1987) savagely encapsulated the finance frenzy of the 1980s. David Edgar developed into a dramatist of impressive span and depth with plays such as *Destiny* (1976) and *Pentecost* (1994), his masterly response to the collapse of communism and rise of nationalism in eastern Europe. David Hare similarly widened his range with confident accomplishment; in the 1990s he completed a panoramic trilogy surveying the contemporary state of British institutions—the Anglican church (*Racing Demon* [1990]), the police and the judiciary (*Murmuring Judges* [1991]), and the Labour Party (*The Absence of War* [1993]).

Hare also wrote political plays for television, such as *Licking Hitler* (1978) and *Saigon: Year of the Cat* (1983). Trevor Griffiths, author of dialectical stage plays clamorous with debate, put television drama to the same use (*Comedians* [1975] had particular impact). Dennis Potter, best known for his teleplay *The Singing Detective* (1986), deployed a wide battery of the medium's resources, including extravagant fantasy and sequences that sarcastically counterpoint popular music with scenes of brutality, class-based callousness, and sexual rapacity. Potter's works transmit his revulsion, semireligious in nature, at what

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he saw as widespread hypocrisy, sadism, and injustice in British society. Alan Bennett excelled in both stage and television drama. Bennett's first work for the theatre, *Forty Years On* (1968), was an expansive, mocking, and nostalgic cabaret of cultural and social change in England between and during the two World Wars. His masterpieces, though, are dramatic monologues written for television—*A Woman of No Importance* (1982) and 12 works he called *Talking Heads* (1987) and *Talking Heads 2* (1998). In these television plays, Bennett's comic genius for capturing the rich waywardness of everyday speech combines with psychological acuteness, emotional delicacy, and a melancholy consciousness of life's transience. The result is a drama, simultaneously hilarious and sad, of exceptional distinction. Bennett's 1991 play, *The Madness of George III,* took his fascination with England's past back to the 1780s and in doing so matched the widespread mood of retrospection with which British literature approached the end of the 20th century.

5.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Hard Times was written by
   (a) Thackeray (b) Dickens
   (c) George Eliot (d) Thomas Hardy
2. Elizabeth Bennet is a character in
   (a) Emma (b) The Mill On the Floss
   (c) Pride and Prejudice (d) Herzog
3. Ariel is a character in
   (a) Tempest (b) Paradise Lost
   (c) In Memoriam (d) Murder in the Cathedral
4. Which of the following poets was most impressed by the German philosophy ?
   (a) Chaucer (b) Wordsworth
   (c) Coleridge (d) Southey
5. The two cities referred to in a Tale of Two Cities are
   (a) London and Paris
   (b) London and Rome
   (c) Rome and Paris
   (d) d. Moscow and Rome
6. The Peasant's Bread is a story by
   (a) Maupassant (b) Tagore
   (c) R.K. Narayan (d) Tolstoy
7. The Financial Express was written by
   (a) Raja Rao (b) R.K. Narayan

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(c) Tagore (d) Mulk Raj Anand

8. "Negative Capability" is a term associated with

(a) Tagore (b) Shelley

(c) Keats (d) Coleridge

9. The most impressive treatment of imagination has been given by

(a) Coleridge (b) Shelley

(c) Eliot (d) Yeats

10. Maggie is a character in

(a) The Middlemarch (b) The Vanity Fair

(c) The Mill on the Floss (d) None of these

11. Who said about poetry "Emotion recollected in tranquility"

(a) Wordsworth (b) Eliot

(c) Shelley (d) Arnold .

12. Lady Chatterley's Lover was banned because it was considered

(a) Obscene (b) Revolutionary

(c) Obscurantist (d) None of these.

13. Who said: " I awoke one morning and found myself famous"

(a) Byron (b) Tennyson

(c) Eliot (d) Keats

14. Paradise Lost comprises

(a) 10 books (b) 12 books

(c) 6 books (d) 8 books

15. Who used the expression " unaging monuments of intellect"?

(a) Yeats (b) Shakespeare

(c) Whitman (d) Auden

16. Which poet was invited by John F. Kennedy to his inauguration ceremony?

(a) Whitman (b) Frost

(c) Eliot (d) Massefield

5.9 SUMMARY

The 20th century opened with great hope but also with some apprehension, for the new century marked the final approach to a new millennium. For many, humankind was entering upon an unprecedented era. H.G. Wells's utopian studies, the aptly titled *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (1901) and *A Modern Utopia* (1905), both captured and qualified this optimistic mood and gave expression to a common conviction

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that science and technology would transform the world in the century ahead. To achieve such transformation, outmoded institutions and ideals had to be replaced by ones more suited to the growth and liberation of the human spirit. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the accession of Edward VII seemed to confirm that a franker, less inhibited era had begun.

Many writers of the Edwardian period, drawing widely upon the realistic and naturalistic conventions of the 19th century (upon Ibsen in drama and Balzac, Turgenev, Flaubert, Zola, Eliot, and Dickens in fiction) and in tune with the anti-Aestheticism unleashed by the trial of the archetypal Aesthete, Oscar Wilde, saw their task in the new century to be an unashamedly didactic one. In a series of wittily iconoclastic plays, of which *Man and Superman* (performed 1905, published 1903) and *Major Barbara* (performed 1905, published 1907) are the most substantial, George Bernard Shaw turned the Edwardian theatre into an arena for debate upon the principal concerns of the day: the question of political organization, the morality of armaments and war, the function of class and of the professions, the validity of the family and of marriage, and the issue of female emancipation.

