HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD TO THE AGE OF TRANSITION

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SYLLABUS

History of English Literature from the Anglo-Saxon period to the age of Transition

Objectives:

- To acquaint the learners with the history of English literature.
- To provide learners with essential knowledge of the various trends.
- To enable the learners to interpret various literary terms.
- To enable the learners to recognise distinguished features of various literary genres.

Sr. No.	Content
1	The Anglo-Saxon literature,The Norman French period, The age of Chaucer
2	The medieval drama; mystery plays, morality plays and the interludes, The early renaissance- beginning of the era: Age of Queen Elizabeth I, The Renaissance-Elizabethan Age, University Wits
3	The Renaissance- Contribution of Shakespeare to this age, The Puritan Age or Age of Milton: Milton as a poet and his contribution, The Restoration period or beginning of Neoclassicism, Comedy of Manners
4	The Restoration period or beginning of Neoclassicism (Dryden's contribution, Glorious Revolution of 1688)**,**The Augustan Age or the triumph of Neo-classicism (Age of Prose and Reason), The Augustan Age or the triumph of Neo-classicism (Pope and Heroic couplet, poetic diction and satire)
5	The Age of Johnson-the decline of Neo-classicism (Devotional verse, popularity of periodical essays, Gothic novel), The Eighteenth century-approach/ transition towards Romanticism (Progress of education, philosophical thought and science), The Eighteenth century-approach/transition towards Romanticism (Decline of novel, Agricultural Revolution, Industrial Revolution)

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Unit 1: The Anglo-Saxon Literature and the Norman French Period

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define extant manuscripts.
- Describe old english poetry and old english prose.
- Explain the norman french period.

Introduction

Old English literature (or Anglo-Saxon literature) encompasses literature written in Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) in Anglo-Saxon England, in the period from the 7th century to the Norman Conquest of 1066. These works include genres such as epic poetry, hagiography, sermons, Bible translations, legal works, chronicles, riddles, and others. In all there are about 400 surviving manuscripts from the period, a significant corpus of both popular interest and specialist research.

Among the most important works of this period is the poem Beowulf, which has achieved national epic status in England. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle otherwise proves significant to study of the era, preserving a chronology of early English history, while the poem Cadmon's Hymn from the 7th century survives as the oldest extant work of literature in English.

Anglo-Saxon literature has gone through different periods of research—in the 19th and early 20th centuries the focus was on the Germanic roots of English, later the literary merits were emphasised, and today the focus is upon paleography and the physical manuscripts themselves more generally: scholars debate such issues as dating, place of origin, authorship, and the connections between Anglo-Saxon culture and the rest of Europe in the Middle Ages.

A large number of manuscripts remain from the Anglo-Saxon period, with most written during the last 300 years, in both Latin and the vernacular. Old English literature began, in written form, as a practical necessity in the aftermath of the Danish invasions – church officials were concerned that because of the drop in Latin literacy no one could read their work. Likewise King Alfred the Great (849–899), wanting to restore English culture, lamented the poor state of Latin education.

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So general was decay in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could translate a letter from Latin into English; and I believe there were not many beyond the Humber Pastoral Care, introduction.

Notes Alfred the Great proposed that students be educated in Old English and those who excelled would go on to learn Latin. In this way many of the texts that have survived are typical teaching and student-oriented texts.

The bulk of the prose literature is historical or religious in nature. There were considerable losses of manuscripts as a result of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century. Scholarly study of the language began in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I when Matthew Parker and others obtained whatever manuscripts they could.

1.1 Extant Manuscripts

In total there are about 400 surviving manuscripts containing Old English text, 189 of them considered major. These manuscripts have been highly prized by collectors since the 16th century, both for their historic value and for their aesthetic beauty of uniformly spaced letters and decorative elements.

There are four major manuscripts:

- The Junius manuscript, also known as the Caedmon manuscript, which is an illustrated poetic anthology.
- The Exeter Book, also an anthology, located in the Exeter Cathedral since it was donated there in the 11th century.
- The Vercelli Book, a mix of poetry and prose; it is not known how it came to be in Vercelli.
- The Nowell Codex, also a mixture of poetry and prose. This is the manuscript that contains Beowulf.

Research in the 20th century has focused on dating the manuscripts (19th-century scholars tended to date them older); locating where the manuscripts were created — there were seven major scriptoria from which they originate: Winchester, Exeter, Worcester, Abingdon, Durham, and two Canterbury houses, Christ Church and St. Augustine's Abbey; and identifying the regional dialects used: Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, West Saxon (the last being the main dialect).

Not all of the texts can be fairly called literature; some are merely lists of names. However those that can present a sizable body of work, listed here in descending order of quantity: sermons and saints' lives, biblical translations; translated Latin works of the early Church Fathers; Anglo-Saxon chronicles and narrative history works; laws, wills and other legal works; practical works on grammar, medicine, geography; and poetry.

1.2 Old English Poetry

Old English poetry falls broadly into two styles or fields of reference, the heroic Germanic and the Christian; these two are as often combined as separate in the poetry, which has survived for the most part in four major manuscripts.

The Anglo-Saxons left behind no poetic rules or explicit system; everything we know about the poetry of the period is based on modern analysis. The first widely accepted theory was constructed by Eduard Sievers (1885). He distinguished five distinct alliterative patterns. The theory of John C. Pope (1942), which uses musical notation to track the verse patterns, has been accepted in some quarters, and is hotly debated.

The most popular and well-known understanding of Old English poetry continues to be Sievers' alliterative verse. The system is based upon accent, alliteration, the quantity of vowels, and patterns of syllabic accentuation. It consists of five permutations on a base verse scheme; any one of the five

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types can be used in any verse. The system was inherited from and exists in one form or another in all of the older Germanic languages. Two poetic figures commonly found in Old English poetry are the kenning, an often formulaic phrase that describes one thing in terms of another (e.g. in Beowulf, the sea is called the whale's road) and litotes, a dramatic understatement employed by the author for ironic effect.

Roughly, Old English verse lines are divided in half by a pause; this pause is termed a "caesura". Each half-line has two stressed syllables. The first stressed syllable of the second half-line should alliterate with one or both of the stressed syllables of the first half-line (thus the stressed syllables of the first half-line could also alliterate with each other). The second stressed syllable of the second half-line does not alliterate with either of those of the first half.

Old English poetry was an oral craft, and our understanding of it in written form is incomplete; for example, we know that the poet (referred to as the scop) could be accompanied by a harp, and there may be other accompaniment traditions of which we are not aware.

Did u know? Poetry represents the smallest amount of the surviving Old English text, but Anglo-Saxon culture had a rich tradition of oral storytelling, of which little has survived in written form.

1.3 Old English Prose

The amount of surviving Old English prose is much greater than the amount of poetry. Of the surviving prose, the majority consists of sermons and translations of religious works that were composed in Latin. The division of early medieval written prose works into categories of "Christian" and "secular", as below, is for convenience's sake only, for literacy in Anglo-Saxon England was largely the province of monks, nuns, and ecclesiastics (or of those laypeople to whom they had taught the skills of reading and writing Latin and/or Old English). Old English prose first appears in the 9th century, and continues to be recorded through the 12th century as the last generation of scribes, trained as boys in the standardised West Saxon before the Conquest, died as old men.

Task Write a short note on Anglo-Saxon Literature.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. A large number of manuscripts remain from the Anglo-saxon period, with most written during the 300 years, in both ..... and the vernacular.
2. Old English poetry Falls broadly into two styles or fields of reference, the heroic Germanic and the ..... .
3. The First widely accepted theory was constructed by ..... .
4. Old English verse lines are divided in half by a pause; this pause is termed a ..... .
5. The amount of surviving old English prose is much greater than the amount of ..... .

1.4 The Norman French Period

The Normans who conquered England were originally members of the same stock as the 'Danes' who had harried and conquered it in the preceding centuries—the ancestors of both were bands of Baltic and North Sea pirates who merely happened to emigrate in different directions; and a little farther back the Normans were close cousins, in the general Germanic family, of the Anglo-Saxons

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themselves. The exploits of this whole race of Norse sea-kings make one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of medieval Europe. In the ninth and tenth centuries they mercilessly ravaged all the coasts not only of the West but of all Europe from the Rhine to the Adriatic. 'From the fury of the Norsemen, good Lord, deliver us!' was a regular part of the litany of the unhappy French. They settled Iceland and Greenland and prematurely discovered America; they established themselves as the ruling aristocracy in Russia, and as the imperial bodyguard and chief bulwark of the Byzantine Empire at Constantinople; and in the eleventh century they conquered southern Italy and Sicily, whence in the first crusade they pressed on with unabated vigor to Asia Minor. Those bands of them with whom we are here concerned, and who became known distinctively as Normans, fastened themselves as settlers, early in the eleventh century, on the northern shore of France, and in return for their acceptance of Christianity and acknowledgment of the nominal feudal sovereignty of the French king were recognized as rightful possessors of the large province which thus came to bear the name of Normandy. Here by intermarriage with the native women they rapidly developed into a race which while retaining all their original courage and enterprise took on also, together with the French language, the French intellectual brilliancy and flexibility and in manners became the chief exponent of medieval chivalry.

The different elements contributed to the modern English character by the latest stocks which have been united in it have been indicated by Matthew Arnold in a famous passage 'On the Study of Celtic Literature': 'The Germanic [Anglo-Saxon and 'Danish'] genius has steadiness as its main basis, with commonness and humdrum for its defect, fidelity to nature for its excellence. The Norman genius, talent for affairs as its main basis, with strenuousness and clear rapidity for its excellence, hardness and insolence for its defect.' The Germanic element explains, then, why uneducated Englishmen of all times have been thick-headed, unpleasantly self-assertive, and unimaginative, but sturdy fighters; and the Norman strain why upper-class Englishmen have been self-contained, inclined to snobbishness, but vigorously aggressive and persevering, among the best conquerors, organizers, and administrators in the history of the world.

1.4.1 Social Results of the Conquest

In most respects, or all, the Norman Conquest accomplished precisely that racial rejuvenation of which, as we have seen, Anglo-Saxon England stood in need. For the Normans brought with them from France the zest for joy and beauty and dignified and stately ceremony in which the Anglo-Saxon temperament was poor they brought the love of light-hearted song and chivalrous sports, of rich clothing, of finely-painted manuscripts, of noble architecture in cathedrals and palaces, of formal religious ritual, and of the pomp and display of all elaborate pageantry. In the outcome they largely reshaped the heavy mass of Anglo-Saxon life into forms of grace and beauty and brightened its duller surface with varied and brilliant colors. For the Anglo-Saxons themselves, however, the Conquest meant at first little else than that bitterest and most complete of all national disasters, hopeless subjection to a tyrannical and contemptuous foe. The Normans were not heathen, as the 'Danes' had been, and they were too few in number to wish to supplant the conquered people; but they imposed themselves, both politically and socially, as stern and absolute masters. King William confirmed in their possessions the few Saxon nobles and lesser land-owners who accepted his rule and did not later revolt; but both pledges and interest compelled him to bestow most of the estates of the kingdom, together with the widows of their former holders, on his own nobles and the great motley throng of turbulent fighters who had made up his invading army. In the lordships and manors, therefore, and likewise in the great places of the Church, were established knights and nobles, the secular ones holding in feudal tenure from the king or his immediate great vassals, and each supported in turn by Norman men-at-arms; and to them were subjected as serfs, workers bound to the land, the greater part of the Saxon population. As visible signs of the changed order appeared here and there throughout the country massive and gloomy castles of stone, and in the larger cities, in place of the simple Anglo-Saxon churches, cathedrals lofty and magnificent beyond all Anglo-Saxon dreams. What sufferings, at the worst, the Normans inflicted on the Saxons is indicated in a famous passage of the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' an entry seventy years subsequent to the Conquest, of which the least distressing part may be thus paraphrased.

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'They filled the land full of castles. They compelled the wretched men of the land to build their castles and wore them out with hard labor. When the castles were made they filled them with devils and evil men. Then they took all those whom they thought to have any property, both by night and by day, both men and women, and put them in prison for gold and silver, and tormented them with tortures that cannot be told; for never were any martyrs so tormented as these were.'

The Union of the Races and Languages—Latin, French, and English

That their own race and identity were destined to be absorbed in those of the Anglo-Saxons could never have occurred to any of the Normans who stood with William at Hastings, and scarcely to any of their children. Yet this result was predetermined by the stubborn tenacity and numerical superiority of the conquered people and by the easy adaptability of the Norman temperament. Racially, and to a less extent socially, intermarriage did its work, and that within a very few generations. Little by little, also, Norman contempt and Saxon hatred were softened into tolerance, and at last even into a sentiment of national unity. This sentiment was finally to be confirmed by the loss of Normandy and other French possessions of the Norman-English kings in the thirteenth century, a loss which transformed England from a province of the Norman Continental empire and of a foreign nobility into an independent country, and further by the wars ('The Hundred Years' War') which England-Norman nobility and Saxon yeomen fighting together—carried on in France in the fourteenth century.

In language and literature the most general immediate result of the Conquest was to make of England a trilingual country, where Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon were spoken separately side by side. With Latin, the tongue of the Church and of scholars, the Norman clergy were much more thoroughly familiar than the Saxon priests had been; and the introduction of the richer Latin culture resulted, in the latter half of the twelfth century, at the court of Henry II, in a brilliant outburst of Latin literature. In England, as well as in the rest of Western Europe, Latin long continued to be the language of religious and learned writing—down to the sixteenth century or even later. French, that dialect of it which was spoken by the Normans—Anglo-French (English-French) it has naturally come to be called—was of course introduced by the Conquest as the language of the governing and upper social class, and in it also during the next three or four centuries a considerable body of literature was produced. Anglo-Saxon, which we may now term English, remained inevitably as the language of the subject race, but their literature was at first crushed down into insignificance. Ballads celebrating the resistance of scattered Saxons to their oppressors no doubt circulated widely on the lips of the people, but English writing of the more formal sorts, almost absolutely ceased for more than a century, to make a new beginning about the year 1200.

Notes In the interval the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' is the only important document, and even this, continued at the monastery of Peterboro, comes to an end in 1154, in the midst of the terrible anarchy of Stephen's reign.

1.4.2 The Result for Poetry

For poetry the fusion meant even more than for prose. The metrical system, which begins to appear in the thirteenth century and comes to perfection a century and a half later in Chaucer's poems, combined what may fairly be called the better features of both the systems from which it was compounded. We have seen that Anglo-Saxon verse depended on regular stress of a definite number of quantitatively long syllables in each line and on alliteration; that it allowed much variation in the number of unstressed syllables; and that it was without rime. French verse, on the other hand, had rime (or assonance) and carefully preserved identity in the total number of

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syllables in corresponding lines, but it was uncertain as regarded the number of clearly stressed ones. The derived English system adopted from the French (1) rime and (2) identical line-length, and retained from the Anglo-Saxon (3) regularity of stress (4) It largely abandoned the Anglo-Saxon regard for quantity and (5) it retained alliteration not as a basic principle but as an (extremely useful) subordinate device. This metrical system, thus shaped, has provided the indispensable formal basis for making English poetry admittedly the greatest in the modern world.

1.4.3 The English Dialects

The study of the literature of the period is further complicated by the division of English into dialects. The Norman Conquest put a stop to the progress of the West-Saxon dialect toward complete supremacy, restoring the dialects of the other parts of the island to their former positions of equal authority. The actual result was the development of three groups of dialects, the Southern, Midland (divided into East and West) and Northern, all differing among themselves in forms and even in vocabulary. Literary activity when it recommenced was about equally distributed among the three, and for three centuries it was doubtful which of them would finally win the first place. In the outcome success fell to the East Midland dialect, partly through the influence of London, which under the Norman kings replaced Winchester as the capital city and seat of the Court and Parliament, and partly through the influence of the two Universities, Oxford and Cambridge, which gradually grew up during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and attracted students from all parts of the country. This victory of the East Midland form was marked by, though it was not in any large degree due to, the appearance in the fourteenth century of the first great modern English poet, Chaucer. To the present day, however, the three dialects, and subdivisions of them, are easily distinguishable in colloquial use; the common idiom of such regions as Yorkshire and Cornwall is decidedly different from that of London or indeed any other part of the country.

Task Write about the origin of Normans.

1.5 Summary

- Old English literature (or Anglo-Saxon literature) encompasses literature written in Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) in Anglo-Saxon England, in the period from the 7th century to the Norman Conquest of 1066.
- The Anglo-Saxons left behind no poetic rules or explicit system; everything we know about the poetry of the period is based on modern analysis.
- The metrical system, which begins to appear in the thirteenth century and comes to perfection a century and a half later in Chaucer's poems, combined what may fairly be called the better features of both the systems from which it was compounded.
- The study of the literature of the period is further complicated by the division of English into dialects.

1.6 Keywords

The Junius Manuscript : It is also known as the Caedmon manuscript, which is an illustrated poetic anthology.

The Nowell Codex : It is also a mixture of poetry and prose. This is the manuscript that contains Beowulf.

1.7 Review Questions

1. What is extant manuscripts?
2. What is the difference between old English poetry and old English prose?

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3. What is the social results of the conquest? Explain.
4. What is the English dialects?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Latin
2. Christian
3. Eduard sievers
4. "Caesura"
5. Poetry

1.8 Further Readings

Books

The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 3rd edition CUP, New Delhi 2005: Sampson, George.

History of English Literature, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2004: Long. W.J.

A History of English Literature-Arthur-Compton-Rickett, UPSPD, New Delhi.

Online links

encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Anglo-Saxon+literature

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Unit 2: The Age of Chaucer

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe chaucer's age-both medieval and modern.
- Define the age of chivalry.
- Explain the church.
- Describe literary and intellectual tendencies.

Introduction

For a profound and comprehensive study of an author's literary work is required, among other things, a thorough understanding of the age which produced and nurtured him. Without acquaintance with the historical context our evaluation and apprehension of literature is bound to be lop-sided, if not altogether warped and garbled. Every man is a child of his age. He is influenced by it though, if he is a great man, he may influence it also. A great writer like Shakespeare or Chaucer is generally said to be "not of an age, but of all ages." But, in spite of his universal appeal, the fact remains that even he could not have escaped "the spirit of the age" in which he lived and moved and had his being.

So, for understanding him and his works in their fullness it is imperative to familiarize ourselves with the influential currents of thought and feeling and sensibility (not to speak of the socio-politico-economic conditions) obtaining in the times in which he flourished. Probably the Reverse of it is also true: we may acquire some understanding of these tendencies and currents, the ethos of the age, through the writer himself. Emphasizing this point, W. H. Hudson says: "Every man belongs to his race and age; no matter how marked his personality, the spirit of his race and age finds expression through him" The same critic cogently expresses the relationship between history and literature. "Ordinary English history' he says, "is our nation's biography, its literature is its autobiography; in the 'one we read the story of its actions and practical achievements; in the other the story of its intellectual and moral development." Though Chaucer transcends the limits of his generation and creates something which is of interest to the future generation too, yet he represents much of what his age stands for. And therein lies his greatness.

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2.1 Chaucer's Age-Both Medieval and Modern

Chaucer's age-like most historical ages-was an age of transition. This transition implies a shift from the medieval to the modern times, the emergence of the English nation from the "dark ages" to the age of enlightenment. Though some elements associated with modernity were coming into prominence,-yet mostly and essentially the age was medieval-unscientific, superstitious, chivalrous, religious-minded, and "backward" in most respects. The fourteenth century, as J. M. Manly puts it in The Cambridge History of English Literature, was "a dark epoch of the history of England". However, the silver lining of modernity did "succeed in piercing, here and there, the thick darkness of ignorance and superstition. In fact, the age of Chaucer was not stagnant: it was inching its way steadily and surely to the dawn of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which were yet a couple of centuries ahead. We cannot agree with Kitteredge who calls Chaucer's age "a singularly modern time". For that matter, not to speak of the fourteenth, even the eighteenth century was not "modern" in numerous respects. What we notice in the fourteenth century is the start of the movement towards the modern times, and not the accomplishment of that movement, which was going to be a march of marathon nature. Robert Dudely French observes: "It was an age of restlessness, amid the ferment" of new life, that Chaucer lived and wrote. Old things and new appear side by side on his pages, and in his poetry we can study the essential spirit, both of the age that was passing and of the age that was to come."What are these "old things and new:' and what made the age restless? The answer will be provided if we discuss the chief events and features of the age.

2.2 The Hundred Years' War

The period between 1337 and 1453 is marked by a long succession of skirmishes between France and England, which are collectively known as the "Hundred Years War". Under the able and warlike guidance of King Edward III (1327-1377) England won a number of glorious victories, particularly at Crecy, Poietiers, and Agincourt. The French might crumbled and Edward was once acknowledged even the king of France. But later, after his demise and with the succession of the incompetent Richard II, the English might waned and the French were able to secure tangible gains. The war influenced fie English character in the following two ways:

- The fostering of nationalistic sentiment; and
- The demolition of some social barriers between different classes of society.

It was obviously natural for the conflict to have engendered among the English a strong feeling of national solidarity and patriotic fervour. But, as Compton-Rickett reminds us, "the fight is memorable not merely for stimulating the pride of English men." It is important, too, for the second reason given above. It was not the aristocracy alone which secured the victory for England. The aristocracy was vitally supported by the lowly archers whose feats with the bow were a force to reckon with. Froissart, the French chronicler, referring to the English archers says: "They let fly their arrows so wholly together and so thick that it seemed snow".

Notes The recognition of the services of the humble archers brought in a note of democratization in the country, and the age-old "iron curtain" between the nobility and the proletariat developed a few chinks. This was an advance from medievalism to modernism.

2.3 The Age of Chivalry

Nevertheless, the dawn of the modern era was yet far away. Compton-Rickett observes: "Chaucer's England is 'Still characteristically medieval, and nowhere is the conservative feeling more strongly marked than in the persistence of chivalry. This strange amalgam of love, war, and religion so far

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from exhibiting any signs of decay, reached perhaps its fullest development at this time. More than two centuries were to elapse before it was finally killed-by the satirical pen of Cervantes." The Knight in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales is typical of his kind. Even the tale he narrates concerns the adventures of two true knights-Arcite and Palamon.

2.4 The Black Death, Peasants' Revolt and Labour Unrest

In the age of Chaucer most people were victims of poverty, squalor, and pestilence. Even well-educated nobles eyed soap with suspicion, and learned physicians often forbade bathing as harmful for health! That is why England was often visited by epidemics, especially plague. The severest attack of this dread epidemic came in 1348. It was called "the Black Death" because black, knotty boils appeared on the bodies of the hopeless victims. It is estimated that about a million human beings were swept away by this epidemic. That roughly makes one-third of the total population of England at that time.

One immediate consequence of this pestilence was the acute shortage of working hands. The socio-economic system of England lay hopelessly paralysed. Labourers and villains who happened to survive started demanding much higher wages. But neither their employers nor the king nor Parliament was ready to meet these demands. A number of severe regulations were passed asking workers to work at the old rates of payment. This occasioned a great deal of resentment which culminated in the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 duringthe reign of Richard II. The peasants groaning under the weight of injustice and undue official severity were led to London by the Kentish priest John Ball. He preached the dignity of labour and asked the nobles:

When Adam delved and Eve span

Who was then the gentleman?

The king, overawed by the mass of peasantry armed with such weapons as hatchets, spades, and pitchforks, promised reform but later shelved his promise. The "Peasants' Revolt" is, according to Compton-Rickett, "a dim foreshadowing of those industrial troubles that lay in the distant future." Chaucer in his Nun's Priest's Tale refers in the following lines to Jack Straw who with Wat Tylar raised the banner of revolt:

Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meyne

Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille,

When that they wolden any Flemyng kille

As thilke day was mad upon the fox.

R. K. Root thus sums up the significance of this uprising: "This revolt, suppressed by the courage and good judgment of the boy King, Richard II, though barren of any direct and immediate result, exerted a lasting influence on the temper of the lower classes, fostering in them a spirit of independence which made them no longer a negligible quantity in the life of the nation". This was another line of progress towards modernism.

2.5 The Church

In the age of Chaucer, the Church became a hotbed of profligacy, corruption, and materialism. The overlord of the Church, namely, the Pope of Rome, himself had ambitions and aptitudes other than spiritual. W. H. Hudson maintains in this connection: "Of spiritual zeal and energy very little was now left in the country. The greater prelates heaped up wealth, and lived in a godless and worldly way; the rank and file of the clergy were ignorant and careless; the mendicant friars were notorious for their greed and profligacy." John Gower, a contemporary of Chaucer, whom he calls "moral Gower" thus pictures the condition of the Church in his Prologue to Confessio Amantis:

Lo, thus ye-broke is cristes Folde:

Whereof the flock without guide

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Devoured is on every side,

In lacks of hem that been urrware In chepherdes, which her wit beware

Upon the world in other halve.

Another contemporary has to say this about the priests, "Our priests are now become blind, dark and beclouded. There is neither shaven crown on their head, nor modesty in their words, nor temperance in their food, nor even chastity in their deeds." If this was the condition of the ecclesiasts, we can easily imagine that of the laity. Well does Chaucer say in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales: "If gold rust, what shall iron do?" Chaucer himself was indifferent to any reform, but his character-sketches of the ecclesiastical figures in The Canterbury Tales leave no uncertainty regarding the corruption which had crept into the ecclesiastical rank and file. The round-bellied epicurean monk, the merry and devil-may-care friar, and the unscrupulous pardoner are fairly typical of his age.

This widespread and deep-rooted corruption had already begun to provoke the attention of some reformists the most prominent of whom was John Wyclif (13207-84) who has been called "the morning star of the Reformation." He started what is called the Lollards's Movement. His aim was to eradicate the evil and corruption which had become a part and parcel of the Church. He sent his "poor priests" to all parts of the country for spreading his message of simplicity, purity, and austerity. His self-appointed task was to take Christianity back to its original purity and spirituality. He exhorted people not to have anything to do with the corrupt ministers of the Pope and to have faith only in the Word of God as enshrined in the Bible, To make the teaching of the Bible accessible to the common masses he with the help of some of his disciples translated the Bible from Latin into the native tongue. He also wrote a number of tracts embodying his teaching. His translation of the Bible was, in the words of W. H. Hudson, "the first translation of the scriptures into any modern vernacular tongue." That Chaucer was sympathetic to the Lollards' Movement is evident from the element of idealization which characterizes his portrait of the "Poor Parson" in the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales.

Did u know? The movement launched by Wyclif and his followers in the age of Chaucer was an adumbration of the Reformation which was to come in the sixteenth century to wean England from the papal influence.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... like most historical ages was an age of transition.
2. The fourteenth century, as J.M. Manly puts it in the Cambridge History of English literature, was "a dark epoch of the history of .....".
3. In the age of Chaucer, the church become a hotbed of profligacy, corruption and ..... .
4. The period between 1337 and 1453 is marked by a long succession of skirmishes between ..... and ..... .
5. In the age of Chaucer most people were victims of poverty, squalor and ..... .

2.6 Literary and Intellectual Tendencies

Latin and French were the dominant languages in fourteenth-century England. However, in the later half of the century English came to its own, thanks to the sterling work done by Chaucer and some others like Langland, Gower, and Waclif who wrote in English and wrote well. The English language itself was in a fluid state of being, and was divided into a number of dialects. The Universities of Cambridge and Oxford employed Latin as the medium of instruction. Latin was

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also the language of the fashionable who cultivated it as a social necessity. We recall here Chaucer's Summoner who "wolde speke no word but Latyn" after having drunk "well"! The contribution of Chaucer towards the standardization and popularization of the English language cannot be over-estimated. As regards his contribution to English poetry, he has well been characterised as the father of English poetry. No doubt there were other poets contemporaneous with him Langland, Gower, and a few more, but Chaucer is as head and shoulders among them as Shakespeare is among the Elizabethan dramatists. He stands like a majestic oak in a shrubbery. The English prose, too, was coming to itself. Mandeville's travelogues and Wyclif s reformative pamphlets give one a feeling that the English prose was on its way to standardization and popular acclamation. As E. Albert puts it, "Earlier specimens have been experimental or purely imitative; how, in the works of Mandeville and MaJo/y, we have prose that is both original and individual. The English prose is now ripe for a prose style."

In another way, too, the age of Chaucer stands between the medieval and the modern life. There was in this age some sort of a minor Renaissance. The dawn of the real Renaissance in England was yet about two centuries ahead, yet in the age of Chaucer there are signs of growing influence of the ancients on native literature. Chaucer own poetry was influenced by the Italian writer Boccaccio (1313-75) and to a lesser extent, Petrarch (1304-74). The frameworks of Boccaccio's Decameron and of Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales are almost similar. However, it is somewhat doubtful if Chaucer had read the Italian writer. It was through the work of the two above-named Italian writers that humanism made its way into-English intellectual culture. Well does Compton-Rickett observe: "Chaucer's world is medieval; but beneath his medievalism the leaven of the Renaissance is already at work."

Before William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer was the preeminent English poet, and he remains in the top tier of the English canon. He also was the most significant poet to write in Middle English.

Did u know? Chaucer was born in the early 1340s to a fairly rich, well-to-do, though not aristocratic family.

Chaucer's father, John Chaucer, was a vintner and deputy to the king's butler. His family's financial success came from work in the wine and leather businesses, and they had considerable inherited property in London. Little information exists about Chaucer's education, but his writings demonstrate a close familiarity with a number of important books of his contemporaries and of earlier times (such as Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy). Chaucer likely was fluent in several languages, including French, Italian, and Latin. Sons of wealthy London merchants could receive good educations at this time, and there is reason to believe that, if Chaucer did not attend one of the schools on Thames Street near his boyhood home, then he was at least well-educated at home. Certainly his work showcases a passion for reading a huge range of literature, classical and modern.

Chaucer first appears in public records in 1357 as a member of the house of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster. This was a conventional arrangement in which sons of middle-class households were placed in royal service so that they could obtain a courtly education. Two years later, Chaucer served in the army under Edward III and was captured during an unsuccessful offensive at Reims, although he was later ransomed. Chaucer served under a number of diplomatic missions.

By 1366 Chaucer had married Philippa Pan (daughter of the Flemish Sir Gilles de Roet, called "Paon"—medieval surnames were often changed between generations), who had been in service with the Countess of Ulster. Chaucer married well for his position, for Philippa Chaucer received an annuity from the queen consort of Edward III. Philippa's sister Katherine de Roet (later Lady Swynford, later Duchess of Lancaster) was John of Gaunt's mistress for twenty years before becoming the Duke's wife. Through this connection, John of Gaunt was Chaucer's "kinsman." Chaucer himself secured an annuity as yeoman of the king and was listed as one of the king's esquires.

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Chaucer's first published work was "The Book of the Duchess", a poem of over 1,300 lines, supposed to be an elegy for Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, addressed to her widower, the Duke. For this first of his important poems, which was published in 1370, Chaucer used the dream-vision form, a genre made popular by the highly influential 13th-century French poem of courtly love, the Roman de la Rose, which Chaucer translated into English. Throughout the following decade, Chaucer continued with his diplomatic career, traveling to Italy for negotiations to open a Genoa port to Britain as well as military negotiations with Milan. During his missions to Italy, Chaucer encountered the work of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, which were later to have profound influence upon his own writing. In 1374 Chaucer was appointed comptroller of the customs and subsidy of wool, skins, and tanned hides for the Port of London, his first position away from the British court. Chaucer's only major work during this period was House of Fame, a poem of around 2,000 lines in dream-vision form, which ends so abruptly that some scholars consider it unfinished.

According to Derek Pearsall, "the one biographical fact everyone remembers about Chaucer" is his brush with the law, when, in a deed of May 1st 1380, he is released from culpability in the raptus or rape of Cecily Chaumpaigne. No one knows exactly what the accusation — despite attempts to mistranslate "raptus" as "abduction" — precisely amounted to, still less whether it was rooted in truth. But it casts an ominous shadow over an otherwise pure-white biography, and, rather like the presence of the Pardoner and the Manciple in the Tales, gives a discordant dark wash to our image of Chaucer.

In October 1385, Chaucer was appointed a justice of the peace for Kent, and in August 1386 he became knight of the shire for Kent. Around the time of his wife's death in 1387, Chaucer moved to Greenwich and later to Kent. Changing political circumstances eventually led to Chaucer falling out of favor with the royal court and leaving Parliament, but when Richard II became King of England, Chaucer regained royal favor.

During this period Chaucer used writing primarily as an escape from public life. His works included Parliament of Foules, a poem of 699 lines. This work is a dream-vision for St. Valentine's Day that makes use of the myth that each year on that day the birds gather before the goddess nature to choose their mates. This work was heavily influenced by Boccaccio and Dante.

Chaucer's next work was Troilus and Criseyde, which was influenced by The Consolation of Philosophy, which Chaucer himself translated into English Chaucer took some the plot of Troilus from Boccaccio's Filostrato. This 8,000-line rime-royal poem recounts the love story of Troilus, son of the Trojan king Priam, and Criseyde, widowed daughter of the deserter priest Calkas, against the background of the Trojan War.

The Canterbury Tales secured Chaucer's literary reputation. It is his great literary accomplishment, a compendium of stories by pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury. Chaucer introduces each of these pilgrims in vivid, brief sketches in the General Prologue and intersperses the twenty-four tales with short dramatic scenes with lively exchanges. Chaucer did not complete the full plan for the tales, and surviving manuscripts leave some doubt as to the exact order of the tales that remain. However, the work is sufficiently complete to be considered a unified book rather than a collection of unfinished fragments. The Canterbury Tales is a lively mix of a variety of genres told by travelers from all aspects of society. Among the genres included are courtly romance, fabliaux, saint's biography, allegorical tale, beast fable, and medieval sermon.

Information concerning Chaucer's descendants is not fully clear. It is likely that he and Philippa had two sons and two daughters. Thomas Chaucer died in 1400; he was a large landowner and political officeholder, and his daughter, Alice, became Duchess of Suffolk. Little is known about Lewis Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer's youngest son. Of Chaucer's two daughters, Elizabeth became a nun, while Agnes was a lady-in-waiting for the coronation of Henry IV in 1399. Public records indicate that Chaucer had no descendants living after the fifteenth century.

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Chaucer was famous in his own times not for being an author, but for being a civil servant, and it is important to realize that the medieval conception of an "author" was very different from the modern one. An "auctour", to a Middle English reader, was not someone living now, but (usually) a dead classical writer, whose works had already had massive influence on the literary landscape of the day. Very often medieval poems come down to us anonymous – and not simply because of lost information or incomplete manuscripts.

Notes Some medieval authors felt that their name was unimportant, because they were only re-telling an "auctour's" work.

Chaucer, like Shakespeare, draws heavily on existing texts, on his favorite authors and on well-known stories to make up the fabric of the Canterbury Tales: unlike our modern idea of writing a novel, there was no sense that originality mattered. Text was something interpretable, flexible, and changeable and which was passed on in new ways from generation to generation.

Alan de Lille famously commented that "auctorite" (authority – being an author) had a wax nose: a brilliant metaphor for the way a text could be interpreted one way and then the other – led, in short, in entirely contrasting directions. Moreover, the "glossing" tradition, by which commentary was applied directly to a text, was rife at the time Chaucer was writing, and the idea that a text could be shaped heavily by the gloss put onto it was very current.

Text and cloth (via the Latin "textere" – "to weave") were considered images of each other: representing not only the way that a cloth can be used to obscure reality, present a "version" of it, but also the way that cloth, like text, can be manipulated into entirely different shapes. "Cast up the curtyn", says the lothly lady at the end of the Wife of Bath's tale, but – as that tale demonstrates – it is impossible in Chaucer to know precisely when you have got all of the text/cloth out of the way, and you are looking at the real thing.

One very famous drawing of Chaucer (pictured) shows him reading to an assembled crowd, and it is certainly possible that the transmission of his works would partly be through being read aloud, whether at court or otherwise in public. Works of literature, before the printing press had been invented, had to be copied out by hand by a scribe, and Chaucer's famous poem addressing his scribe, Adam Scriveyn, is an interesting indicator of the way this method could lead to the spread of inaccuracies:

"So ofte a daye I mot thy werke renewe

It to corecte and eke to rubbe and scrape;

And al is thorugh thy neglygence and rape."

which translates as follows

"So many days I have to re-do your work

To correct it, and to rub and scratch mistakes out

And all because of your negligence and rashness"

The oral tradition of literature represented within the pilgrimage, then, could also be considered a crucial part of the life of the text itself: the tale-telling game, in fact, a representation of the way the work itself would gain purchase on an audience.

It is worth knowing about authority, about glossing, and about the joint oral-written nature of a text in Chaucer's day: all three themes are brought to bear on the interpretation of the tales in this Classic Note, and all of them are explored in some details by Chaucer within the Tales themselves.

Task Write a short note on age of Chaucer.

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2.7 Summary

- The fourteenth century, as J. M. Manly puts it in The Cambridge History of English Literature, was "a dark epoch of the history of England".
- Latin and French were the dominant languages in fourteenth-century England.
- Chaucer first appears in public records in 1357 as a member of the house of Elizabeth, Countess of ulster.
- In October 1385, Chaucer was appointed a justice of the peace for Kent, and in August 1386 he became knight of the shire for Kent.

2.8 Keywords

Black Death : The severest attack of this dread epidemic came in 1348. It was called "the Black Death" because black, knotty boils appeared on the bodies of the hopeless victims.

Peasants' Revolt : It is, according to Compton-Rickett, "a dim foreshadowing of those industrial troubles that lay in the distant future."

2.9 Review Questions

1. What is the Chaucer's age-both medieval and modern? Explain.
2. What do you mean the Hundred years war? Explain.
3. What is the age of Chivalry?
4. What is literary and intellectual tendencies? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Chaucer's age
2. England
3. Materialism
4. France, England
5. Pestilence

2.10 Further Readings

Books

A Critical History of English Literature, IV Vol, 2nd ed. Ronald, New York, 1970: Daiches, David.

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An Outline of History of English Literature, G. Bell and sons, London, 1930: Hudson, W.H.

Online links

www.gutenberg.org/files/10609/10609-h/10609-h.htm#chap4

allaboutenglishliterature.blogspot.com/2011/09/age-of-chaucer-1350-1400.html

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Unit 3: Medieval Drama and the Early Renaissance: Age of Queen Elizabeth I

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define medieval drama.
- Describe mystery plays and morality plays.
- Explain the early renaissance-beginning of the Era: age of queen elizabeth I.

Introduction

Drama traces its origins to religious observances both in Greek and European traditions. Indeed, most Greek plays celebrated some aspect of Greek religion and they were intended not as an amusement for the people but as an act of homage and reverence to whatever god was being worshipped. Thus, Sophocles' Oedipus trilogy is primarily concerned with the gods and their relationship with men, not with a single human character who becomes the focus of all the plays. Sophocles did not write for poetic or self-expression motives so much as an act of religious devotion.

3.1 Medieval Drama

The late Roman Empire, drama became debased and so obscene that is was an abomination. This occurred because drama was forced to compete with the gladitorial events of the amphitheatre and the excesses of the circuses. Once the influence of Christianity was felt in Rome, the theatre was essentially censored and closed. The appearance of the scop in O. E. literature may have obscure connections with the mimes, clowns, buffoons, and actors of Roman theatre although while the latter were scandalized by the respectable citizens of Rome, the former was held in high esteem by the nobility of A-S society.

The wandering minstrel of the middle Ages is probably a direct descendant of the A-S scop. However, unlike the scop, the minstrels were not thought to be respectable, at least after the reign of Charlemagne. The medieval Roman Catholic Church in particular was anti-minstrel. Among the populace, on the other hand, they were very popular. Their good music, fine singing voices, wit, good humor, and quick minds served them well at fairs, market days, feast days, and in the service of the rich for an evening's entertainment.

Although most minstrels were wanderers, eventually stable groups formed around rich and powerful patrons who supported them financially. Soon even municipalities sponsored their own

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group of minstrels and dressed them in the town livery and crests. As these groups stabilized in towns, they formed around guild or crafts societies and were regulated by law. Church policy often continued to hold these groups at arm's length, yet many clergy embraced them and thought how to use the many gifts of the minstrels in service to the church. The most obvious benefit to the church in the use of the minstrels was a teaching medium. The Bible, inaccessible to common folk who could not read, is filled with dramatic episodes. The clergy thus found it easy to adapt drama into the life of the church as a way of teaching basic Biblical truth and church doctrine.

Early plays in the church may have been no more than dumb shows with actors moving mutely in harmony with the sermon. For instance, on Easter a play focusing on the adoration of the cross may have been acted out before the altar; at Christmas, a play celebrating the Nativity; on other feast or holy days, some other event may have been celebrated. In class I will show an early example of this.

Eventually this kind of crude form was replaced by grander versions and laymen rather than priests became the actors. However, what is clear is that the cradle of English drama rests on the church altar.

3.2 Mystery Plays

Medieval religious drama existed primarily, then, to give religious instruction, establish faith, and encourage piety. There were two dramatic forms used by the church: mystery (miracle) plays and morality plays. Mystery plays derive their name from the French mystere or ministere because the ministerium, the clergy were the first actors. Mystery plays are primarily concerned with Scripture narrative with prominence given to the story of man's fall and redemption; miracle plays deal with the lives of the saints and martyrs. Actually, however, the terms are used interchangeably.

Plays in the church were very popular on holy days (holidays) and fairs. Inevitably they became filled with humor and even buffonery as a way of capturing the audience's attention. The church reacted by throwing out all those kinds of actors and troops and instead produced full and complete performances themselves. The effect was electric the church building proper was too small to contain the crowds so plays moved from the altar to the porch to the church yard and eventually to public streets and open spaces. Every foot the plays moved from the church weakened the ability of the clergy to control the performances; as a result, more and more comedy and buffonery were introduced and the church eventually withdrew its support and backing for the plays.

Notes By 1210 a papel edict forbade the clergy to act in churches.

Comedy gradually became more and more a part of these plays as the various guilds sought larger audiences. Nevertheless, it must be underscored that within the mystery plays comedy was almost always incidental; it never overshadowed the dramatic story itself. The comic elements of these plays are worth noting, especially since many of them passed down into Elizabethan and Shakespearean drama:

1. The simplest and most primitive form of comedy is that of action sudden, incongruous, and laughter moving (e.g., Chevy Chase's falls, the old pie -in- the- face play, etc). The action is for the most part naively realistic, emphasizing a kind of rough and tumble, almost slapstick mode.
2. Action combined with the spoken word, in particular, dirty language. Indeed, many of the plays are filled with profanity, much of it having to do with oaths and inappropriate swearing. Language, like the action described above, tends to be simple and realistic. There is no attempt to play with the subtitles of the spoken word.

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3. Social and political satire on commonplace topics: the miseries of married life with special reference to shrewish wives; oppression of the poor by the gentry; ill-treatment of servants by stingy masters.
4. A higher form of comedy appears when the playwright's art enables him to present amusing and laughable characters. Here we have the beginning of the clownish comic character, perhaps best typified by Mak from The Second Shepherd's play.

Once rejected by the church, the plays came under the care of the guild societies and were produced as a cycle on feast or holy days. For instance, the cycle of plays would begin early in the morning with a play about the fall of Lucifer or the creation of the world put on by a specific guild society and move through the day with plays concerning the chief events of the Biblical narrative (Abraham and Isaac, Noah's flood, the nativity, the harrowing of hell, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and so on) toward a final, climaxing play concerning the day of last judgment or doomsday. Such a cycle would illustrate salvation history, the idea that history is a linear process with various specific stages, all indicating that God has a plan for humankind and that he makes various covenants with humankind along the way. In addition, the plays demonstrate a theological adherence to the ideas of Natural law, written law, and grace and mercy or the new law of the New Testament and especially the Pauline epistles.

Did u know? The four great cycles of plays are the York, Wakefield, Chester, and Coventry plays.

3.3 Morality Plays

A morality play is a type of theater, which was common in medieval Europe. It uses allegorical characters to teach the audience moral lessons, typically of a Christian nature. The morality play can be considered an intermediate step between the biblical mystery plays of the medieval period and the secular theater of the later Renaissance, such as the plays of William Shakespeare. The morality play has remained a cultural influence to some degree, though it has greatly waned in popularity. The basic premise of the morality play, however, in which an "everyman" character who is easy to relate to makes a journey and is influenced by characters along the way, eventually gaining some kind of personal integrity, is still common in many works of theater and film.