These novelists, however, wrote more memorably when they allowed themselves a larger perspective. In *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908), Bennett showed the destructive effects of time on the lives of individuals and communities and evoked a quality of pathos that he never matched in his other fiction; in *Tono-Bungay* (1909), Wells showed the ominous consequences of the uncontrolled developments taking place within a British society still dependent upon the institutions of a long-defunct landed aristocracy; and in *Howards End* (1910), Forster showed how little the rootless and self-important world of contemporary commerce cared for the more rooted world of culture, although he acknowledged that commerce was a necessary evil. Nevertheless, even as they perceived the difficulties of the present, most Edwardian novelists, like their counterparts in the theatre, held firmly to the belief not only that constructive change was possible but also that this change could in some measure be advanced by their writing.

Other writers, including Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling, who had established their reputations during the previous century, and Hilaire Belloc, G.K. Chesterton, and Edward Thomas, who established their reputations in the first decade of the new century, were less confident about the future and sought to revive the traditional forms—the ballad, the narrative poem, the satire, the fantasy, the topographical poem, and the essay—that in their view preserved traditional sentiments and perceptions. The revival of traditional forms in the late 19th and early 20th century was not a unique event.

There were many such revivals during the 20th century, and the traditional poetry of A.E. Housman (whose book *A Shropshire Lad*, originally published in 1896, enjoyed huge popular success during World War I), Walter de la Mare, John Masefield, Robert Graves, and Edmund Blunden represents an important and often neglected strand of English literature in the first half of the century.

The most significant writing of the period, traditionalist or modern, was inspired by neither hope nor apprehension but by bleaker feelings that the new century would witness the collapse of a whole civilization. The new century had begun with Great Britain involved in the South African War (the Boer War; 1899–1902), and it seemed to some that the British Empire was as doomed to destruction, both from within and from without, as had been the Roman Empire. In his poems on the South African War, Hardy (whose achievement as a poet in the 20th century rivaled his achievement as a novelist in the 19th) questioned simply and sardonically the human cost of empire building and established a tone and style that many British poets were to use in the course of the century, while Kipling, who had done much to engender pride in empire, began to speak in his verse and short stories of the burden of empire and the tribulations it would bring.

No one captured the sense of an imperial civilization in decline more fully or subtly than the expatriate American novelist Henry James. In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), he had briefly anatomized the fatal loss of energy of the English ruling class and, in *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), had described more directly the various instabilities that threatened its paternalistic rule. He did so with regret: the patrician American admired in the English upper class its sense of moral obligation to the community. By the turn of the century, however, he had noted a disturbing change.

In *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897) and *What Maisie Knew* (1897), members of the upper class no longer seem troubled by the means adopted to achieve their morally dubious ends. Great Britain had become indistinguishable from the other nations of the Old World, in which an ugly rapacity had never been far from the surface. James's dismay at this condition gave to his subtle and compressed late fiction, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), much of its gravity and air of disenchantment.

James's awareness of crisis affected the very form and style of his writing, for he was no longer assured that the world about which he wrote was either coherent in itself or unambiguously intelligible to its inhabitants. His fiction still presented characters within an identifiable social world, but he found his characters and their world increasingly elusive and enigmatic and his own grasp upon them, as he made clear in *The Sacred Fount* (1901), the questionable consequence of artistic will.

Man was a solitary, romantic creature of will who at any cost imposed his meaning upon the world because he could not endure a world that did not reflect his central place within it. He did so as a philosophical novelist whose concern with the mocking limits of human knowledge affected not only the content of his fiction but also its very structure. His writing itself is marked by gaps in the narrative, by narrators who do not fully grasp the significance of the events they are retelling, and by characters who are unable to make themselves understood.

Notes

James and Conrad used many of the conventions of 19th-century realism but transformed them to express what are considered to be peculiarly 20th-century preoccupations and anxieties.

5.10 KEY –WORDS

1. Approbation - Approval or praise

2. Bough - A main branch of a tree

3. Censure - Expression of harsh disapproval; strong criticism

4. Consternation - Feelings of anxiety or dismay

5. Disillusion - Disappointment with the discovery that something is not as good as one thought it to be.

5.11 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What autobiographical details does Pound use in his poetry? What is the function of these personal allusions?
2. Discuss modern poetic drama.
3. Explain the trends in the 20th century poetry.
4. What kinds of controversy did Pound's poetry cause?
5. How does Pound explore economics in his poetry? Use specific examples
6. What does Pound mean when he says he wanted *The Cantos* to bring cohesion to the universe? Did he fail or succeed, and how?

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (b) 2. (c) 3. (a) 4. (c) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (b) 8. (c) 9. (a) 10. (c) 11. (a) 12. (a) 13. (a) 14. (b) 15. (a) 16. (b)

5.12 FURTHER READINGS

1. Kathryn Gundersen, author of ClassicNote.
2. I. For Evans, History of English Literature
3. Lewis, Barry. "Postmodernism and Literature." *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* NY: Routledge, 2002, p. 121.