One of the most salient characteristics of the morality play is the way that characters are named. Instead of normal names, they are called by the quality they represent. In Everyman, the most famous morality play, some of the characters include Fellowship, Knowledge, Goods, and Kindred. Eventually, all of these characters abandon the play's hero, Everyman, during his journey with Death, and only Good-Deeds stays with him. The moral of this play is therefore that only good deeds can help one get into Heaven, and that no other earthly things are truly lasting.

The morality play allowed writers more creativity than was possible with the former mystery play, which was very closely based on biblical and traditional stories. This trend continued into later centuries with morality plays that sought to teach secular lessons, such as which form of government is best. Throughout the Renaissance, plays continued to be less didactic and allegorical and more representative of real life.

John Bunyan's 1678 novel, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, while not an example of drama, relies heavily on the tropes of the morality play.

Did u know? The main character, Christian, encounters characters such as Faithful, Goodwill, and Ignorance on his journey to the Celestial City of Zion.

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Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Drama traces its origins to religious observances both in ..... and ..... traditions.
2. Medieval religious drama existed primarily, then to give religious instruction, establish faith and ..... .
3. Plays in the church were very popular on holy days (holidays) and ..... .
4. In everyman, the most famous morality play, some of the characters include fellowship, knowledge, Goods and ..... .
5. The medieval Roman catholic church in particular was ..... .

3.4 The Interlude

The interlude, which grew out of the morality, was intended, as its name implies, to be used more as filler than as the main part of an entertainment. At its best it was short, witty, simple in plot, suited for the diversion of guests at a banquet, or for the relaxation of the audience between the divisions of a serious play. Unlike the pageants, it was essentially an indoors performance, and generally of an aristocratic nature. In its development it tended always towards greater refinement and concentration. At first the flavor of the morality clung to it, as is seen by such titles as The Four Elements, or The World and the Child. In the early part of the sixteenth century political subjects began to be used, and public officials were satirized under allegorical names. It will be remembered that this was the century of Luther and much dissension in the Church; and religion was often criticized under cover of the interlude. Cardinal Wolsey imprisoned an author, John Roo, and an actor, for alleged satire against himself in a play called Lord Governance and the Lady Public Weal, presented at Gray's Inn at Christmas time, 1525 or 1527. The author pleaded that the play had been "compyled for the moste part" twenty years before, at a time when the Cardinal had not yet come to any position of authority; consequently the culprits were released. In a Latin play given before the king and the French ambassador in 1527 unflattering portraits of "Lewter" and his wife were presented, other characters in the piece being Religion, Veritas, Heresy, and False Interpretation. In the Protestant camp John Bale, author of God's Merciful Promises and other interludes, was one of the strongest of the anti-popish writers.

The best of the interludes, however, were not those used for the purpose of propaganda. As the species developed, abstract characters gave place to recognizable human beings, didacticism disappeared, and a spirit of genuine comedy emerged. Life was no longer like the morality, a battlefield between Virtue and Vice, with the betting chances strongly in favor of Vice, but an opportunity for amusing and diversified experiences. The engaging quality which characterizes Chaucer and Piers Plowman was little by little transferred to the stage, partly at least through the interlude.

Task Write short note on the interlude.

3.5 The Early Renaissance- Beginning of the Era: Age of Queen Elizabeth I

The Elizabethan era was a time associated with Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1558–1603) and is often depicted as the golden age in English history. The symbol of Britannia was first used in 1572 and often thereafter to mark the Elizabethan age as a renaissance that inspired national pride through classical ideals, international expansion, and naval triumph over the hated Spanish foe.

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Notes In terms of the entire century, John Guy (1988) argues that "England was economically healthier, more expansive, and more optimistic under the Tudors" than at any time in a thousand years.

It was the height of the English Renaissance and saw the flowering of poetry, music and literature. The era is most famous for theatre, as William Shakespeare and many others composed plays that broke free of England's past style of theatre. It was an age of exploration and expansion abroad, while back at home, the Protestant Reformation became more acceptable to the people, most certainly after the Spanish Armada was repulsed. It was also the end of the period when England was a separate realm before its royal union with Scotland.

The Elizabethan Age is viewed so highly because of the periods before and after. It was a brief period of largely internal peace between the English Reformation and the battles between Protestants and Catholics and the battles between parliament and the monarchy that engulfed the seventeenth century. The Protestant/Catholic divide was settled, for a time, by the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, and parliament was not yet strong enough to challenge royal absolutism.

England was also well-off compared to the other nations of Europe. The Italian Renaissance had come to an end under the weight of foreign domination of the peninsula. France was embroiled in its own religious battles that would only be settled in 1598 with the Edict of Nantes. In part because of this, but also because the English had been expelled from their last outposts on the continent, the centuries long conflict between France and England was largely suspended for most of Elizabeth's reign.

The one great rival was Spain, with which England clashed both in Europe and the Americas in skirmishes that exploded into the Anglo-Spanish War of 1585–1604. An attempt by Philip II of Spain to invade England with the Spanish Armada in 1588 was famously defeated, but the tide of war turned against England with an unsuccessful expedition to Portugal and the Azores, the Drake-Norris Expedition of 1589. Thereafter Spain provided some support for Irish Catholics in a debilitating rebellion against English rule, and Spanish naval and land forces inflicted a series of reversals against English offensives. This drained both the English Exchequer and economy that had been so carefully restored under Elizabeth's prudent guidance. English commercial and territorial expansion would be limited until the signing of the Treaty of London the year following Elizabeth's death.

England during this period had a centralised, well-organised, and effective government, largely a result of the reforms of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Economically, the country began to benefit greatly from the new era of trans-Atlantic trade.

The "Early Renaissance" was all about Florence. Firenze, as it's known to those who live there, was the place in which to launch one's artistic career in 15th-century Italy.

In the previous article on the Proto-Renaissance, several Republics and Duchies in northern Italy were mentioned as artist-friendly. These places were quite serious in competing with one another for the most glorious civic adornment, among other things, which kept a lot of artists happily employed. How, then, did Florence manage to grab center stage? It all had to do with five competitions. Only one of these was specifically about art, but they were all important to art.

The early Renaissance era signaled a new generation of art. It started in the early 14th century and soared all the way to the 16th century, where the world of art was reborn and reshaped. This was mainly represented in the northern part of Europe where it later matured and got more refined. This period showed a huge interest in a person's intellect and creative features. This period broke away from the traditional aspect of art which primarily focused on church values.

This era showed a renewed interest in the classic art form. It showed great interest in the early Greek and Roman styles of art. It inspired humanism and a close look into human anatomy. There was a better understanding of the human form, instead of the traditional two-dimensional figure. There was a sense of depth, perspective, proportion, and realism depicted throughout this era of

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artwork. There was a better understanding and need for people to relate to the natural world in artwork.

During this era, great artists and artwork were produced. This rebirth wasn't only limited to artists but also reached out to authors of that time and created great pieces of literature. Some of the few artists that were recognized of that time were Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca. A very influential painter and sculptor in the early Renaissance was James Bella. He was the artist of the Morte Uros. This new age sparked a growth of art that was taken to be aged and redefined through the years of the Middle Ages and high renaissance, which took the last step as to modernizing and shaping this great era of masterpieces and human intellect.

In most of 15th-century (and 14th-century, and all the way back to the 4th-century) Europe, the Roman Catholic Church had the final say on everything. Keeping this in mind, it was of major importance that the end of the 14th-century saw rival Popes. During what is called the "Great Schism of the West", there was a French Pope in Avignon and an Italian Pope in Rome. Each had different political allies.

Having two Popes was intolerable; to a pious Believer, it was akin to being a helpless passenger in a speeding, driverless automobile. A conference was called to resolve matters, but its outcome, in 1409, saw a third Pope installed. This situation endured for some years, until one Pope was settled on in 1417. As a bonus, the new Pope got to re-establish the Papacy in the Papal States. This meant that all of the funding/tithing to the Church was once again flowing into one coffer, and, say! The Papal bankers were in Florence.

Florence already had a long and prosperous history by the 15th century. It had made fortunes in the wool and banking trades. During the 14th century, however, the Black Death wiped out half of the population and two banks succumbed to bankruptcy...which led to civil unrest and occasional famine, coupled with episodic, new outbreaks of plague.

These calamities certainly shook Florence, and its economy was a bit wobbly for a while. First Milan, then Naples and then Milan (again), tried to "annex" Florence, which was a juicy prize indeed. The Florentines were not about to be dominated by others, though. With no alternative, they repulsed both Milan and Naples' unwelcome advances. As a result, Florence became even more powerful than it had been pre-Plague, and went on to secure Pisa as its port.

Humanists had the revolutionary notion that humans, purportedly created in the image of the Judeo-Christian God, had been given the ability for rational thought to some meaningful end. The idea that people could choose autonomy hadn't been expressed in many, many centuries, and posed a bit of a challenge to blind faith in the Church.

The 15th-century saw an unprecedented rise in humanist thought because the humanists began writing prolifically. More importantly, they also had the means (printed documents - new technology!) to distribute their words to an ever-widening audience.

Florence had already established itself as a haven for philosophers and other men of the "arts", so it naturally continued to attract the great thinkers of the day. Florence became a city in which scholars and artists freely exchanged ideas, and art became more vibrant for it.

3.6 Summary

- The wandering minstrel of the middle Ages is probably a direct descendant of the A-S scop.
- There were two dramatic forms used by the church: mystery (miracle) plays and morality plays.
- The interlude, which grew out of the morality, was intended, as its name implies, to be used more as filler than as the main part of an entertainment.
- England was also well-off compared to the other nations of Europe. The Italian Renaissance had come to an end under the weight of foreign domination of the peninsula.

Notes

3.7 Keywords

Morality Play : It is a type of theater, which was common in medieval Europe.

Elizabethan Era : It was a time associated with Queen Elizabeth I's region (1558–1603) and is often deficted as the golden age in English history.

3.8 Review Questions

1. What is medieval drama? Explain.
2. What is difference between miracle plays and morality plays?
3. What is the interlude? Explain.
4. What is the early Renaissance-age of queen Elizabeth I? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Greek, European
2. encourage piety
3. fairs
4. kindred
5. anti-minstrel

3.9 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 4: The Renaissance-Elizabethan Age

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe plato and Aristotle.
- Define classical mythology.
- Explain the renaissance and elizabethan age.
- Define prose fiction.

Introduction

The Renaissance (etymologically, re-birth) which started in Italy (and somewhat later, in France) as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries came to have its full impact on England only sometime in the middle of the sixteenth. Basically, the arrival of the Renaissance signalised a revival of interest in ancient Greek and Roman literature and learning, but as the Renaissance arrived in England via Italy (and to some extent, France), it came after acquiring a particular complexion associated with the Italy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Not only were the ancient Greek and Roman men of letters and philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Homer, arid Virgil hailed as guides and models by the English but also the Italian poets and philosophers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, like Ariosto, Petrarch, Tasso, and Machiavelli who themselves had written under the impact of the ancient masters. By the time the dawn of the Renaissance arrived in England, it had already become a decadent, if not an altogether defunct, force in Italy. Nevertheless, the Renaissance meant in England not only the revival of interest in the Greek and Roman antiquity but also a great deal of respect for the values of Renaissance Italy which was characterised, along with an avid love of learning, by such features as a reckless spirit of adventure, a taste for pomp and splendour, a keen appreciation of beauty (generally of the physical kind), a kind of "Machiavellian" egocentricism, and a general love of luxury. Spenser's work very well captures the spirit of the Italian Renaissance which stirred the life of his age in all its aspects except the sordid Machiavellianism which held such £ sinister interest for some of, his contemporaries, like the University Wits arid Baron as well as a vast brood of gilded courtiers. The Renaissance elements in Spenser are tempered by the Reformation ideals.

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4.1 Writers

Spenser, an M. A. of Cambridge University, was well read in much of the ancient classical literature which had then begun to be commonly known. He borrowed a good deal from the vast treasure of that literature and came to be intimately influenced by a number of ancient poets and philosophers and the writers of Renaissance Italy who themselves had been influenced by these poets and philosophers. He modelled his most important work The Faerie Queene upon the epics of the Greek Homer, the Roman Virgil, and the Italian Ariosto and Tasso. Theocritus and Virgil prompted him to try his hand at the pastoral {The Shepherd's Calendar). The first English writer of the eclogue was Barclay (of the Ship of Fools fame) who flourished in the fifteenth century; but he had based his five eclogues on the work of the Italian poet Mantuanus rather than the great Virgil and Theocritus. Spenser went back to Virgil and wrote what stands in comparison with his eclogues. Then, Spenser looked to Petrarch and his French followers while composing his sonnet sequence Amoretti. Thus in his selection of the literary genres for his use Spenser clearly displays his debt to the ancient Greek and Roman and the modern Italian writers. Moreover, there are some specific echoes of these writers in his works. For instance, we have a number of Virgilian phrases which, like a good writer, Spenser does not allow to stand out, but submerges into the context. In The Faerie Queene Sir Guyon's voyage to the Bower of' Bliss is suggested most probably by a similar voyage in Homer's Odyssey; but Spenser means by this voyage what Homer did not. Then the descent of the false Duessa to Hades is suggested by the sixth book of Virgil''s Aeneid. Tasso'? Armida gave Spenser some obvious hints for his description of Acrasy and her terrible powers.

Notes Ariosto, the writer of the first romantic epic in the history of world literature, set before Spenser a living example of the romantic love of adventure and unbounded activity which he was to imitate in The Faerie Queene.

4.2 Plato and Aristotle

The, great Greek philosophers, Plato and his disciple Aristotle, exerted a strong hold on Spenser's intellectual and moral temper. In his Four Hymns Spenser gives a poetic utterance to the Platonic conception of Love and Beauty. Plato taught that all material beauty (such as the beauty of the human body) is a shadow as well as a symbol" of the Ideal Beauty which is divine. A specific embodiment of beauty should be used for ascending to the contemplation of the abstract Idea of Beauty. The abstract Idea is divine, and the contemplation of the Idea is a religious activity. Echoing the true Platonic spirit, Spenser observes in the Hymn in Honour of Beauty that "a comely corpse, with beauty fair endowed" is the house of a 'beauteous soul."

Task Write a short note on Plato and Aristotle.

Fit to Receive the Seed of Virtue Strewed

For all that jair is, is by nature good.

Spenser well became a spokesman of the neo-Platonism of the Renaissance.

Aristotle, too, was a philosopher of abiding interest for Spenser. He seems to have effectively taught Spenser the doctrine of the golden mean which finds an effective embodiment in Guyon who stands for Temperance. The very ground plan of "The Faerie Queene", which is to celebrate twelve cardinal virtues, is perhaps suggested by Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. If it is not Aristotle himself, it must have been some of his very numerous commentators who seems to have enumerated the twelve virtues each of which was to be dealt within one of the twelve projected books of "The Fairie Queene". Spenser's Prince Arthur is described as "the image of a brave

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knight, perfected in the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised." writes a critic," Spenser follows the great formative work of Elizabethan and later English culture, the Nichomachean Ethics."

4.3 Classical Mythology

Another Renaissance feature of Spenser's work is his employment of classical mythology for ornament and illustration. Being a devout Christian he did not believe at all in the multiplicity of pagan-deities, but, like Shakespeare, Marlowe, Lyly, and almost all the rest of his contemporaries, he was attracted by classical mythology which he freely drew upon in his works. Very like Milton he uses his profound and vast knowledge of this mythology even when his sincere aim is to drive home a Christian moral. At any rate, the frequent references to classical mythology give the language a veneer of richness and exoticism which was so much sought after by the English writers of the Renaissance.

4.4 Emphasis on Self-culture

A new creed of humanism arrived with the Renaissance in England. It taught that the universe was not, as the middle Ages had believed, theocentric (that is, centred in God), but homocentric (that is, centred in man). Much emphasis came to be laid upon man, human life, the material world, and man's activity in this world. Such things had hitherto been despised, for man was taught to concern himself with his welfare in the next world. The new humanistic thinking, which put human interests paramount, gave special importance to self-culture which did not mean simply the cultivation of the well-known Christian virtues but implied a harmonious development of the human personality on all planes-thought, feelings, and action. More concretely, it meant the cultivation of "the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised." In The Faerie Queens Spenser celebrates not only Holiness but also other virtues, like justice and Temperance, which are more of secular and humanistic than of Christian nature.

Did u know? Spenser's aim in his great poem is not just to teach people to submit passively before the Divine Will, or to seek for divine Grace, but in the manner of a Renaissance humanist "to fashion", as he himself writes, "a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline."

Some Other Renaissance Features

The age of the Renaissance in England was, as has been often said, "a young age." It was marked by unprecedented ebullience and adolescent impatience of all fetters intellectual, religious, and even moral. It also developed a craving for sensuous thrills. Renaissance Italy had burst forth into hectic activity in the field of arts like painting, music, and sculpture which in the Middle Ages were looked down upon as too mundane. England in the late sixteenth century produced a number of great musicians such as Byrd, but she remained devoid of the plastic arts. However, in the poetry of the age" we often find the sensuous touches of a painter. Spenser's poetry is well known for its sensuous and more specifically, pictorial quality. He was in the words of Legouis, "a painter who never held a brush." But, what is more, Spenser—with all his Platonism and Puritanism notwithstanding— seems too frequently to indulge in the pleasures of the senses for their own sake. His paradise seems to be as earthly as that of Omar Khayyam himself. He spends all his art while describing the beauty of the nude female figure, which he does quite voluptuously and with untiring zeal, dwelling on each and every part with great patience and a greater joy. He is, no doubt, uncontaminated by the virus of the Italian pornographic eroticism which is evident in works like Marston's Pigmalionand even in Marlowe's Hero and.Leander arid Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis, but his taste for the delights of the senses is quite apparent. For instance, see the following sonnet:

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Coming to kiss her lips (such grace I found),
Me seem'd I smelt a garden of sweet flow'rs,
That dainty odours from them threw around,.
For damsels fit to deck their lovers, 'bow 'rs.
Her lips did smell like unto gilliflowers,
Her ruddy cheeks like unto roses red,
Her snowy brows like budded betlamoures,
Her lovely eyes like pinks but newly spread,
Her goodly bosom like a strawberry bed.
Her neck like to a bunch ofcullambines.
Her breast like lilies ere their leaves be shed,
Her nipples like young blossom 'd jessamines;
Such fragrant flow 'ers do give most odorous smell,
But her sweet odour did them all excel.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The great Greek philosophers, plato and his disciple Aristotle, exerted a strong hold on spenser's intellectual and ..... .
2. The abstract Idea is divine, and the contemplation of the Idea is a ..... .
3. Aristotle, too, was a philosopher of abiding interest for ..... .
4. Another Renaissance Feature of spenser's work is his employment of classical mythology for ornament and ..... .
5. A new creed of humanism arrived with the Renaissance in ..... .

4.5 The Renaissance

The Renaissance was a cultural movement that spanned roughly the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the Late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe. The term is also used more loosely to refer to the historical era, but since the changes of the Renaissance were not uniform across Europe, this is a general use of the term. As a cultural movement, it encompassed a flowering of literature, science, art, religion, and politics, and a resurgence of learning based on classical sources, the development of linear perspective in painting, and gradual but widespread educational reform. Traditionally, this intellectual transformation has resulted in the Renaissance being viewed as a bridge between the middle Ages and the Modern era. Although the Renaissance saw revolutions in many intellectual pursuits, as well as social and political upheaval, it is perhaps best known for its artistic developments and the contributions of such polymaths as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, who inspired the term "Renaissance man".

There is a consensus the Renaissance began in Florence, Tuscany in the 14th century. Various theories have been proposed to account for its origins and characteristics, focusing on a variety of factors including the social and civic peculiarities of Florence at the time; its political structure; the patronage of its dominant family, the Medici.

The Renaissance has a long and complex historiography, and there has been much debate among historians as to the usefulness of Renaissance as a term and as a historical delineation. Some have called into question whether the Renaissance was a cultural "advance" from the middle Ages, instead seeing it as a period of pessimism and nostalgia for the classical age, while others have instead focused on the continuity between the two eras. Indeed, some have called for an end to the

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use of the term, which they see as a product of presentism — the use of history to validate and glorify modern ideals.

Did u know? The word Renaissance has been used to describe other historical and cultural movements, such as the Carolingian Renaissance and the Renaissance of the 12th century.

4.6 Elizabethan Age

The earlier half of Elizabeth's reign, also, though not lacking in literary effort, produced no work of permanent importance. After the religious convulsions of half a century time was required for the development of the internal quiet and confidence from which a great literature could spring. At length, however, the hour grew ripe and there came the greatest outburst of creative energy in the whole history of English literature. Under Elizabeth's wise guidance the prosperity and enthusiasm of the nation had risen to the highest pitch, and London in particular was overflowing with vigorous life. A special stimulus of the most intense kind came from the struggle with Spain. After a generation of half-piratical depredations by the English seadogs against the Spanish treasure fleets and the Spanish settlements in America, King Philip, exasperated beyond all patience and urged on by a bigot's zeal for the Catholic Church, began deliberately to prepare the Great Armada, which was to crush at one blow the insolence, the independence, and the religion of England. There followed several long years of breathless suspense; then in 1588 the Armada sailed and was utterly overwhelmed in one of the most complete disasters of the world's history. There upon the released energy of England broke out exultantly into still more impetuous achievement in almost every line of activity. The great literary period is taken by common consent to begin with the publication of Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar' in 1579, and to end in some sense at the death of Elizabeth in 1603, though in the drama, at least, it really continues many years longer.

Several general characteristics of Elizabethan literature and writers should be indicated at the outset.

1. The period has the great variety of almost unlimited creative force; it includes works of many kinds in both verse and prose, and ranges in spirit from the loftiest Platonic idealism or the most delightful romance to the level of very repulsive realism.
2. It was mainly dominated, however, by the spirit of romance.
3. It was full also of the spirit of dramatic action, as befitted an age whose restless enterprise was eagerly extending itself to every quarter of the globe.
4. In style it often exhibits romantic luxuriance, which sometimes takes the form of elaborate affectations of which the favorite 'conceit' is only the most apparent.
5. It was in part a period of experimentation, when the proper material and limits of literary forms were being determined, oftentimes by means of false starts and grandiose failures. In particular, many efforts were made to give prolonged poetical treatment to many subjects essentially prosaic, for example to systems of theological or scientific thought, or to the geography of all England.
6. It continued to be largely influenced by the literature of Italy, and to a less degree by those of France and Spain.
7. The literary spirit was all-pervasive, and the authors were men (not yet women) of almost every class, from distinguished courtiers, like Raleigh and Sidney, to the company of hack writers, who starved in garrets and hung about the outskirts of the bustling taverns.

4.7 Prose Fiction

The period saw the beginning, among other things; of English prose fiction of something like the later modern type. First appeared a series of collections of short tales chiefly translated from

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Italian authors, to which tales the Italian name 'novella' (novel) was applied. Most of the separate tales are crude or amateurish and have only historical interest; though as a class they furnished the plots for many Elizabethan dramas, including several of Shakespeare's. The most important collection was Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure,' in 1566. The earliest original or partly original, English prose fictions to appear were handbooks of morals and manners in story form, and here the beginning was made by John Lyly, who is also of some importance in the history of the Elizabethan drama. In 1578 Lyly, at the age of twenty-five, came from Oxford to London, full of the enthusiasm of Renaissance learning, and evidently determined to fix himself as a new and dazzling star in the literary sky. In this ambition he achieved a remarkable and immediate success, by the publication of a little book entitled 'Euphues and His Anatomie of Wit.' 'Euphues' means 'the well-bred man,' and though there is a slight action, the work is mainly a series of moralizing disquisitions (mostly rearranged from Sir Thomas North's translation of 'The Dial of Princes' of the Spaniard Guevara) on love, religion, and conduct. Most influential, however, for the time-being, was Lyly's style, which is the most conspicuous English example of the later Renaissance craze, then rampant throughout Western Europe, for refining and beautifying the art of prose expression in a mincingly affected fashion. Witty, clever, and sparkling at all costs, Lyly takes especial pains to balance his sentences and clauses antithetically, phrase against phrase and often word against word, sometimes emphasizing the balance also by an exaggerated use of alliteration and assonance. A representative sentence is this: 'Although there be none so ignorant that both not know, neither any so impudent that will not confesse, friendship to be the jewell of humaine joye; yet who so ever shall see this amitie grounded upon a little affection, soon will conjecture that it shall be dissolved upon a light occasion.' Others of Lyly's affectations are rhetorical questions, hosts of allusions to classical history, and literature, and an unfailing succession of similes from all the recondite knowledge that he can command, especially from the fantastic collection of fables which, coming down through the Middle Ages from the Roman writer Pliny, went at that time by the name of natural history and which we have already encountered in the medieval Bestiaries. Preposterous by any reasonable standard, Lyly's style, 'Euphuism,' precisely hit the Court taste of his age and became for a decade its most approved conversational dialect.

In literature the imitations of 'Euphues' which flourished for a while gave way to a series of romances inaugurated by the 'Arcadia' of Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney's brilliant position for a few years as the noblest representative of chivalrous ideals in the intriguing Court of Elizabeth is a matter of common fame, as is his death in 1586 at the age of thirty-two during the siege of Zutphen in Holland. He wrote 'Arcadia' for the amusement of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, during a period of enforced retirement beginning in 1580, but the book was not published until ten years later. It is a pastoral romance, in the general style of Italian and Spanish romances of the earlier part of the century. The pastoral is the most artificial literary form in modern fiction. It may be said to have begun in the third century B. C. with the perfectly sincere poems of the Greek Theocritus, who gives genuine expression to the life of actual Sicilian shepherds. But with successive Latin, Medieval, and Renaissance writers in verse and prose the country characters and setting had become mere disguises, sometimes allegorical, for the expression of the very far from simple sentiments of the upper classes, and sometimes for their partly genuine longing, the outgrowth of sophisticated weariness and ennui, for rural naturalness. Sidney's very complicated tale of adventures in love and war, much longer than any of its successors, is by no means free from artificiality, but it finely mirrors his own knightly spirit and remains a permanent English classic. Among his followers were some of the better hack-writers of the time, who were also among the minor dramatists and poets, especially Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge. Lodge's 'Rosalynde,' also much influenced by Lyly, is in itself a pretty story and is noteworthy as the original of Shakespeare's 'As You like It'.

Lastly, in the concluding decade of the sixteenth century, came a series of realistic stories depicting chiefly, in more or less farcical spirit, the life of the poorer classes. They belonged mostly to that class of realistic fiction which is called picaresque, from the Spanish word 'picaro,' a rogue, because it began in Spain with the 'Lazarillo de Tormes' of Diego de Mendoza, in 1553, and because its heroes are knavish serving-boys or similar characters whose unprincipled tricks and exploits formed the substance of the stories. In Elizabethan England it produced nothing of individual note.

Notes

4.8 Summary

- Spenser, an M. A. of Cambridge University, was well read in much of the ancient classical literature which had then begun to be commonly known.
- The earlier half of Elizabeth's reign, also, though not lacking in literary effort, produced no work of permanent importance.
- In 1578 Lyly, at the age of twenty-five, came from Oxford to London, full of the enthusiasm of Renaissance learning, and evidently determined to fix himself as a new and dazzling star in the literary sky.
- In literature the imitations of 'Euphues' which flourished for a while gave way to a series of romances inaugurated by the 'Arcadia' of Sir Philip Sidney.

4.9 Keywords

Renaissance : It was a cultural movement that spanned roughly the 14th to the 17th century, beginning in Italy in the Late Middle Ages and later spreading to the rest of Europe.

Prose Fiction : The period saw the beginning, among other things; of English prose fiction of something like the later modern type. First appeared a series of collec tions of short tales chiefly translated from Italian authors, to which tales the Italian name 'novella' (novel) was applied.

4.10 Review Questions

1. What is classical mythology?
2. What is the Renaissance? Explain.
3. What do you man by Elizabethan age? Explain.
4. What is prose Fiction?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. moral temper
2. religious activity
3. spenser
4. illustration
5. England

4.11 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 5: The Renaissance-University Wits and Contribution of Shakespeare to This Age

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define christopher marlowe and robert greene.
- Describe thomas nashe and thomas lodge.
- Explain george peele and john lyly.

Introduction

The University Wits were a group of late 16th century English playwrights who were educated at the universities (Oxford or Cambridge) and who became playwrights and popular secular writers. Prominent members of this group were Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, and Thomas Nashe from Cambridge, and John Lyly, Thomas Lodge, George Peele from Oxford.

This diverse and talented loose association of London writers and dramatists set the stage for the theatrical Renaissance of Elizabethan England. They were looked upon as the literary elite of the day and often ridiculed other playwrights such as Thomas Kyd and Shakespeare who did not have a university education. Greene calls Shakespeare an "upstart crow" in his pamphlet Greene's Groats - Worth of Wit.

The chief University Wits include:

- Christopher Marlowe
- Robert Greene
- Thomas Nashe
- Thomas Lodge
- George Peele
- John Lyly

5.1 Christopher Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe (baptised 26 February 1564; died 30 May 1593) was an English dramatist, poet and translator of the Elizabethan era. As the foremost Elizabethan tragedian, next to William

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Shakespeare, he is known for his blank verse, his overreaching protagonists, and his mysterious death.

A warrant was issued for Marlowe's arrest on 18 May 1593. No reason for it was given, though it was thought to be connected to allegations of blasphemy—a manuscript believed to have been written by Marlowe was said to contain "vile heretical conceipts". On 20 May he was brought to the court to attend upon the Privy Council for questioning. There is no record of their having met that day, however, and he was commanded to attend upon them each day thereafter until "licensed to the contrary." Ten days later, he was stabbed to death by Ingram Frizer. Whether the stabbing was connected to his arrest has never been resolved.

5.2 Robert Greene

Robert Greene (11 July 1558 – 3 September 1592) was an English author best known for a posthumous pamphlet attributed to him, Greene's Groats-Worth of Wit, widely believed to contain a polemic attack on William Shakespeare. He was born in Norwich and attended Cambridge University, receiving a B.A. in 1580, and an M.A. in 1583 before moving to London, where he arguably became the first professional author in England. Greene published in many genres including autobiography, plays, and romances, while capitalizing on a scandalous reputation.

5.3 Thomas Nashe

Thomas Nashe was an English Elizabethan pamphleteer, playwright, poet and satirist. He was the son of the minister William Nashe and his wife Margaret. Little is known with certainty of Nashe's life. He was baptised in Lowestoft, Suffolk, where his father was curate. The family moved to West Harling, near Thetford in 1573 after Nashe's father was awarded the living there at the church of All Saints. Around 1581 Thomas went up to St John's College, Cambridge as a sizar, gaining his bachelor's degree in 1586. From references in his own polemics and those of others, he does not seem to have proceeded Master of Arts there. Most of his biographers agree that he left his college about summer 1588, as his name appears on a list of students due to attend philosophy lectures in that year. His reasons for leaving are unclear; his father may have died the previous year, but Richard Lichfield maliciously reported that Nashe had fled possible expulsion for his role in Terminus et non terminus, one of the raucous student theatricals popular at the time.

Did u know? William Covell wrote in Polimanteia that Cambridge "has been unkind to the one to wean him before his time." Nashe himself claimed that he could have become a fellow had he wished.

5.4 Thomas Lodge

Thomas Lodge was an English dramatist and writer of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. In 1578 he entered Lincoln's Inn, where, as in the other Inns of Court, a love of letters and a crop of debts were common. Lodge, disregarding the wishes of his family, took up literature. When the penitent Stephen Gosson had (in 1579) published his Schoole of Abuse, Lodge responded with Defence of Poetry, Music and Stage Plays (1579 or 1580), which shows a certain restraint, though both forceful and learned. The pamphlet was banned, but appears to have been circulated privately. It was answered by Gosson in his Playes Confuted in Five Actions; and Lodge retorted with his Alarum against Usurers (1585)—a tract for the times which may have resulted from personal experience. In the same year he produced the first tale written by him on his own account in prose and verse, The Delectable History of Forbonius and Prisceria, both published and reprinted with the Alarum.

From 1587 onwards he seems to have made a series of attempts at play writing, though most of those attributed to him are mainly conjectural. He probably never became an actor, and John Payne Collier's conclusion to that effect rested on the two assumptions that the "Lodge" of Philip Henslowe's manuscript was a player and that his name was Thomas, neither of which is supported by the text.

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Having been to sea with Captain Clarke in his expedition to Terceira and the Canaries, Lodge in 1591 made a voyage with Thomas Cavendish to Brazil and the Straits of Magellan, returning home by 1593. During the Canaries expedition, to beguile the tedium of his voyage, he composed his prose tale of Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie, which, printed in 1590, afterwards furnished the story of Shakespeare's As You Like It. The novel, which in its turn owes some, though no very considerable, debt to the medieval Tale of Gamelyn (unwarrantably appended to the fragmentary Cookes Tale in certain manuscripts of Geoffrey Chaucer's works), is written in the euphuistic manner, but decidedly attractive both by its plot and by the situations arising from it. It has been frequently reprinted. Before starting on his second expedition he had published a historical romance, The History of Robert, Second Duke of Normandy, surnamed Robert the Devil; and he left behind him for publication Catharos Diogenes in his Singularity, a discourse on the immorality of Athens (London). Both appeared in 1591. Another romance in the manner of Lyly, Euphues Shadow, the Battaile of the Sences (1592), appeared while Lodge was still on his travels.

Lodge's known dramatic work is small in quantity. In conjunction with Robert Greene he, probably in 1590, produced in a popular vein the odd but far from feeble play, A Looking Glass for London and England (published 1594). He had already written "The Wounds of Civil War" (produced perhaps as early as 1587, and published in 1594, and put on as a play reading at the Globe Theatre on 7 February 1606), a good second-rate piece in the half-chronicle fashion of its age. Fleay saw grounds for assigning to Lodge Mucedorus and Amadine, played by the Queen's Men about 1588, a share with Robert Greene in George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield, and in Shakespeare's 2nd part of Henry VI; he also regards him as at least part-author of, The True Chronicle of King Leir and his three Daughters (1594); and The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England; in the case of two other plays he allowed the assignation to Lodge to be purely conjectural. That Lodge is the "Young Juvenal" of Greene's Groatsworth of Wit is no longer a generally accepted hypothesis. In the latter part of his life—possibly about 1596, when he published his Wits Miserie and the World's Madnesse, which is dated from Low Leyton in Essex, and the religious tract Prosopopeia (if, as seems probable, it was his), in which he repents him of his "lewd lines" of other days—he became a Catholic and engaged in the practice of medicine, for which Wood says he qualified himself by a degree at Avignon in 1600.

Did u know? In 1602, Thomas Lodge received the degree of M.D. from Oxford University.

5.5 George Peele

George Peele (born in London and baptized 25 July 1556 – buried 9 November 1596), was an English dramatist. His pastoral comedy The Arraignment of Paris was presented by the Children of the Chapel Royal before Queen Elizabeth perhaps as early as 1581, and was printed anonymously in 1584. In the play, Paris is arraigned before Jupiter for having assigned the apple to Venus. Diana, with whom the final decision rests, gives the apple to none of the competitors but to a nymph called Eliza, a reference to Queen Elizabeth I.

His play Edward I was printed in 1593. This chronicle history is an advance on the old chronicle plays, and marks a step towards the Shakespearean historical drama. Peele is said by some scholars to have written or contributed to the bloody tragedy Titus Andronicus, which was published as the work of Shakespeare. This theory is in part due to Peele's predilection for gore, as evidenced in The Battle of Alcazar (acted 1588-1589, printed 1594), published anonymously, which is attributed with much probability to him. The Old Wives' Tale (printed 1595) was followed by The Love of King David and fair Bethsabe (written ca. 1588, printed 1599), which is notable as an example of Elizabethan drama drawn entirely from Scriptural sources. F. G. Fleay sees in it a political satire, and identifies Elizabeth and Leicester as David and Bathsheba, Mary, Queen of Scots as Absalom.

Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes (printed 1599) has been attributed to Peele, but on insufficient grounds. Other plays attributed to Peele include Jack Straw (ca. 1587), The Wisdom of Dr. Doddypoll (printed 1600), The Maid's Metamorphosis (printed 1600), and Wily Beguiled (printed 1606) — though the scholarly consensus has judged these attributions to be insufficiently supported by

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evidence. Indeed, individual scholars have repeatedly resorted to Peele in their attempts to grapple with Elizabethan plays of uncertain authorship. Plays that have been assigned to (or blamed on) Peele include Locrine, The Troublesome Reign of King John, and Parts 1 and 2 of Shakespeare's Henry VI trilogy, in addition to Titus Andronicus. Edward III was attributed to Peele by Tucker Brooke in 1908. While the attribution of the entire play to Peele is no longer accepted, Sir Brian Vickers demonstrated using metrical and other analysis that Peele wrote the first act and the first two scenes in Act II of Titus Andronicus, with Shakespeare responsible for the rest.

5.6 John Lyly

John Lyly was an English writer, best known for his books Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit and Euphues and His England. Lyly's linguistic style, originating in his first books, is known as Euphuism.

In 1632 Blount published Six Court Comedies, the first printed collection of Lyly's plays. They appear in the text in the following order; the parenthetical date indicates the year they appeared separately in quarto form:

- Endymion (1591)
- Campaspe (1584)
- Sapho and Phao (1584)
- Gallathea (1592)
- Midas (1592)
- Mother Bombie (1594).

Lyly's other plays include Love's Metamorphosis (though printed in 1601, possibly Lyly's earliest play — the surviving version is likely a revision of the original), and The Woman in the Moon, first printed in 1597. Of these, all but the last are in prose.

Notes A Warning for Faire Women (1599) and The Maid's Metamorphosis (1600) have been attributed to Lyly, but on altogether insufficient grounds.

The first editions of all these plays were issued between 1584 and 1601, and the majority of them between 1584 and 1592, in what were Lyly's most successful and popular years. His importance as a dramatist has been very differently estimated. Lyly's dialogue is still a long way removed from the dialogue of Shakespeare. But at the same time it is a great advance in rapidity and resource upon anything which had gone before it; it represents an important step in English dramatic art. His nimbleness, and the wit which struggles with his pedantry, found their full development in the dialogue of Twelfth Night and Much Ado about Nothing, just as "Marlowe's mighty line" led up to and was eclipsed by the majesty and music of Shakespearean passion.

One or two of the songs introduced into his plays are justly famous and show a real lyrical gift. Nor in estimating his dramatic position and his effect upon his time must it be forgotten that his classical and mythological plots, flavourless and dull as they would be to a modern audience, were charged with interest to those courtly hearers who saw in Midas Philip II, Elizabeth in Cynthia and perhaps Leicester's unwelcome marriage with Lady Sheffield in the love affair between Endymion and Tellus which brings the former under Cynthia's displeasure. As a matter of fact his reputation and popularity as a playwright were considerable. Harvey dreaded lest Lyly should make a play upon their quarrel; Francis Meres, as is well known, places him among "the best for comedy;" and Ben Jonson names him among those foremost rivals who were "outshone" and outsung by Shakespeare.

Lyly must also be considered and remembered as a primary influence on the plays of William Shakespeare, and in particular the romantic comedies. Love's Metamorphosis is a large influence on Love's Labour's Lost, and Gallathea is a major source for A Midsummer Night's Dream. In 2007,

Notes

Primavera Productions in London are staging a reading of Gallathea, directed by Tom Littler, consciously linking it to Shakespeare's plays. They also claim an influence on Twelfth Night and As You Like It.

In addition to the plays, Lyly also composed at least one "entertainment" for Queen Elizabeth; the Entertainment at Chiswick was staged on July 28 and 29, 1602. Lyly has been suggested as the author of several other royal entertainments of the 1590s, most notably "The Entertainment at Mitcham" performed on September 13, 1598.

Task Write short note on "University Wits"?

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. A warrant was issued for Marlower's arrest on 18 may ..... .
   (*a*) 1573 (*b*) 1583 (*c*) 1593 (*d*) 1598
2. ..... was born in Norwich and attended Cambridge university.
   (*a*) Christopher Marlowe (*b*) Robert Greene
   (*c*) Thomas Nashe (*d*) Thomas Lodge
3. ..... was the son of the minister William Nash-e and his wife Margaret
   (*a*) Thomas Nashe (*b*) John Lyly
   (*c*) George Peele (*d*) Thomas Lodge
4. ..... was born in London and baptized 25 July 1556-buried 9 November 1596.
   (*a*) Robert Greene (*b*) Thomas Lodge
   (*c*) John Lyly (*d*) George peele
5. ..... was an English writer, best known for his books Euphuest, The Anatomy of wit and Euphues and his England.
   (*a*) George Peele (*b*) John Lyly
   (*c*) Thomas Nashe (*d*) Christopher Marlowe

5.7 The Renaissance-Contribution of Shakespeare to This Age

The renaissance movement is used to describe how Europeans moved away from the restrictive ideas of the middle ages. The ideology that dominated the middle ages was heavily focused on the absolute power of God and was enforced by the formidable Catholic Church.

From the Fourteenth Century onwards, people started to break away from this idea. The renaissance movement did not necessarily reject the idea of God, but rather questioned humankind's relationship to God – an idea that caused an unprecedented upheaval in the accepted social hierarchy. In fact, Shakespeare himself may have been Catholic.

This focus on humanity created a new-found freedom for artists, writers and philosophers to be inquisitive about the world around them.

Shakespeare: the Renaissance man

Shakespeare was born towards the end of the renaissance period and was one of the first to bring the renaissance's core values to the theater.

Shakespeare Embraced the Renaissance in the Following Ways

- Shakespeare updated the simplistic, two-dimensional writing style of pre-renaissance drama. He focused on creating "human" characters with psychologically complexity. Hamlet is perhaps the most famous example of this.

Notes

- The upheaval in the accepted social hierarchy allowed Shakespeare to explore the humanity of every character regardless of their social position. Even monarchs are given human emotions and are capable of making mistakes.
- Shakespeare utilized his knowledge of Greek and Roman classics when writing his plays. Before the renaissance, these texts had been suppressed by the Catholic Church.

5.8 Summary

- Christopher Marlowe (baptised 26 February 1564; died 30 May 1593) was an English dramatist, poet and translator of the Elizabethan era.
- Lodge's known dramatic work is small in quantity. In conjunction with Robert Greene he, probably in 1590, produced in a popular vein the odd but far from feeble play, A Looking Glass for London and England (published 1594).
- Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes (printed 1599) has been attributed to Peele, but on insufficient grounds.
- Lyly must also be considered and remembered as a primary influence on the plays of William Shakespeare, and in particular the romantic comedies.

5.9 Keywords

Thomas Nashe : Thomas Nashe was an English Elizabethan pamphleteer, playwright, poet and satirist.

Thomas Lodge : Thomas Lodge was an English dramatist and writer of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

5.10 Review Questions

1. How many the chief university wits include?
2. Who was Christopher Marlowe and Robert Greene? Explain.
3. What was the difference between Thomas Nashe and Thomas Lodge?
4. Who was the George peele and John Lyly?
5. What is the Renaissance-contribution of Shakespeare to this age?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. (*c*) 1593
2. (*b*) Robert Greene
3. (*a*) Thomas Nashe
4. (*d*) George peele
5. (*b*) John Lyly

5.11 Further Readings

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Notes

Unit 6: The Puritan Age or Age of Milton: Milton as a Poet and His Contribution

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the baroque style and sir thomas browne.
- Explain the puritans: baxter, milton and others.
- Define the eccentrics.

Introduction

The age of Milton (that is, 1625-1660, comprising the Caroline age and the Commonwealth) was an age of singular activity in the field of English prose. The central events of the age-political struggles culminating in the execution of Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth-exerted both a hampering and an encouraging influence on the prose writers of the age. Much was written by them in sheer party spirit to promote either of the two conflicting parties-the Puritans and the Cavaliers.

Thus the air was thick with party pamphlets most of which proved only of ephemeral interest. Further, this age was remarkable for its production of some very eloquent and compelling sermons of the first rank in the language. The age of Milton has been very aptly called "the Golden Age of English Pulpit." The names of such powerful writers as Taylor, Robert South, Fuller, Isaac Barrow, and Richard Baxter are associated with this department of writing. In the field of moral, social, and political philosophy the age was enriched by the works of Sir Thomas Browne, John Hales, and Hobbes. Clarendon and Fuller wrote distinguished histories. Isaac Walton composed the quaint work The Complete Angler—a work of its own kind. And then there was the almighty Milton who distinguished himself almost as eminently in the field of prose as that of poetry.

Notes The age of Milton was a period of prolific activity in the field of English prose touching many departments of life.

Notes

6.1 The Baroque Style

As regards prose style, the writers of the age of Milton exhibit a curious retrogressive tendency. Every past age in England had in some measure advanced literature from antiquity to modernity. But the age of Milton does not seem to have advanced English prose from the extra vagance and antiquity of the prose of the Elizabethan period towards the ideal of simplicity, comprehensibility, and lucidity associated with the prose of the writers of the age of Queen Anne (1702-14). Right in the Jacobean age (1603-25) we come across some important writers like Bacon and the character writers who look to the future and dissociate themselves from the ornateness, prolixity, involvedness, arid diffuseness of the prose of their contemporaries. The Gothic" style of most Elizabethans influenced a sizable proportion of the prose writer of the age of Milton. The lesson of simplicity and sententiousness set forth by Bacon and the character writers was forgotten, with the result that a kind of "baroque" style was cultivated during the age of Milton. It was at the end of the age that the Restoration writers like Dryden stemmed the retrogressive tide and furthered the advance towards simplicity and lucidity which came fully and effectively to be realised by such writers as Addison and Swift after the close of the seventeenth century. However, it may be admitted with H.C.J. Grierson that the progress towards simplicity and modernity cost the English prose some "freshness, harmony, dignity, and poetic richness of phraseology." When prose becomes strictly functional in nature these qualities have to be done without. With these preliminary remarks let us proceed to examine the work of the major prose writers of the age.

6.2 Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682)

Sir Thomas Browne was a quaint figure, though a very typical prose writer of his age. He may be compared with Burton before him. But whereas Burton was by profession a clergyman with a deep interest in medicine, Browne was by profession a physician, with a very deep interest in religion. As a thinker and writer he was a surprising blend of the medieval and modern characteristics. He had a scientific love of investigating the physical truths, the qualities of both a mystic and a sceptic, was a crusader for a rationalistic appraisal of both the work and the word of God, a great supporter of religious tolerance, a zealous campaigner for the removal of errors in all fields of learning and divinity, but himself tenaciously wedded to such errors as belief in witchcraft and the mystic supremacy of the number five. His works reveal his attractively quaint personality in its fullness, and therein lies the reason of his perpetual appeal to the readers of all ages.

Notes The modern reader may justly scoff at the pomposity and the occasional absurdity of the learned doctor, but he has to admit with the Earl of Dorset that "assuredly, he is the owner of a strong generous heart."

Browne's Religio Medici (The Religion of a Doctor) which was published in 1642 immediately achieved Continental fame, and was translated into several languages. The work may be called" an autobiography of the soul". But apart from its importance in revealing the personality of the writer, the work intended a curative effect on the "sick" society of the age. "It is likely," says Tucker Brooke in A Literary History of England, edited by Albert C. Baugh, "that Dr. Browne, in all his estimable career, never prescribed a better medicine than when he wrote Religio Medici. The world was sick of horrors, on the brink of civil war, and in the throes of a harsh theology. The book is a prophylactic against totalitarian damnation, and the world took it to its heart."

Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica (Vulgar Errors), which comprised seven books, attempted to correct the common errors in the fields of mineral and vegetable bodies, animals, men, misrepresentations in pictures etc. geography, and history, However, the author himself is not altogether free from errors. In his Hydriotaphia or Urn-Burial and The Garden vf Gyrjus (both published 1658), the emphasis is clearly on style. The former was opcasioned by the recovery of a

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few sepulchral urns in Norwich, the habitat of the writer. As Leaouis savs "it treats of the oblivion which covers the traces of men, even though famous and with this subject he plays as a dilettante." The latter work is concerned with the supremacy of the number five (the quincunx).

Did u know? Browne's Christian Morals, published posthumously, is written in the character of a fairly orthodox Christian.

Browne's prose style-though there are passages of rare lucidity charged with incisive energy is representative of the baroque style. He has love of Latinised expressions and poetic cadences and sonorous words. "The interweaving of his harmonies", says Legouis, "offers an enchantment to the ear scarcely less than that of the finest lyrics."

6.3 The Anglican Clergy: Taylor and Others

The prose of the age of Milton is remarkable for its pronounced religious slant. The secular interest of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods seem to have yielded considerable place to religious interests. Legouis remarks in this connexion: "The rich humanity, the widespread curiosity, the intermingling of comedy with tragedy in the portrayal of life, were replaced by a passionate controversy on the forms of Christian religion and a search which became almost an obsession for the way of salvation." In the Caroline period there was a complete polarisation of religious affiliations and the Puritans and the Protestants (Anglicans) emerged as two groups irreconcilably opposed to each other. Both of them had eminent men of letters among their ranks. Whereas Milton was the most important of the Puritans, Jeremy Taylor was the best among the Protestants. Let us consider briefly the prose of the Anglicans first.

Among the Anglicans the important prose writers were George Herbert, Thomas Traherne, John Hales, William Chiliingworth, John Gauden, and Jeremy Taylor (1613-67). Most of them mainly wrote sermons. The last named was the most distinguished and the most tolerant of all of them. Along with his sermons he gave Liberty of Prophesying (1646) and his most famous works Holy Living and Holy Dying (1650-51). Like Browne, Taylor is preoccupied with the thought of human mortality. Like him, again, he is not afraid of death; he considers it as "nothing but a middle-point between the two lives." The recent death of his wife prompted him further to enter into the contemplation of mortality and the holy practice of prayer as also the importance of faith and patience.

Notes Taylor's style is a good example of the baroque style. His prose is a collection of long, rich, rolling sentences each of which goes like the river Alph in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan".

Five Miles Meandering with a Mazy Motion

The structure is Ciceronian and highly Latinised. Taylor's prcse is characterised by a love of fancy at the cost of logic. Like the verse of the metaphysicals, TayIor's prose manifests what T. S. Eliot calls the 2S3ociation of sensibility. He is very close to the Elizabethans, and has reen called—not without justice "the Shakespeare of English prose" and "the Spenser of the pulpit." According to Legouis, in Taylor's case "the logician becomes lost in the poet." Nevertheless, his prose is not without its beauty of harmony and dignity when he dwells on a theme rear to him, such as death or human frailty.

6.4 The Puritans: Baxter, Milton and Others

The Puritan camp was dominated by Milton. But there were also some other important figures such as Baxter and Prynne. As: compared to the prose works of the Anglicans, those of the Puritans are marked by violence and coarseness and, not unoften, downright lack of good taste. In his

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Histriomastix (1632) Prynne made a violent attack in the allesed immorality of the state. Elsewhere, he lashed at the Anglican bishops. Richard Baxter (1615-91), however, is not so intolerant. He wrote two manuals of practical religion-TTze Saints'Everlasting Rest (1650) and Call to the Unconverted (1657) which remained for long very important books in the Puritan tradition in both England and America. His style is quite simple but has few qualities to recommend itself. The prose of John Owen, another Puritan divine, is again, as Legouis remarks, "rather dull and uninviting."

Milton from the age of thirty one. Jo fifty wrote a number of pamphlets on political and ecclesiastical themes. In this period his poetic activity remained suspended except for the production of a dozen sonnets. On his return from the Continent to England he found the country "on a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes." But he plunged into the "sea" and made his appearance felt. Milton's prose is the work of an excellent poet who looked upon prose as something contemptible and the work of but his "ibft hand." His prose is generally rhetorical and too highly Latinised, but is not without its rocky strength and overwhelming grandeur, to one thing, it has the quality of high seriousness plus sincerity. Milton always has a point to make and does make it, and quite often, effectively. But some bitterness does become manifest here and there. Areopagitica, a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing (1644) is Milton's most outstanding prose work. It was an eloquent plea for the liberty of the press. Regarding Milton's style, Legouis observes: "The remorseless length, of his sentences renders them formidable at first to the reader, but' from their troubled vehemence breaks forth at times a scathing irony or a sudden splendour. They reveal the impetuous idealist, unpractical and thorough-going."

6.5 Philosophy: Hobbes, Harrington

The prose of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) raises above all political and religious controversies. Hobbes was Bacon's secretary and Decartes' correspondent. He combines in his philosophic work the empiricism of the former and the mechanistic rationalism of the latter. His important work Leviathan (1651) sets forth his totalitarian, materialistic, and rationalistic philosophy. Leviathan, says Legouis, "is written in strong, logical, massive prose, exempt from the oratorical vehemence and ornaments of his great contemporaries, and heralding the prose of the classical period."

James Harrington in his Utopian work Oceana (1656) offered to controvert the views of Hobbes favouring absolute monarchy. The Cambridge Platonists, Henry More (1614-87) and Ralph Cudworth (1617-88) wrote in opposition to Hobbes's rationalism. The prose of all these writers is fanciful and devoid of lucidity and exactness-the hallmarks of Hobbes's style.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... was a quaint figure, though a very typical prose writer of his age.
2. The prose of the ..... is remarkable for its pronounced religious slant.
3. The ..... was dominated by Milton.
4. ..... was Bacon's secretary and Decartes correspondent.
5. Hobbes important work ..... (1651) sets Forth his totalitarian, materialistic, and rationalistic philosophy.

6.6 The Eccentrics

Lastly, we come across some "eccentrics" who wrote about the middle of the seventeeth century. Of them Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty (1611-60) translated the first two books of Rabelais Gargantua (1653). In giving free play to fancy he outdid even Browne Thomas Fuller (1608-61), an Anglican clergyman, wrote the Church History of Britain (1655-56), Holy and Prophane State (1642), and The History of the Worthies of England (1662). Fuller's prose is somewhat quaint, but

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has an element of wit, even the wit of the metaphysical kind. At any rate, he is delightful, even though in patches. He wittily describes a negro as "an image of God cut in ebony." "The soldier", Fuller writes at a place, "at the same time shoots out his prayers to God and his pistol at his enemy."

Izaac Walton (1593-1683) falls in a class by himself. He is known for his biographies of Donne, Henry Wotton, Hooker, George Herbert, and Bishop Sanderson written between 1640 and 1678. They are, says Hardin Craig in A History of English Literature, ed. Hardin Craig, "masterpieces, not of biography, but of style and temper, hearty sincerity, cheerfulness and good nature, and personal interest in the men treated. His mistakes as a biographer, for example in the case of ' Hooker, have to be guarded against, but his pictures are essentially true."

Walton's more important work, however, is The Compleai Angler (1653) which is essentially a treatise on fishing, but has alongside many incidental attractions for the student of literature. Walton was an ironmonger by profession and he spent all of his leisure on fishing, of which sport he acquired an almost uncanny knowledge. He sets forth this knowledge in this book. "Its charm," says Hardin Craig, "rests also on its background which is made up of natural scenery, life at inns, fishermen's tales and casual conversations with fishermen, and of casually interspersed songs and lyrics".

"He", says Legouis in his A Short History of English Literature "serves as a link between Marlowe and Dryden." We can easily perceive in his prose, even though it is the prose of an ironmonger, a marked Elizabethan quality. "He describes", says Legouis, "these healthful pleasures in a prose, limpid, if a little slow; still redolent of the artificial pastoral here and there but wherein lies the witchery of the English countryside."

6.7 Summary

- The age of Milton (that is, 1625-1660, comprising the Caroline age and the Common-wealth) was an age of singular activity in the field of English prose.
- Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica (Vulgar Errors), which comprised seven books, attempted to correct the common errors in the fields of mineral and vegetable bodies, animals, men, misrepresentations in pictures etc.
- Among the Anglicans the important prose writers were George Herbert, Thomas Traherne, John Hales, William Chiliingworth, John Gauden, and Jeremy Taylor (1613-67).

6.8 Keywords

Autobiography of the Soul : Browne's Religio Medici (The Religion of a Doctor) which was published in 1642 immediately achieved Continental fame, and was translated into several languages. The work may be called" an autobiography of the soul".

Sir Thomas Browne : He was a quaint Figure, though a very typical prose writer of his age.

6.9 Review Questions

1. What was the Baroque style?
2. Who was Sir Thomas Browne? Explain.
3. What is the eccentrics?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Sir Thomas Browne
2. Age of Milton
3. Puritan camp
4. Hobbes
5. Leviathan

6.10 Further Readings

Notes

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Notes

Unit 7: The Restoration Period or Beginning of Neoclassicism, Comedy of Manners

CONTENTS

Objectives

After Studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define romanticism of neoclassicism.
- Explain origins of neoclassicism.
- Describe comedy of manners.

Introduction

The English Neoclassical movement, predicated upon and derived from both classical and contemporary French models, embodied a group of attitudes toward art and human existence — ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, "correctness," "restraint," decorum, and so on, which would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures and themes of Greek or Roman originals. Though its origins were much earlier (the Elizabethan Ben Jonson, for example, was as indebted to the Roman poet Horace as Alexander Pope would later be), Neoclassicism dominated English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the eighteenth century, when the publication of Lyrical Ballads (1798) by Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the full emergence of Romanticism.

For the sake of convenience the Neoclassic period can be divided into three relatively coherent parts: the Restoration Age (1660-1700), in which Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden were the dominant influences; the Augustan Age (1700-1750), in which Pope was the central poetic figure, while Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett were presiding over the sophistication of the novel; and the Age of Johnson (1750-1798), which, while it was dominated and characterized by the mind and personality of the inimitable Dr. Samuel Johnson, whose sympathies were with the fading Augustan past, saw the beginnings of a new understanding and appreciation of the work of Shakespeare, the development, by Sterne and others, of the novel of sensibility, and the emergence of the Gothic school — attitudes which, in the context of the development of a cult of Nature, the influence of German romantic thought, religious tendencies like the rise of Methodism, and political events like the American and French revolutions — established the intellectual and emotional foundations of English Romanticism.

Notes

7.1 Romanticism of Neoclassicism

If the Enlightenment was a movement which started among tiny elite and slowly spread to make its influence felt throughout society, Romanticism was more widespread both in its origins and influence. No other intellectual/artistic movement has had comparable variety, reach, and staying power since the end of the Middle Ages.

Beginning in Germany and England in the 1770s, by the 1820s it had swept through Europe, conquering at last even its most stubborn foe, the French. It traveled quickly to the Western Hemisphere, and in its musical form has triumphed around the globe, so that from London to Boston to Mexico City to Tokyo to Vladivostok to Oslo, the most popular orchestral music in the world is that of the romantic era. After almost a century of being attacked by the academic and professional world of Western formal concert music, the style has reasserted itself as neo-romanticism in the concert halls. When John Williams created the sound of the future in Star Wars, it was the sound of 19th-century Romanticism—still the most popular style for epic film soundtracks.

Beginning in the last decades of the 18th century, it transformed poetry, the novel, drama, painting, sculpture, all forms of concert music (especially opera), and ballet. It was deeply connected with the politics of the time, echoing people's fears, hopes, and aspirations. It was the voice of revolution at the beginning of the 19th century and the voice of the Establishment at the end of it.

Did u know? Last shift was the result of the triumph of the class which invented, fostered, and adopted as its own the Romantic Movement: the bourgeoisie.

7.2 Origins of Neoclassicism

Folklore and Popular Art

Some of the earliest stirrings of the Romantic movement are conventionally traced back to the mid-18th-century interest in folklore which arose in Germany—with Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collecting popular fairy tales and other scholars like Johann Gottfried von Herder studying folk songs and in England with Joseph Addison and Richard Steele treating old ballads as if they were high poetry. These activities set the tone for one aspect of Romanticism: the belief that products of the uncultivated popular imagination could equal or even surpass those of the educated court poets and composers who had previously monopolized the attentions of scholars and connoisseurs.

Whereas during much of the 17th and 18th centuries learned allusions, complexity and grandiosity were prized, the new romantic taste favored simplicity and naturalness; and these were thought to flow most clearly and abundantly from the "spontaneous" outpourings of the untutored common people. In Germany in particular, the idea of a collective Volk (people) dominated a good deal of thinking about the arts. Rather than paying attention to the individual authors of popular works, these scholars celebrated the anonymous masses that invented and transmuted these works as if from their very souls.

Notes All of this fantasizing about the creative folk process reflected precious little knowledge about the actual processes by which songs and stories are created and passed on and created as well an ideology of the essence of the German soul which was to be used to dire effect by the Nazis in the 20th century.

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Nationalism

The natural consequence of dwelling on creative folk genius was a good deal of nationalism. French Romantic painting is full of themes relating to the tumultuous political events of the period and later Romantic music often draws its inspiration from national folk musics. Goethe deliberately places German folkloric themes and images on a par with Classical ones in Faust.

Shakespeare

But one of the early effects of this interest in the folk arts seems particularly strange to us moderns: the rise and spread of the reputation of William Shakespeare. Although he is regarded today as the epitome of the great writer, his reputation was at first very different. Shakespeare was a popular playwright who wrote for the commercial theater in London. He was not college-educated, and although his company had the sponsorship of King James, his work was not entirely "respectable."

Academic critics at first scorned his indiscipline, his rejection of their concepts of drama which were derived in part from ancient Roman and Greek patterns. A good play should not mix comedy with tragedy, not proliferate plots and subplots, not ramble through a wide variety of settings or drag out its story over months or years of dramatic time; but Shakespeare's plays did all these things. A proper serious drama should always be divided neatly into five acts, but Shakespeare's plays simply flowed from one scene to the next, with no attention paid to the academic rules of dramatic architecture (the act divisions we are familiar with today were imposed on his plays by editors after his death).

If the English romantics exalted Shakespeare's works as the greatest of their classics, his effect on the Germans was positively explosive. French classical theater had been the preeminent model for drama in much of Europe; but when the German Romantics began to explore and translate his works, they were overwhelmed. His disregard for the classical rules which they found so confining inspired them. Writers like Friedrich von Schiller and Goethe created their own dramas inspired by Shakespeare. Faust contains many Shakespearian allusions as well as imitating all of the nonclassical qualities enumerated above.

Because Shakespeare was a popular rather than a courtly writer, the Romantics exaggerated his simple origins. In fact he had received an excellent education which, although it fell short of what a university could offer, went far beyond what the typical college student learns today about the classics. In an age drunk on the printing and reading of books he had access to the Greek myths, Roman and English history, tales by Italian humanists and a wide variety of other materials. True, he used translations, digests, and popularizations; but he was no ignoramus.

To the Romantics, however, he was the essence of folk poetry, the ultimate vindication of their faith in spontaneous creativity. Much of the drama of the European 19th century is influenced by him, painters illustrated scenes from his plays, and composers based orchestral tone poems and operas on his narratives.

Task: Write a short note on William shakespear.

Nature

The subject of the relationship of Romanticism to nature is a vast one which can only be touched on here. There has hardly been a time since the earliest antiquity that Europeans did not celebrate nature in some form or other, but the attitudes toward nature common in the Western world today emerged mostly during the Romantic period. The Enlightenment had talked of "natural law" as the source of truth, but such law was manifest in human society and related principally to civic behavior. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese, Europeans had traditionally had little interest in natural landscapes for their own sake. Paintings of rural settings were usually extremely idealized: either well-tended gardens or tidy versions of the Arcadian myth of ancient Greece and Rome.

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Here again, Rousseau is an important figure. He loved to go for long walks, Climb Mountains, and generally "commune with nature." His last work is called Les Reveries du promeneur solitaire. Europe had become more civilized, safer, and its citizens now felt freer to travel for the simple pleasure of it. Mountain passes and deep woods were no longer merely perilous hazards to be traversed, but awesome views to be enjoyed and pondered. The violence of ocean storms came to be appreciated as an esthetic object in any number of paintings, musical tone poems, and written descriptions, as in the opening of Goethe's Faust.

None of this had been true of earlier generations, who had tended to view the human and the natural as opposite poles, with the natural sometimes exercising an evil power to degrade and dehumanize those who were to drawn to it. The Romantics, just as they cultivated sensitivity to emotion generally, especially cultivated sensitivity to nature. It came to be felt that to muse by a stream; to view a thundering waterfall or even confront a rolling desert could be morally improving. Much of the nature writing of the 19th century has a religious quality to it absent in any other period. This shift in attitude was to prove extremely powerful and long-lasting, as we see today in the love of Germans, Britons and Americans for wilderness.

It may seem paradoxical that it was just at the moment when the industrial revolution was destroying large tracts of woods and fields and creating an unprecedentedly artificial environment in Europe that this taste arose; but in fact it could probably have arisen in no other time. It is precisely people in urban environments aware of the stark contrast between their daily lives and the existence of the inhabitants of the wild who romanticise nature. They are attracted to it precisely because they are no longer unselfconsciously part of it.

Notes Faust, for instance, is powerfully drawn to the moonlit landscape outside his study at the beginning of Goethe's play largely because he is so discontented with the artificial world of learning in which he has so far lived.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Beginning in Germany and England in the 1770s, by the 1820s it had swept through Europe, conquering at last even its most stubborn Foe, the ..... .
2. Beginning in the last decades of the 18th century, it transformed poetry, the novel, drama, painting, sculpture, all forms of cocert music, and ..... .
3. The natural consequence of dwelling on creative Folk genius was a good deal of ..... .
4. But one of the early effects of this interest in the Folk arts seems particularly strange to us moderns: the rise and spread of the reputation of ..... .
5. Academic critics at First scorned his indiscipline, his rejection of their concepts of drama which were derived in part from ancient Roman and ..... .

7.3 Comedy of Manners

The comedy of manners is a genre of comedy that flourished on the English stage during the Restoration period. Plays of this type are typically set in the world of the upper class, and ridicule the pretensions of those who consider themselves socially superior, deflating them with satire. With witty dialogue and cleverly constructed scenarios, comedies of manners comment on the standards and mores of society and explore the relationships of the sexes. Marriage is a frequent subject. Typically, there is little depth of characterization; instead, the playwrights used stock character types—the fool, the schemer, the hypocrite, the jealous husband, the interfering old parents—and constructed plots with rapid twists in events, often precipitated by miscommunications. The roots of the comedy of manners can be traced back to Moliere's

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seventeenth-century French comedies and to the "humours" comedy of Ben Johnson; indeed, certain characteristics can be found as far back in time as ancient Greek plays.

Critics agree that the masters of the comedy of manners were George Etherege (1635-1692), William Wycherley (1640-1716), John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), William Congreve (1670-1729), and George Farquhar (1678-1707). Etherege's The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub (1664) and She Would If She Could (1668) are often seen as inaugurating the genre of the comedy of manners, and his characters, including Sir Frederick Frollick and Sir Fopling Flutter, were favorites with audiences and became standard character types.

Wycherley's comedies are pointed and relatively harsh. The Country Wife (1674) deals with the jealousy experienced by an old man, Bud Pinchwife, married to a young woman, Margery. Margery's affair with another man, and her concealment of it, is accepted as proper and understandable in light of Bud's abusiveness. (He threatens repeatedly to stab his wife.)

Did you know Wycherley's masterpiece, The Plain Dealer (1676), is based on Moliere's Le Misanthrope and follows the relationship problems of a sea-captain, Manly.

Congreve is considered by many critics to have been the greatest wit of the dramatists writing in this vein; William Hazlitt declared Congreve's dialogue brilliant and his style perfect. The Old Bachelour (1693) was a great popular success, as was Love for Love (1695). His last comedy, The Way of the World (1700), is now considered his masterpiece but was not successful upon its premier. Although marriage is at its center, the preoccupation is with contracts and negotiation of terms, not passionate love.

Vanbrugh's The Relapse: Or Virtue in Danger (1696) has two plots, only slightly connected, and includes seduction, infidelity, impersonation, and the attempt to gain another's fortune. Vanbrugh's masterwork, The Provoked Wife (1697), became notorious because it was given special attention by critic Jeremy Collier in his case against the immorality of the stage. In keeping with the plays of the time, the names of the characters often reflect their type: Heartfree, Sir John Brute, Constant, Lady Fanciful, and Colonel Bully.

Farquhar's comedies were written at the end of the period and serve as a transition to later comedies, noticeable in their greater sensitivity to characters as individuals rather than types. The Recruiting Officer (1706) makes fun of some of the foibles of military heroes, while The Beaux' Stratagem (1707) includes a remarkably modern-style divorce, due to the couple failing to make each other happy.

While they wrote in the latter portion of the eighteenth century, after the Restoration period, and after sentimental comedy had become the dominant comedic form, Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Oliver Goldsmith composed plays that revived and renewed the comedy of manners genre. Sheridan's The School for Scandal (1777) and Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer (1773), in particular, received popular and critical acclaim when first produced, and have been continuously staged to the present day.

Because the comedy of manners so readily presents a view into the attitudes of society of the past, scholars find its study rewarding. Newell W. Sawyer has traced the development of the genre and relates it to the changes occurring in society at large. John Palmer has focused on the changes in comedy wrought by Collier, whose criticism of what he deemed moral lapses in certain plays affected what playwrights produced thereafter. Attitudes toward youth and old age have been examined by Elisabeth Mignon, who noted the comedy of manners' reflection of society's preoccupation with aging. Margaret Lamb McDonald and Pat Gill have analyzed the comedy of manners for what it reveals about attitudes toward women, particularly in regards to their intelligence, independence, and sexuality. Not all critics have devoted their time solely to its

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treatment of society's mores; some, such as David L. Hirst, have performed close readings of the texts themselves in order to judge the comedies on their merits as comedies.

The comedy of manners is a genre of play/television/film which satirizes the manners and affectations of a social class, often represented by stock characters, such as the miles glorious in ancient times, the fop and the rake during the Restoration, or an old person pretending to be young. The plot of the comedy, often concerned with scandal, is generally less important than its witty dialogue. A great writer of comedies of manners was Oscar Wilde, his most famous play being "The Importance of Being Earnest".

The comedy of manners was first developed in the new comedy of the Ancient Greek playwright Menander. His style, elaborate plots, and stock characters were imitated by the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence, whose comedies were widely known and copied during the Renaissance. The best-known comedies of manners, however, may well be those of the French playwright Moliere, who satirized the hypocrisy and pretension of the ancien regime in such plays as L'École des femmes (The School for Wives, 1662), Le Misanthrope (The Misanthrope, 1666), and most famously Tartuffe (1664).

Notes Modern television sitcoms that use the mockumentary format, such as The Office and Modern Family, use slightly altered forms of the comedy of manners to represent the daily and work lives of the average people.

In England, William Shakespeare's Much Ado about Nothing might be considered the first comedy of manners, but the genre really flourished during the Restoration period. Restoration comedy, which was influenced by Ben Johnson's comedy of humours, made fun of affected wit and acquired follies of the time. The masterpieces of the genre were the plays of William Wycherley (The Country Wife, 1675) and William Congreve (The Way of the World, 1700). In the late 18th century Oliver Goldsmith (She Stoops to Conquer, 1773) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (The Rivals, 1775; The School for Scandal, 1777) revived the form.

The tradition of elaborate, artificial plotting and epigrammatic dialogue was carried on by the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde in Lady Windermere's Fan (1892) and The Importance of Being Earnest (1895). In the 20th century, the comedy of manners reappeared in the plays of the British dramatists Noel Coward (Hay Fever, 1925) and Somerset Maugham and the novels of P.G. Wodehouse, as well as various British sitcoms. The Carry On films is direct descendant of the comedy of manners style.

7.4 Summary

- If the English romantics exalted Shakespeare's works as the greatest of their classics, his effect on the Germans was positively explosive.
- Rousseau is an important figure. He loved to go for long walks, Climb Mountains, and generally "commune with nature." His last work is called Les Reveries du promeneur solitaire
- Critics agree that the masters of the comedy of manners were George Etherege (1635-1692), William Wycherley (1640-1716), John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), William Congreve (1670-1729), and George Farquhar (1678-1707).
- Vanbrugh's The Relapse: Or Virtue in Danger (1696) has two plots, only slightly connected, and includes seduction, infidelity, impersonation, and the attempt to gain another's fortune.

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7.5 Keywords

Decline of Novel : The death of the novel is the common name for the theoretical dis cussion of the declining importance of the novel as literary form.

The Comedy of Manners : The comedy of manners was first developed in the new comedy of the Ancient Greek playwright menander.

7.6 Review Questions

1. What is the main subject of Romanticism?
2. What is Folklore and popular art? Explain.
3. Who was William Shakespeare? Explain.
4. What is the comedy of Manners?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. French
2. ballet
3. nationalism
4. William Shakespeare
5. Greek patterns

7.7 Further Readings

Books

A History of English Literature-Arthur-Compton-Rickett, UPSPD, New Delhi.

History of English Literature, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2004: Long. W.J.

History of English Literature, Cambridge University Press, London, 1968: Legouis and Cazamian.

Online links

www.uh.edu/engines/romanticism/introduction.html

www.arthistoryunstuffed.com/neoclassicism/

neoenglishsystem.blogspot.com/2010/12/restoration-comedy-of-manners.html

Notes

Unit 8: The Restoration Period or Beginning of Neoclassicism (Dryden's Contribution, Glorious Revolution of 1688)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define dryden's contribution.
- Describe james II and william of orange.
- Explain constitutional credibility and fiscal credibility.
- Define financial consequences.

Introduction

Restoration literature is the English literature written during the historical period commonly referred to as the English Restoration (1660–1689), which corresponds to the last years of the direct Stuart reign in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. In general, the term is used to denote roughly homogeneous styles of literature that center on a celebration of or reaction to the restored court of Charles II. It is a literature that includes extremes, for it encompasses both Paradise Lost and the Earl of Rochester's Sodom, the high-spirited sexual comedy of "The Country Wife" and the moral wisdom of "The Pilgrim's Progress". It saw Locke's Treatises of Government, the founding of the Royal Society, the experiments and holy meditations of Robert Boyle, the hysterical attacks on theaters from Jeremy Collier, and the pioneering of literary criticism from John Dryden and John Dennis. The period witnessed news become a commodity, the essay develop into a periodical art form, and the beginnings of textual criticism.

The dates for Restoration literature are a matter of convention, and they differ markedly from genre to genre. Thus, the "Restoration" in drama may last until 1700, while in poetry it may last only until 1666 (see 1666 in poetry) and the annus mirabilis; and in prose it might end in 1688, with the increasing tensions over succession and the corresponding rise in journalism and periodicals, or not until 1700, when those periodicals grew more stabilized. In general, scholars use the term

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"Restoration" to denote the literature that began and flourished under Charles II, whether that literature was the laudatory ode that gained a new life with restored aristocracy, the eschatological literature that showed an increasing despair among Puritans, or the literature of rapid communication and trade that followed in the wake of England's mercantile empire.

8.1 Dryden's Contribution

Dryden was the dominant literary figure and influence of his age. He established the heroic couplet as a standard form of English poetry by writing successful satires, religious pieces, fables, epigrams, compliments, prologues, and plays with it; he also introduced the alexandrine and triplet into the form. In his poems, translations, and criticism, he established a poetic diction appropriate to the heroic couplet—Auden referred to him as "the master of the middle style"—that was a model for his contemporaries and for much of the 18th century. The considerable loss felt by the English literary community at his death was evident from the elegies that it inspired. Dryden's heroic couplet became the dominant poetic form of the 18th century. The most influential poet of the 18th century, Alexander Pope, was heavily influenced by Dryden, and often borrowed from him; other writers were equally influenced by Dryden and Pope. Pope famously praised Dryden's versification in his imitation of Horace's Epistle II.i: "Dryden taught to join/The varying pause, the full resounding line, / The long majestic march, and energy divine." Samuel Johnson summed up the general attitude with his remark that "the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry." His poems were very widely read, and are often quoted, for instance, in Tom Jones and Johnson's essays.

Johnson also noted, however, that "He is, therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetic; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure." The first half of the 18th century did not mind this too much, but in later generations, this was increasingly considered a fault.

One of the first attacks on Dryden's reputation was by Wordsworth, who complained that Dryden's descriptions of natural objects in his translations from Virgil were much inferior to the originals. However, several of Wordsworth's contemporaries, such as George Crabbe, Lord Byron, and Walter Scott were still keen admirers of Dryden. Besides, Wordsworth did admire many of Dryden's poems, and his famous "Intimations of Immortality" ode owes something stylistically to Dryden's "Alexander's Feast". John Keats admired the "Fables," and imitated them in his poem Lamia. Later 19th century writers had little use for verse satire, Pope, or Dryden; Matthew Arnold famously dismissed them as "classics of our prose." He did have a committed admirer in George Saintsbury, and was a prominent figure in quotation books such as Bartlett's, but the next major poet to take an interest in Dryden was T. S. Eliot, who wrote that he was 'the ancestor of nearly all that is best in the poetry of the eighteenth century', and that 'we cannot fully enjoy or rightly estimate a hundred years of English poetry unless we fully enjoy Dryden.' However, in the same essay, Eliot accused Dryden of having a "commonplace mind." Critical interest in Dryden has increased recently, but, as a relatively straightforward writer his work has not occasioned as much interest as Andrew Marvell's or John Donne's or Pope's.

Dryden is also believed to be the first person to posit that English sentences should not end in prepositions because it was against the rules of Latin grammar. Dryden created the prescription against preposition stranding in 1672 when he objected to Ben Jonson's 1611 phrase the bodies that those souls were frightened from, although he didn't provide an explanation of the rationale that gave rise to his preference.

Dryden's reputation is greater today, contemporaries saw the 1670s and 1680s as the age of courtier poets in general, and Edmund Waller was as praised as any. Dryden, Rochester, Buckingham, and Dorset dominated verse, and all were attached to the court of Charles. Aphra Behn, Matthew Prior, and Robert Gould, by contrast, were outsiders who were profoundly royalist. The court poets

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follow no one particular style, except that they all show sexual awareness, a willingness to satirise, and a dependence upon wit to dominate their opponents. Each of these poets wrote for the stage as well as the page. Of these, Behn, Dryden, Rochester, and Gould deserve some separate mention.

Dryden was prolific; and he was often accused of plagiarism. Both before and after his Laureateship, he wrote public odes. He attempted the Jacobean pastoral along the lines of Walter Raleigh and Philip Sidney, but his greatest successes and fame came from his attempts at apologetics for the restored court and the Established Church. His Absalom and Achitophel and Religio Laici both served the King directly by making controversial royal actions seem reasonable. He also pioneered the mock-heroic. Although Samuel Butler had invented the mock-heroic in English with Hudibras, Dryden's MacFlecknoe set up the satirical parody. Dryden was himself not of noble blood, and he was never awarded the honours that he had been promised by the King (nor was he repaid the loans he had made to the King), but he did as much as any peer to serve Charles II. Even when James II came to the throne and Roman Catholicism was on the rise, Dryden attempted to serve the court, and his The Hind and the Panther praised the Roman church above all others. After that point, Dryden suffered for his conversions, and he was the victim of many satires.

John Dryden was born at "Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire", in 1631. He came of a Puritan family, which had been for years very active in the political world. Dryden was sent to school at Westminster. He published some verses at the age of eighteen. In 1650 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, and took a degree of B.A. four years later, but it is probable that he spent also the next three years at Cambridge. He went to London in 1657. His first important literary effort, Heroic Stanzas to the memory of Cromwell, was published in 1659. This was followed the next year by verses on the return of Charles. In order to add to his slender income, he turned to the stage, and after two unsuccessful attempts he produced his first play, The Wild Gallant, in 1663. This comedy was not well received, and Dryden confesses that his forte was not comedy. The same year he produced The Rival Ladies, and married Lady Elizabeth Howard. The Indian Queen (1664), written in collaboration with Sir Robert Howard, his wife's brother, enjoyed considerable success. Dryden followed this with The Indian Emperor (1665). During the Plague Dryden lived with his father-in-law in Wiltshire, where he wrote his Essay of Dramatick Poesie (1668). Howard's preface to his Four New Playes (1665) called forth a reply from Dryden: A Defence of an Essay of Dramatique Poesie (1668). From the re-opening of the theaters in 1666, to 1681, Dryden wrote little except his plays. The production of Buckingham's satirical play The Rehearsal in 1671, in which Dryden was the chief personage, called forth the preface Of Heroic Plays and Defence of the Epilogue (1672). All for Love, in all probability the poet's greatest play, was performed in 1678. He continued to produce plays to the end of his career. In 1681 he turned to satire and wrote Absalom and Achitophel, which achieved instant and widespread popularity. This was followed by other satires. In 1687, after his conversion to the Catholic Church, he wrote The Hind and the Panther, a plea for Catholicism. His Catholic leanings lost for him the laureateship and other offices when the Revolution came. During his last ten years he translated many of the Latin classics: Virgil, Ovid, Lucretius, Horace, Theocritus, and others, and modernized Chaucer. He died in 1700, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Dryden's contribution to English literature, besides his poems and plays, was the invention of a direct and simple style for literary criticism. He improved upon the prose of the Elizabethan writers in the matter of ridding English of its involved forms, even if through that process he lost some of its gorgeous ornament and rugged strength. Jonson's method in criticism was after all not much more than the note-book method of jotting down stray thoughts and opinions and reactions. Dryden elaborated his ideas, sought the weight of authority, argued both sides of the question, and adduced proofs. Dryden performed an inestimable service to his countrymen in applying true standards of criticism to the Elizabethans and in showing them a genuine and sympathetic if occasionally misguided love for Shakespeare.

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Did u know? Dryden enjoyed the advantage of being able to bring his knowledge of the drama of Spain and France to bear on his criticism of English dramatists.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... was the dominant literary figure and influence of his age.
2. Dryden is believed to be the first person to posit that English sentences should not end in preposition because it was against the rules of ..... .
3. The dates for ..... are a matter of convention, and they differ markedly form genre to genre.
4. Dryden, Rochester, Buckingham and Dorset dominated verse, and all were attached to the court of ..... .
5. John Dryden was born at ..... in 1631.

8.2 Glorious Revolution of 1688

The Glorious Revolution was when William of Orange took the English throne from James II in 1688. The event brought a permanent realignment of power within the English constitution. The new co-monarchy of King William III and Queen Mary II accepted more constraints from Parliament than previous monarchs had, and the new constitution created the expectation that future monarchs would also remain constrained by Parliament. The new balance of power between parliament and crown made the promises of the English government more credible, and credibility allowed the government to reorganize its finances through a collection of changes called the Financial Revolution. A more contentious argument is that the constitutional changes made property rights more secure and thus promoted economic development.

8.2.1 Historical Overview

Tension between king and parliament ran deep throughout the seventeenth century. In the 1640s, the dispute turned into civil war. The loser, Charles I, was beheaded in 1649; his sons, Charles and James, fled to France; and the victorious Oliver Cromwell ruled England in the 1650s. Cromwell's death in 1659 created a political vacuum, so Parliament invited Charles I's sons back from exile, and the English monarchy was restored with the coronation of Charles II in 1660.

Tensions after the Restoration

The Restoration, however, did not settle the fundamental questions of power between king and Parliament. Indeed, exile had exposed Charles I's sons to the strong monarchical methods of Louis XIV. Charles and James returned to Britain with expectations of an absolute monarchy justified by the Divine Right of Kings, so tensions continued during the reigns of Charles II (1660-1685) and his brother James II (1685-88). Table 8.1 lists many of the tensions and the positions favored by each side. The compromise struck during the Restoration was that Charles II would control his succession, that he would control his judiciary, and that he would have the power to collect traditional taxes. In exchange, Charles II would remain Protestant and the imposition of additional taxes would require Parliament's approval.

Issues Separating Crown and Parliament, 1660-1688

Notes

Table 8.1

Issue	King's Favored Position	Parliament's Favored Position
Constitution	Absolute Royal Power (King above Law)	Constrained Royal Power (King within Law)
Religion	Catholic	Protestant
Ally	France	Holland
Enemy	Holland	France
Inter-Branch Checks	Royal right to control succession (Parliamentary approval NOT required)	Parliament's right to meet (Royal summons NOT required)
Judiciary	Subject to Royal Punishment	Subject to Parliamentary Impeachment
Ordinary Revenue	Royal authority sufficient to impose and collect traditional taxes.	Parliamentary authority necessary to impose and collect traditional taxes.
Extraordinary Revenue	Royal authority sufficient to impose and collect new taxes.	Parliamentary authority necessary to impose and collect new taxes.
Appropriation	Complete royal control over expenditures	Parliamentary audit or even appropriation

In practice, authority over additional taxation was how Parliament constrained Charles II. Charles brought England into war against Protestant Holland (1665-67) with the support of extra taxes authorized by Parliament. In the years following that war, however, the extra funding from Parliament ceased, but Charles II's borrowing and spending did not.

Notes By 1671, all Charles II income was committed to regular expenses and paying interest on his debts. Parliament would not authorize additional funds, so Charles II was fiscally shackled.

8.2.2 Treaty of Dover

To regain fiscal autonomy and subvert Parliament, Charles II signed the secret Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV in 1671. Charles agreed that England would join France in war against Holland and that he would publicly convert to Catholicism. In return, Charles received cash from France and the prospect of victory spoils that would solve his debt problem. The treaty, however, threatened the Anglican Church, contradicted Charles II's stated policy of support for Protestant Holland, and provided a source of revenue independent of Parliament.

Moreover, to free the money needed to launch his scheme, Charles stopped servicing many of his debts in an act called the Stop of the Exchequer, and, in Machiavellian fashion, Charles isolated a few bankers to take the loss (Roseveare 1991). The gamble, however, was lost when the English Navy failed to defeat the Dutch in 1672. Charles then avoided a break with Parliament by retreating from Catholicism.

8.2.3 James II

Parliament, however, was also unable to gain the upper hand. From 1679 to 1681, Protestant nobles had Parliament pass acts excluding Charles II's Catholic brother James from succession to the throne. The political turmoil of the Exclusion Crisis created the Whig faction favoring exclusion

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and the Tory counter-faction opposing exclusion. Even with a majority in Commons, however, the Whigs could not force a reworking of the constitution in their favor because Charles responded by dissolving three Parliaments without giving his consent to the acts.

As a consequence of the stalemate, Charles did not summon Parliament over the final years of his life, and James did succeed to the throne in 1685. Unlike the pragmatic Charles, James II boldly pushed for all of his goals. On the religious front, the Catholic James upset his Anglican allies by threatening the preeminence of the Anglican Church. He also declared that his son and heir would be raised Catholic. On the military front, James expanded the standing army and promoted Catholic officers. On the financial front, he attempted to subvert Parliament by packing it with his loyalists. With a packed Parliament, "the king and his ministers could have achieved practical and permanent independence by obtaining larger revenue".

Notes By 1688, Tories, worried about the Church of England, and Whigs, worried about the independence of Parliament, agreed that they needed to unite against James II.

8.2.4 William of Orange

The solution became Mary Stuart and her husband, William of Orange. English factions invited Mary and William to seize the throne because the couple was Protestant and Mary was the daughter of James II. The situation, however, had additional drama because William was also the military commander of the Dutch Republic, and, in 1688, the Dutch were in a difficult military position. Holland was facing war with France (the Nine Years War, 1688-97), and the possibility was growing that James II would bring England into the war on the side of France. James was nearing open war with his son-in-law William.

For William and Holland, accepting the invitation and invading England was a bold gamble, but the success could turn England from a threat to an ally. William landed in England with a Dutch army on November 5, 1688 (Israel 1991). Defections in James II's army followed before battle was joined, and William allowed James to flee to France. Parliament took the flight of James II as abdication and the co-reign of William III and Mary II officially replaced him on February 13, 1689. Although Mary had the claim to the throne as James II's daughter, William demanded to be made King and Mary wanted William to have that power. Authority was simplified when Mary's death in 1694 left William the sole monarch.

8.2.5 New Constitution

The deal struck between Parliament and the royal couple in 1688-89 was that Parliament would support the war against France, while William and Mary would accept new constraints on their authority. The new constitution reflected the relative weakness of William's bargaining position more than any strength in Parliament's position. Parliament feared the return of James, but William very much needed England's willing support in the war against France because the costs would be extraordinary and William would be focused on military command instead of political wrangling.

The initial constitutional settlement was worked out in 1689 in the English Bill of Rights, the Toleration Act, and the Mutiny Act that collectively committed the monarchs to respect Parliament and Parliament's laws. Fiscal power was settled over the 1690s as Parliament stopped granting the monarchs the authority to collect taxes for life. Instead, Parliament began regular re-authorization of all taxes, Parliament began to specify how new revenue authorizations could be spent, Parliament began to audit how revenue was spent, and Parliament diverted some funds entirely from the king's control.

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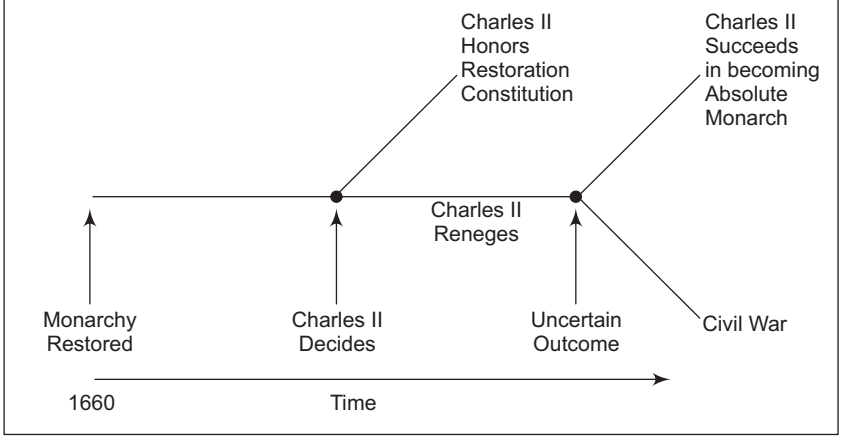
Did u know? By the end of the war in 1697, the new fiscal powers of Parliament were largely in place.

8.2.6 Constitutional Credibility

The financial and economic importance of the arrangement between William and Mary and Parliament was that the commitments embodied in the constitutional monarchy of the Glorious Revolution were more credible that the commitments under the Restoration constitution. Essential to the argument is what economists mean by the term credible. If a constitution is viewed as a deal between Parliament and the Crown, then credibility means how believable it is today that Parliament and the king will choose to honor their promises tomorrow. Credibility does not ask whether Charles II reneged on a promise; rather, credibility asks if people expected Charles to renege.

One can represent the situation by drawing a decision tree that shows the future choices determining credibility. For example, the decision tree in Figure 8.1 contains the elements determining the credibility of Charles II's honoring the Restoration constitution of 1660. Going forward in time from 1660 (left to right), the critical decision is whether Charles II will honor the constitution or eventually renege. The future decision by Charles, however, will depend on his estimation of benefits of becoming an absolute monarch versus the cost of failure and the chances he assigns to each. Determining credibility in 1660 requires working backwards (right to left). If one thinks Charles II will risk civil war to become an absolute monarch, then one would expect Charles II to renege on the constitution, and therefore the constitution lacks credibility despite what Charles II may promise in 1660. In contrast, if one expects Charles II to avoid civil war, then one would expect Charles to choose to honor the constitution, so the Restoration constitution would be credible.

Figure 8.1 Restoration of 1660 Decision Tree



A difficulty with credibility is foreseeing future options. With hindsight, we know that Charles II did attempt to break the Restoration constitution in 1670-72. When his war against Holland failed, he repaired relations with Parliament and avoided civil war, so Charles managed something not portrayed in Figure 8.1. He replaced the outcome of civil war in the decision tree with the outcome of a return to the status quo. The consequence of removing the threat of civil war, however, was to destroy credibility in the king's commitment to the constitution. If James II believed he inherited the options created by his brother, then James II's 1685 commitment to the Restoration constitution lacked credibility because the worst that would happen to James was a return to the status quo.

So why would the Glorious Revolution constitution be more credible than Restoration constitution challenged by both Charles II and James II? William was very unlikely to become Catholic or pro-French which eliminated many tensions. Also, William very much needed Parliament's support

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for his war against France; however, the change in credibility argued by North and Weingast (1989) looks past William's reign, so it also requires confidence that William's successors would abide by the constitution. A source of long-run confidence was that the Glorious Revolution reasserted the risk of a monarch losing his throne. William III's decision tree in 1689 again looked like Charles II's in 1660, and Parliament's threat to remove an offending monarch was becoming credible.

Notes The seventeenth century had now seen Parliament remove two of the four Stuart monarchs, and the second displacement in 1688 was much easier than the wars that ended the reign of Charles I in 1649.

Another lasting change that made the new constitution more credible than the old constitution was that William and his successors were more constrained in fiscal matters. Parliament's growing 'power of the purse' gave the king less freedom to maneuver a constitutional challenge. Moreover, Parliament's fiscal control increased over time because the new constitution favored Parliament in the constitutional renegotiations that accompanied each succeeding monarch.

As a result, the Glorious Revolution constitution made credible the enduring ascendancy of Parliament. In terms of the king, the new constitution increased the credibility of the proposition that kings would not usurp Parliament.

8.2.7 Fiscal Credibility

The second credibility story of the Glorious Revolution was that the increased credibility of the government's constitutional structure translated into an increased credibility for the government's commitments. When acting together, the king and Parliament retained the power to default on debt, seize property, or change rules; so why would the credibility of the constitution create confidence in a government's promises to the public?

A king who lives within the constitution has less desire to renege on his commitments. Recall that Charles II defaulted on his debts in an attempt to subvert the constitution, and, in contrast, Parliament after the Glorious Revolution generously financed wars for monarchs who abided by the constitution. An irony of the Glorious Revolution is that monarchs who accepted constitutional constraints gained more resources than their absolutist forebears.

Still, should a monarch want to have his government renege, Parliament will not always agree, and a stable constitution assures a Parliamentary veto. The two houses of Parliament, Commons and Lords, creates more veto opportunities, and the chances of a policy change decrease with more veto opportunities if the king and the two houses have different interests.

Another aspect of Parliament is the role of political parties. For veto opportunities to block change, opponents need only to control one veto, and here the coalition aspect of parties was important. For example, the Whig coalition combined dissenting Protestants and moneyed interests, so each could rely on mutual support through the Whig party to block government action against either. Cross-issue bargaining between factions creates a cohesive coalition on multiple issues.

An additional reason for Parliament's credibility was reputation. As a deterrent against violating commitments today, reputation relies on penalties felt tomorrow, so reputation often does not deter those overly focused on the present. A desperate king is a common example. As collective bodies of indefinite life, however, Parliament and political parties have longer time horizons than an individual, so reputation has better chance of fostering credibility.

A measure of fiscal credibility is the risk premium that the market puts on government debt. During the Nine Years War (1688-97), government debt carried a risk premium of 4 percent over

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private debt, but that risk premium disappeared and became a small discount in the years 1698 to 1705. The drop in the rates on government debt marks a substantial increase in the market's confidence in the government after the Treaty of Ryswick ended the Nine Years War in 1697 and left William III and the new constitution intact. A related measure of confidence was the market price of stock in companies like the Bank of England and the East India Company. Because those companies were created by Parliamentary authorization and held large quantities of government debt, changes in confidence were reflected in changes in their stock prices. Again, the Treaty of Ryswick greatly increased stock prices and confirms a substantial increase in the credibility of the government. In contrast, later Jacobite threats, such as the invasion of Scotland by James II's son 'the Pretender' in 1708, had negative but largely transitory effects on share prices.

8.2.8 Financial Consequences

The fiscal credibility of the English government created by the Glorious Revolution unleashed a revolution in public finance. The most prominent element was the introduction of long-run borrowing by the government, because such borrowing absolutely relied on the government's fiscal credibility. To create credible long-run debt, Parliament took responsibility for the debt, and Parliamentary-funded debt became the National Debt, instead of just the king's debt. To bolster credibility, Parliament committed future tax revenues to servicing the debts and introduced new taxes as needed (Dickson 1967, Brewer 1988). Credible government debt formed the basis of the Bank of England in 1694 and the core the London stock market. The combination of these changes has been called the Financial Revolution and was essential for Britain's emergence as a Great Power in the eighteenth century.

While the Glorious Revolution was critical to the Financial Revolution in England, the follow up assertion in North and Weingast (1989) that the Glorious Revolution increased the security of property rights in general, and so spurred economic growth, remains an open question. A difficulty is how to test the question. An increase in the credibility of property rights might cause interest rates to decrease because people become willing to save more; however, rates based on English property rentals show no effect from the Glorious Revolution, and the rates of one London banker actually increased after the Glorious Revolution (Clark 1996, Quinn 2001). In contrast, high interest rates could indicate that the Glorious Revolution increased entrepreneurship and demand for investment. Unfortunately, high rates could also mean that the expansion of government borrowing permitted by the Financial Revolution crowded out investment. North and Weingast (1989) point to a general expansion of financial intermediation which is supported by studies like Carlos, Key, and Dupree (1998) that find the secondary market for Royal African Company and Hudson's Bay Company stocks became busier in the 1690s. Distinguishing between crowding out and increased demand for investment, however, relies on establishing whether the overall quantity of business investment changed, and that remains unresolved because of the difficulty in constructing such an aggregate measure. The potential linkages between the credibility created by the Glorious Revolution and economic development remain an open question.

Task Write a short note on Dryden's contribution to Restoration Literature.

8.3 Summary

- Dryden's contribution to English literature, besides his poems and plays, was the invention of a direct and simple style for literary criticism.
- The Glorious Revolution was when William of Orange took the English throne from James II in 1688.

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- To regain fiscal autonomy and subvert Parliament, Charles II signed the secret Treaty of Dover with Louis XIV in 1671.
- The deal struck between Parliament and the royal couple in 1688-89 was that Parliament would support the war against France, while William and Mary would accept new constraints on their authority.
- The second credibility story of the Glorious Revolution was that the increased credibility of the government's constitutional structure translated into an increased credibility for the government's commitments.

8.4 Keywords

Financial Revolution : The new balance of power between parliament and crown made the promises of the English government more credible, and credibility allowed the government to reorganize its finances through a collec tion of changes called the Financial Revolution.

Dryden's Contribution : Dryden was the dominant literary figure and influence of his age. He established the heroic couplet as a standard form of English poetry by writing successful satires, religious pieces, fables, epigrams, compliments, prologues, and plays with it; he also introduced the alexandrine and triplet into the form.

8.5 Review Questions

1. Examine the Dryten's contribution to Restoration period.
2. Describe the term Glorious Revolution of 1688.
3. What is difference between constitutional credibility and Fiscal credibility?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Dryden
2. Latin grammar
3. Restoration literature
4. Charles
5. Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire

8.6 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 9: The Augustan Age or the Triumph of Neoclassicism (Age of Prose and Reason)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define dominance of reason.
- Explain imitation of the ancients.
- Describe rules and prose.

Introduction

The eighteenth century in English literature has been called the Augustan Age, the Neoclassical Age, and the Age of Reason. The term 'the Augustan Age' comes from the self-conscious imitation of the original Augustan writers, Virgil and Horace, by many of the writers of the period. Specifically, the Augustan Age was the period after the Restoration era to the death of Alexander Pope (~1690 - 1744). The major writers of the age were Pope and John Dryden in poetry, and Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison in prose. Dryden forms the link between Restoration and Augustan literature; although he wrote ribald comedies in the Restoration vein, his verse satires were highly admired by the generation of poets who followed him, and his writings on literature were very much in a neoclassical spirit. But more than any other it is the name of Alexander Pope which is associated with the epoch known as the Augustan Age, despite the fact that other writers such as Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe had a more lasting influence. This is partly a result of the politics of naming inherent in literary history: many of the early forms of prose narrative common at this time did not fit into a literary era which defined itself as neoclassic. The literature of this period which conformed to Pope's aesthetic principles (and could thus qualify as being 'Augustan') is distinguished by its striving for harmony and precision, its urbanity, and its imitation of classical models such as Homer, Cicero, Virgil, and Horace, for example in the work of the minor poet Matthew Prior. In verse, the tight heroic couplet was common, and in prose essay and satire were the predominant forms. Any facile definition of this period would be misleading, however; as important as it was, the neoclassicist impulse was only one strain in the literature of the first half of the eighteenth century. But its representatives were the defining voices in literary circles, and as a result it is often some aspect of 'neoclassicism' which is used to describe the era.

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9.1 Neoclassicism

The works of Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison and John Gay, as well as many of their contemporaries, exhibit qualities of order, clarity, and stylistic decorum that were formulated in the major critical documents of the age: Dryden's An Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668), and Pope's Essay on Criticism (1711). These works, forming the basis for modern English literary criticism, insist that 'nature' is the true model and standard of writing. This 'nature' of the Augustans, however, was not the wild, spiritual nature the romantic poets would later idealize, but nature as derived from classical theory: a rational and comprehensible moral order in the universe, demonstrating God's providential design. The literary circle around Pope considered Homer preeminent among ancient poets in his descriptions of nature, and concluded in a circuitous feat of logic that the writer who 'imitates' Homer is also describing nature. From this follows the rules inductively based on the classics that Pope articulated in his Essay on Criticism:

Those rules of old discovered, not devised,

Are nature still, but nature methodized.

Particularly influential in the literary scene of the early eighteenth century were the two periodical publications by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, The Tatler (1709-11), and The Spectator (1711-12). Both writers are ranked among the minor masters of English prose style and credited with raising the general cultural level of the English middle classes. A typical representative of the post-Restoration mood, Steele was a zealous crusader for morality, and his stated purpose in The Tatler was "to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality." With The Spectator, Addison added a further purpose: to introduce the middle-class public to recent developments in philosophy and literature and thus to educate their tastes. The essays are discussions of current events, literature, and gossip often written in a highly ironic and refined style. Addison and Steele helped to popularize the philosophy of John Locke and promote the literary reputation of John Milton, among others. Although these publications each only ran two years, the influence that Addison and Steele had on their contemporaries was enormous, and their essays often amounted to a popularization of the ideas circulating among the intellectuals of the age. With these widespread and influential publications, the literary circle revolving around Addison, Steele, Swift and Pope was practically able to dictate the accepted taste in literature during the Augustan Age. In one of his essays for The Spectator, for example, Addison criticized the metaphysical poets for their ambiguity and lack of clear ideas, a critical stance which remained influential until the twentieth century.

The literary criticism of these writers often sought its justification in classical precedents. In the same vein, many of the important genres of this period were adaptations of classical forms: mock epic, translation, and imitation. A large part of Pope's work belongs to this last category, which exemplifies the artificiality of neoclassicism more thoroughly than does any other literary form of the period. In his satires and verse epistles Pope takes on the role of an English Horace, adopting the Roman poet's informal candor and conversational tone, and applying the standards of the original Augustan Age to his own time, even addressing George II satirically as "Augustus."

Did u know? Pope translated the Iliad and the Odyssey and after concluding this demanding task, he embarked on The Dunciad (1728), a biting literary satire.

The Dunciad is a mock epic, a form of satiric writing in which commonplace subjects are described in the elevated, heroic style of classical epic. By parody and deliberate misuse of heroic language and literary convention, the satirist emphasizes the triviality of the subject, which is implicitly being measured against the highest standards of human potential. Among the best-known mock epic poems of this period in addition to The Dunciad are John Dryden's MacFlecknoe (1682), and

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Pope's The Rape of the Lock (1714). In The Rape of the Lock, often considered one of the highest achievements of mock epic poetry, the heroic action of epic is maintained, but the scale is sharply reduced. The hero's preparation for combat is transposed to a fashionable boat ride up the Thames, and the ensuing battle is a card game. The hero steals the titular lock of hair while the heroine is pouring coffee.

Although the mock epic mode is most commonly found in poetry, its influence was also felt in drama, most notably in John Gay's most famous work, The Beggar's Opera (1728). The Beggar's Opera ludicrously mingles elements of ballad and Italian opera in a satire on Sir Robert Walpole, England's prime minister at the time. The vehicle is opera, but the characters are criminals and prostitutes. Gay's burlesque of opera was an unprecedented stage success and centuries later inspired the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht to write one of his best-known works, Die Dreigroschenoper (The Threepenny Opera, 1928).

One of the most well-known mock epic works in prose from this period is Jonathan Swift's The Battle of the Books (1704), in which the old battle between the ancient and the modern writers is fought out in a library between The Bee and The Spider. Although not a mock epic, the satiric impulse is also the driving force behind Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), one of the masterpieces of the period. The four parts describe different journeys of Lemuel Gulliver; to Lilliput, where the pompous activities of the diminutive inhabitants is satirized; to Brobdingnag, a land of giants who laugh at Gulliver's tales of the greatness of England; to Laputa and Lagoda, inhabited by quack scientists and philosophers; and to the land of the Houhynhnms, where horses are civilized and men (Yahoos) behave like beasts. As a satirist Swift's technique was to create fictional speakers such as Gulliver, who utter sentiments that the intelligent reader should recognize as complacent, egotistical, stupid, or mad. Swift is recognized as a master of understated irony, and his name has become practically synonymous with the type of satire in which outrageous statements are offered in a straight-faced manner.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The ..... was the period after the Restoration era to the death of Alexander pope.
2. The major writers of the age were ..... and John Dryden in poetry.
3. The literary criticism of these writers often sought its justification in ..... .
4. The ..... is a mock epic, a form of satiric writing in which commonplace subjects are described in the elevated, heroic style of classical epic.
5. ..... is recognized as a master of understated irony.

9.2 The Age of Prose and Reason

The eighteenth century, says Legouis in A Short History of English Literature, "viewed as a whole has a distinctive character." It was "the classical age" in English literature, and, as such, held and practised some basic principles concerning life and literature. Even then one should avoid sweeping generalizations/the temptation to generalize-the eighteenth century particularly-is hard to overcome.

"Few centuries," says George Sherburn in A Literary History of England edited by Albert C. Baugh, "have with more facility been reduced to a formula than the eighteenth....Few centuries, to be sure, have demonstrated more unity of character than superficially considered the eighteenth seems to have possessed." However, it is fallacious to believe that there is a clear cleavage between the seventeenth century and the eighteenth. Observes Sherburn: "The ideas of the later seventeenth century continue into the eighteenth." At any rate, in the eighteenth century there was the

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completion of the reaction against Elizabethan romanticism. This reaction had started in the seventeenth century with Denham, Waller, and Dryden. Pope and his contemporaries stood on the other extreme to Elizabethan romanticists and ushered in "the age of prose and reason," as Matthew Arnold characterises the eighteenth century. Now, let us see how and how far the eighteenth century was "an age of prose and reason."

9.2.1 Dominance of Reason

Pope and his followers give much importance to reason in their modes of thinking and expressing. Reason may variously manifest itself as good sense, rationalism, intellect, wit or just dry logicism, but it is definitely against all excessive emotionalisms, sentimentalism, extravagance, eccentricity, lack of realism, escapism, and even imagination. It is easy to see that in the eighteenth century reason was exalted to a shibboleth. Cazamian maintains: "The true source and the real quality of English classicism are of a psychological nature. It's ideal, its characteristics, its method, all resolve themselves into a general searching after rationality." This search which started in the age of Dryden culminated in the age of Pope. Cazamian maintains in this connexion: "One may say that the age of Pope lives more fully, more spontaneously, at the pitch of that dominant intellectuality, which during the preceding age was chiefly an irresistible impulse, a kind of contagious intoxication." This reign of reason and common sense continued into the middle of the century when new ideas and voices appeared, and the precursors of the English romantics of the nineteenth century appeared on the scene. All the important writers of the age--Swift, Pope, and Dr. Johnson—glorified reason both in their literary and critical work and, conversely, made unreason and bad sense the recurring targets of their satire. Swift in the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels, for example, chastises Yahoos for being creatures of impulse, without reason or common sense. On the other hand, Houyhnhnms are glorified as tenacious adherents of these qualities. The satire on the human beings who resemble them so closely. Thus the fourth book is the most terrible satire on human lack of good sense and reason.

9.2.2 Imitation of the Ancients

This glorification of reason also- manifests itself in the form of the stress laid on the imitation of the "ancients," that is, the Greek and Roman writers of antiquity. It was thought contrary to reason to be led by one's own impulses and eccentricities and to devise one's own idiom for expression. Too much of subjectivity was considered irrational. It was believed that a man should cultivate unrefined and "natural" taste by subjecting it to the influence of classical writers. Much stress was laid on controlling and disciplining one's heady feelings and wild imagination and the personal way of expression with the help of the study of the classics. We find in this century many translations and adaptations of the classics as also their "imitations," not to speak of their rich echoes in most works of the century. The eighteenth century-particularly its first half-is also called the classical age of English literature on account of two reasons which W. H. Hudson enumerates as follows:

- "...the poets and critics of this age believed that the works of the writers of classical antiquity (really of the Latin writers), presented the best of models and the ultimate standards of literary taste."
- "...like these Latin writers they had little faith in the promptings and guidance of individual genius, and much in laws and rules imposed by the authority of the past."

In 1700 Walsh wrote to Pope: "The best of the modern poets in all languages are those that have nearest copied the ancients." Swift in The Battle of the Books showed the supremacy of the ancients over all the succeeding writers. Walsh's expression copied the ancients should not lead one to believe that eighteenth-century writers were no more than copyists and as such are open to the charge of plagiarism. What they copied was only the good taste and reason of the ancients. Well

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did Pope observe: "Those who say our thoughts are not our own because they resemble the Ancients' may as well say our Faces are not our own because they are like our Fathers." Thus the ancients were to be respected as guides and models, not as tyrants. Among the ancients the most respected were the Latin writers of the Age of Augustus and among them, too, particularly Virgil and Horace. The one reason why this age is called the Augustan age is this. However, the English "ancients" like Chaucer and Spenser were not respected. Addison in his critical poem Account of the Greatest English Poets observes about The Faerie Queene:

.... But now the mystic tale mat pleased of yore

Can charm an understanding age no more

Chaucer is dismissed as a "rude barbarian" who tries in vain to make the readers laugh with his jests in "unpolished strain." Thomas Rymer savagely criticised Shakespeare.

First Follow Nature

A. R. Humphreys observes: "Basically, the critical injunction which gained the widest, indeed, almost universal, acceptance was the call to "follow Nature". In the famous lines from Pope's Essay oh Criticism advice is tendered to writers:

First follow Nature, and your judgement frame

By her just standard, which is still the same:

Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,

One clear unchanged and universal light,

Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,

At once the source, and end, and test of Art

Pope's "Nature" was not the "Nature" of the romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge. The Augustans were not much interested in forests, flowers, trees, birds, etc. which inspired poets like Wordsworth. Nor did Pope and his contemporaries mean by "Nature" that Nature which, td use the words of Louis I. Bredvold, "Sir Isaac Newton had recently interpreted in terms of mathematical physics, in his Principia Mathematica (1687); they could hardly have gone to physics for a literary standard, and they were moreover we Haware that their concept of Nature antedated Newtefffeyienturies." For them Nature indicated, what Bredvohtxalls, "a rational and intelligible -moral order in theliniverse, according to which the various experiences of mankind could be confidently and properly vahled." Nature to them meant, in the words of A. R. Humphreys, "the moral course of the world or as ideal truth by which art should be guided." Man's subjective feelings were thus discreditediand sacrificed to "tne laws of Nature." As Basil Willey observes in The Nineteenth--Century Background, "the individual mind was carefully ruled out of the whole scheme." Even in the field of religion, reason and Nature ruled the roost. This was the age of the spread of natural religion or Deism which believed in the existence of God but disbelieved in any revealed religion, not excepting Christianity. People were also talking about, "natural morality." The doctrines of the reason-loving Deists were repudiated by orthodox theologists, not passionately but with reason.

9.2.3 Rules

This eighteenth-century emphasis on Nature often took the form of the emphasis on the "rules" formulated by the ancients. These rules were supposed to be of universal applicability. Nature was the criterion of propriety, and the rules of the ancients were to be respected as they, in the words of Pope, "are Nature still but Nature methodised." And further,

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Nature like liberty, is but restrained

By the same laws which first herself ordained

The tendency to adhere to the rules went against the eccentricities and irrationalities of individual genius. The eighteenth century was infact an age of formalism in all spheres - literature, architecture, gardening, and even social etiquette. A critic maintains: 'Just as a gentleman might not act naturally (that is, in accordance with his impulses), but must follow exact rules in doffing his hat, or addressing a lady, or entering a room, or offering his snuff-box to a friend, so the writers of this age lost individuality and became formal and artificial."

Against Enthusiasm and Imagination

The adoration of reason naturally implied a keen distrust of enthusiasm and imagination which could lead a man to ludicrous extremes. Eightee Btitcentufy literature is, consequently, devoid of the enthusiasm, elemental passion, mysterious suggestiveness, and heady imagination which characterize romantic literature. These romantic characteristics were discredited as they led one to violate Nature. If a writer abandoned himself to emotions or impulses, or let his imagination run away uncontrolled, the result could be disastrous for his writing. Sir Richard Blackmore observed in his "Essay on Epic Poetry" that the writers of old romances "were seized with an irregular Poetic phrenzy, and having Decency and Probability in Contempt, filled the world with endless Absurdities." Swift in "Letter to a Young Clergyman" expresses his distrust of the passionate eloquence of a particular preacher. "I do not see," says he, "how this talent of moving the passions can be of any great use towards directing Ghristian men in the conduct of their lives." In Section IX of Tale of a Tub he scarifies the Puritan enthusiasm by representing it as wind. Likewise the Earl of Shaftesbury in his Letter Concerning Enthusiasm (1708) lashes, religious enthusiasm and fanaticism.

9.2.4 Prose

The eighteenth century was doubtlessly an age of great prose, but not of great poetry. When Matthew Arnold-calls it an age of prose, he suggests that even the poetry of the period was of the nature of prose, or versified prose. It is he who observed that Dryden and Pope are the-classics not of our poetry but of prose. Among the greatest prose writers of the age are Addison, Steele, and Swift. They took English prose from the antiquity of Burton, Browne, and others to the balance, clarity, and simplicity of the modern times. They made prose functional, using it not for impressing but enlightening the reader.

Notes In the field of prose the reaction against romantic extravagance and involvedness, started by Dryden, was brought to a logical conclusion by the prose writers of the age of Queen Anne.

In poetry, however, the age has not to show much excellence. Imagination and passion came to be replaced by the ideals of clearness, perspecuity, and beauty of expression. These ideals appear to some as the ideals of good prose, not good poetry. Regularity, order, and artistic control are certaintly desirable but no substitutes for poetic talent or inspiration. One may be tempted to ask with Roy Campbell: "They use snaffle and the curb, all right. But where's the bloody horse?" Comparing the poetry and prose of the eighteenth century, Long observes: "Now for the first time we must chronicle the triumph of English prose. A multitude of practical interests arising from the new social and political conditions demanded expression not simply in books, but more especially in pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task: hence the development of prose, of the 'unfettered word' as Dante calls it-a development which astonishes

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us by its rapidity and excellence. The graceful elegance of Addison's essays, the terse vigour of Swift's satires, the artistic finish of Fielding's novels, the sonorous eloquence of Gibbon's history and of Burke's orations-these have no parallel in the poetry of the age. Indeed, poetry itself became prosaic in this respect, and it was used not for the creative works of imagination but for essays, for satire, for criticism-for exactly the same practical ends as was prose. The poetry of the first half of the century, as typified by the work of Pope, is polished and witty enough, but artificial; it lacks fire, fine feeling, and enthusiasm, the glow of the Elizabethan Age and the moral earnestness of Puritanism. In a word, it interests us as a study of life, rather than delights or inspires us by its appeal to the imagination. The variety and excellence of prose works, and the development of a serviceable prose style, which had been begun by Dryden, until it served to express clearly every human interest and emotion,-these are the chief literary glories of the eighteenth century."

Task Write short note on the reasons for dominance of reason in Prose and Reason.

9.3 Summary

- Particularly influential in the literary scene of the early eighteenth century were the two periodical publications by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, The Tatler (1709-11), and The Spectator (1711-12).
- The mock epic mode is most commonly found in poetry, its influence was also felt in drama, most notably in John Gay's most famous work, The Beggar's Opera (1728).
- The eighteenth century, says Legouis in A Short History of English Literature, "viewed as a whole has a distinctive character."
- This eighteenth-century emphasis on Nature often took the form of the emphasis on the "rules" formulated by the ancients.

9.4 Keywords

The Classical Age of English Literature : The eighteenth century-particularly its first half-is also called the classical age of English literature

Follow Nature : Basically, the critical injunction which gained the widest, indeed, almost universal, acceptance was the call to "follow Nature".

9.5 Review Questions

1. What is the triumph of Neoclassicism? Explain.
2. Write short note on Dominance of Reason.
3. What was imitation of the ancients? Explain.
4. What is prose? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Augustan Age
2. Pope
3. Classical precedents
4. Dunciad
5. Swift

Notes

9.6 Further Readings

Books

A History of English Literature-Arthur-Compton-Rickett, UPSPD, New Delhi.

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Unit 10: The Augustan Age or The Triumph of Neoclassicism (Pope and Heroic Couplet, Poetic Diction and Satire)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define pope.
- Describe heroic couplet and poetic diction.
- Explain satire.

Introduction

Pope defines this literary movement in his "Essay on Criticism." The English Neoclassical movement drew upon classical and contemporary French models. The movement started with the Restoration in 1660 and lasted until the end of the eighteenth century when Romanticism fully emerged with the lyrical ballads of Coleridge and Wordworth. Neoclassicism encompassed a fixed set of thoughts about the human experience. Neoclassicists supported the ideals of order, logic, accuracy, restraint, and decorum.

10.1 Pope

Pope was called "The Wicked Wasp of Twickenham" for his stinging literary satires of his fellow writers. But Pope also was a poet whose mastery of the heroic couplet has kept him in the canon of English literature since the 18th century. Largely self-educated, Pope began writing poetry as a teen and was first published in 1709. An Essay on Criticism, published in 1711, established him as a technically adept and malicious wit, and Pope became a celebrity in London's literary circles. His mock-heroic poem The Rape of the Lock (1712-14) cemented his reputation, and his translations of Homer made him financially secure enough that in 1719 he settled in a villa in Twickenham. Pope made a career out of mocking other poets, and his sharp-edged jabs earned him the 'Wicked Wasp' nickname. Pope was undeniably skilled at verse, and his literary reputation has waxed and waned over the years, but his work is generally considered a major influence on English satire. His other works include The Dunciad (1728-42), Moral Essays (1731-35) and Essay on Man (1733). He is the source of many commonly-used (and often unattributed) quotes, including: "To err is human, to

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forgive divine," "A little learning is a dangerous thing," and "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Pope suffered an infection as a child that permanently curved his spine (he stood 4'6" tall)... Pope was a Roman Catholic; his spotty education as a youth was due to restrictions against Catholics in Protestant-ruled England.

Did u know? Pope gems are "Fools admire, but men approve," "The proper study of mankind is man" and "Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

10.2 Heroic Couplet

A heroic couplet is a traditional form for English poetry, commonly used for epic and narrative poetry; it refers to poems constructed from a sequence of rhyming pairs of iambic pentameter lines. The rhyme is always masculine. Use of the heroic couplet was first pioneered by Geoffrey Chaucer in the Legend of Good Women and the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer is also widely credited with first extensive use of iambic pentameter.

Example

A frequently-cited example illustrating the use of heroic couplets is this passage from Cooper's Hill by John Denham, part of his description of the Thames:

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream

My great example, as it is my theme!

Though deep yet clear, though gentle yet not dull;

Strong without rage, without overflowing full

History

The term "heroic couplet" is sometimes reserved for couplets that are largely closed and self-contained, as opposed to the enjambed couplets of poets like John Donne. The heroic couplet is often identified with the English Baroque works of John Dryden and Alexander Pope. Major poems in the closed couplet, apart from the works of Dryden and Pope, are Samuel Johnson's The Vanity of Human Wishes, Oliver Goldsmith's The Deserted Village, and John Keats's Lamia. The form was immensely popular in the 18th century. The looser type of couplet, with occasional enjambment, was one of the standard verse forms in medieval narrative poetry, largely because of the influence of the Canterbury Tales.

Variations

English heroic couplets, especially in Dryden and his followers, are sometimes varied by the use of the occasional alexandrine, or hexameter line, and triplet. Often these two variations are used together to heighten a climax. The breaking of the regular pattern of rhyming pentameter pairs brings about a sense of poetic closure. Here are three examples from Book IV of Dryden's translation of the Aeneid.

Triplet

Nor let him then enjoy supreme command;

But fall, untimely, by some hostile hand,

And lie unburied on the barren sand!

(ll. 890-892)

Notes

Alexandrine

Her lofty courser, in the court below,
Who his majestic rider seems to know,
Proud of his purple trappings, paws the ground,
And champs the golden bit, and spreads the foam around.
(ll. 190-193)

Alexandrine and Triplet

My Tyrians, at their injur'd queen's command,
Had toss'd their fires amid the Trojan band;
At once extinguish'd all the faithless name;
And I myself, in vengeance of my shame,
Had fall'n upon the pile, to mend the fun'ral flame
(ll. 867-871)

10.3 Poetic Diction

Poetic diction means the choice and arrangement of words in a line of poetry. Thus it is a matter both of vocabulary and syntax. In almost all ages, poets have used a language different from the language of everyday use. It was believed that, "the language of the age is never the language of poetry", and further that the calling of a poet is a noble and exalted one and so his language also should be equally noble and dignified, different from common language.

Thus it was considered necessary for a poet to avoid low, common and vulgar words, especially in epic-poetry where the diction used should be lofty and sublime in keeping with its lofty and exalted theme. For this reason, in all ages, the diction of poetry has tended to differ from the language of prose, as well as from that of everyday speech. For example, in his Fairy Queen Spenser intentionally used archaic and obsolete words, for his theme was medieval, and archaic words like 'methought', 'I ween', etc., help to create a proper, old world atmosphere. Milton used a highly Latinised and figurative diction for his Paradise Lost, and in this way sought to impart epic dignity and elevation to his language. Milton had considerable influence on the succeeding generation of poets, and this influence was not all healthy. Much that is artificial and unnatural in the diction of the Augustan Age may be traced to Milton.

Though poets in every age have used a specialised diction for their poetry, never was such attention paid to the subject as in the age of Dryden and Pope. The critical theory of the period laid great stress on the need of 'decorum'. 'Decorum' implied that the diction of poetry should be noble and exalted, that it should suit the genre and the characters or personages in a piece of poetry, that the low and the vulgar should be avoided as their use is below the dignity of the poet as well as that of his readers, and lastly that there must be absolute economy in the use of words. The poet must say what he had to say in the fewest and the best possible words. The best' were the words which enabled the poet to convey his meanings with absolute clarity, and with this end in view the use of the archaic, the obsolete, the foreign and the technical words was to be avoided. The older poets like Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare were guilty of such faults and it was felt, that they should be refined and polished. They might be jewels but they were unpolished jewels, and it was their misfortune to have lived and produced in a barbarous age.

Notes The Augustan Age, numerous efforts were made to refine Shakespeare, and many of his poetic beauties were lost on the age.

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Various devices were used to achieve a noble, pure and exalted diction, a diction proper for poetry meant for refined and cultured audiences. First, Periphrasis or Circumlocution or a roundabout way of saying things was widely used. In this way, efforts were made to avoid the vulgar, the archaic and the technical. Thus Pope uses 'finny creatures' for 'fish', 'Velvet plain' for a green table, 'two-handed engine' for a pair of scissors and so on. Secondly Latin words and Latin constructions were abundantly used to impart dignity and elevation. Thus Pope uses 'Sol' in place of the sun. Words are frequently used both by Dryden and Pope in their original Latin sense. Thirdly, Figures of Speech, more particularly Personifications and Hyperbole, were abundantly used to decorate the language and to impart to it force, dignity and effectiveness. An instance of personification and Hyperbole may be given from The Rape of the Lock:

And all Arabia breathes from yonder box

The Tortoise here and Elephant unite

Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white

Another remarkable feature of Pope's diction is his use of antithesis. This he uses it to produce the mock-heroic effect:

Or stain her honour, or her new brocade

Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade

Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball.

Effective, telling, vivid and pictorial images (similes and metaphors) are used by Pope with great frequency and abundance. There are frequent revisions and everything that is superfluous or inapt is carefully eschewed. In this way, the diction acquires not only clarity, elevation and perfection, but also epigrammatic terseness and condensation. There are more quotable lines in Pope than in any other English poet outside Shakespeare.

Pope, in short, represents the best as well as the worst in the poetic diction of the 18th century. He is the clearest as well as the most correct of English poets, but there is also much in his diction that is unnatural and artificial. He bewitched and dazzled his age with his highly ornate and polished language and the various stylistic devices used by him were imitated throughout the century. Even the pre-romantics were unable to break free from his influence. Gray, Collins, Crabbe, Blake and Burns all show his influence. The substance of their poetry is much nobler, but their style continues to be stilted and artificial. Indeed, the full flowering of romanticism in their poetry is checked and retarded by the dead hand of the past. Circumlocution Personification, Latinism etc., all continue to be used by them and their diction continues to be as artificial and unnatural as that of Pope and his imitators.

It was against this innane and affected poetic diction that Wordsworth raised his powerful voice. Reacting against the artificiality of the poetic diction of Pope and the 'Popians', he maintained that the language of poetry should be a selection of language really used by men, and added that, "there is no essential difference between the language of prose and poetry." However, his own practice shows that there is such an essential difference. Language is a matter of vocabulary, the choice and selection of words, as well as of their arrangement. Wordsworth follows his theory of poetic diction only in so far as the selection of words or vocabulary is concerned, and not always even in this respect. As far as the arrangement of words is concerned, he frequently uses inverted constructions. Poems like the Immortality Ode can by no stretch of imagination be regarded as having been written in the language of every day use. Moreover, as Coleridge was quick to point out, metre medicates the whole atmosphere, and exigencies of rhyme and metre determine the diction of a poet. Hence it is bound to be different from ordinary language. It should also be remembered that the end of poetry is to give aesthetic pleasure and the use of ornament is an element in that pleasure. Poetry is 'musical speech', and so the words used by a poet must be selected both with reference to their sense and their sound. Obviously, for all these reasons, we cannot agree with Wordsworth when he says that there is no essential difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose.

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Wordsworth's attack on the 18th century poetic diction served to stress the need of simplicity both in theme and treatment. But diction has continued to flourish, despite Wordsworth's condemnation of it. The verbal art of both Keats and Tennyson is beyond praise, and many of their verbal beauties are echoed by the poetic diction of the Pre-Raphaelities / Rossetti, Swinburne, and Morris. Rossetti's love of 'stunning' words is well-known and Swinburne is equally noted for his sensuous epithets and verbal music. Rossetti's influence on the next generation of poets was great; some adopted his idiosyncrasies; few bettered his example. He helped to introduce a new school of poetry in which the diction diverged as far from the 'real language of men' as in any part of the eighteenth century.

Notes The reaction in our own times against this movement has been as vigorous as that of Wordsworth was in 1801 against the 'gaudiness' of false 'poetic diction' of the 18th century.

Robert Bridges is a great stylist of the 20th century, who tries consciously to cultivate an effective and elevated poetic style. He is a great craftsman with words. His poetry abounds in vivid word-pictures. T.S. Eliot has a peculiar diction of his own. It has been called, "a mosaic of quotations and allusions." His poetry is the poetry of the city, and hence quite rightly his vocabulary and his imagery are drawn from the facts and experiences of city life. He is terse and epigrammatic, so terse and epigrammatic that often it becomes difficult to follow his sense.

In short, poets in all ages have used poetic diction i.e. a poetic language which is different from the language both of prose and of everyday use. From time to time such devices to embellish and elevate the language of poetry have been much criticised, but despite such criticism poets have continued to use them.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Pope defines this literary movement in his ..... .
2. Pope was a poet whose mastery of the heroic couplet has kept him in the canon of ..... since the 18th century.
3. Use of the heroic couplet was first pioneered by ..... in the Legend of good women and the Canterbury Tales.
4. The heroic couplet is often identified with the English Baroque works of John Dryden and ..... .
5. Pope uses 'sol' in place of the ..... .

10.4 Satire

Satire differs from humour in that it has a definite moral purpose. "It is our purpose, Crites, to correct/and punish with our laughter....." says Mercury in Cynthia's Revels. The satirist deliberately alienates our sympathies from those whom he describes, and as the true humorist is apt to pass from comedy to romance, and from romance to tragedy, so the satirist not infrequently ends by finding rage and disgust overpower his sense of the ridiculous. Ben Jonson passes from the comedy of Every Man in his Humour to the bitterness of Volpone. Swift from the comparative lightness of Gulliver in Lilliput, to the savage brutality of the Hounyhymns. But of such satire - pure and simple - few examples are to be found in Chaucer.

The fact is that satire is not Chaucer's natural bent. He is too quick-witted not to see through sham and humbug, but his interest lies in portraiture rather than in exposure. His object is to point life as he sees it, to hold up the mirror to nature, and, as has justly been said, "a mirror has no tendency, "it reflects, but it does not, or should not, distort. But if Chaucer is too tolerant and genial, too little of a preacher and enthusiast, for a satirist, his wit has often a satiric turn.

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Chaucer's kinship as a satirist is however not with Dryden or Pope or Swift but with Fielding. They are alike in a certain air of rollicking good-fellowship, a certain virility, a determination to paint men and women as they know them. Neither is particularly squeamish, both enjoy a rough jest, and have little patience with over-refinement. Both give the readers a sense of studies honesty and kindliness, and know how to combine tenderness with strength. Both with all their tolerance, have a keen eye for hypocrisy or affectation and a sharp tongue wherewith to chastise and expose it. Chaucer hates no one, not even the Pardoner, as whole-heartedly as Fielding hates Master Blifil 'but the Pardoner's Tale affords the best instance of the satiric bent of the poet's humour when he is brought face to face with a scheming rogue.

In Chaucer we have no sustained satire of the Popean or the Swiftean type. His genius is like that of Shakespeare, having a high degree of negative capability. Hence, Chaucer gives us no impression of being a great satirist, although in his writings especially in the portraits of the Prologue we have sharp little sallies of satire. It would be rather more suitable to call Chaucer a comic satirist in relation to his General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. Brewer remarks: For all the variety of attitude in this extraordinarily rich Prologue, comic satire predominates. There are, therefore, certain limitations of scope. The higher aristocracies are excluded, for the Knight is comparatively low ranking, and is in any case an ideal figure. The painfulness and rough comedy of the life of the great mass of the really poor find no place, and again their two representatives are idealized portraits. The characters of highest and lowest ranks were not suitable for comic treatment, while in any case Chaucer seems to have had relatively little intimate knowledge of the poor, as we at once realize when we compare him with Langland. In the Prologue we mainly see the middling people, and we see them through Chaucer's eyes from a slightly superior moral and social station. We can afford to laugh at them. We look through the eye of a poet masculine, self-assured, delighted, who knows there is "joy after woe, and after joy, sadness 'but is not at the moment concerned to point it out. He sees abuses but is neither surprised nor stung by them after all what else can we expect from the world? And is there not a providential order? As several characters in his stories say, God makes nothing in vain. Men are not angels, but neither are they devils. Chaucer gives us a vision of men and women in the world, and most of them have some relish of absurdity when looked at carefully especially when they require neither our loyalty nor our fear.

Winny contends that Chaucer does not see his company of pilgrims simply as an incongruous assortment of pantomime figures, to be enjoyed for their grotesquely comic oddity. The pervasive element of social satire in the General Prologue - most prominent in his account of the ecclesiastical figures - suggests Chaucer's serious concern at the debasing of moral standards, and at the materialistic outlook which had taken hold of society. There are moments, as when he records the Friar's sneering contempt for the poor, which seem to show Chaucer's habitual good temper revolting against the cynical opportunism which had become widespread in ecclesiastical life. Such moments are rare and uncharacteristic of Chaucer. His usual attitude towards the moral weakness which he discloses is one of mocking; not so much at men's often ludicrous shortcomings as at their incompatability with the picture of himself which he presents to the world. The Shipman is a thievish pirate; the Reeve a cunning embezzler, the Physician has a dishonest private understanding with his druggist, and the Man of Law 'semed bisier than he was'. The efforts of the Prioress to mimic courtly manners are detected and set down with the same intuitive sense of false appearance as allows Chaucer to penetrate the Merchant's imposing disguise. The mask of respectability is not roughly torn off, for while he is describing his pilgrims Chaucer is maintaining an outward manner that is awed and deferential; telling us that the Prioress was 'of greet desport', that the Monk was a manly man, 'to been an abbot able', or that the murderous Shipman was an incomparable navigator and pilot.

Because he does not insist upon their moral failings or hypocritical nature, revealing them with an ironic innocence of manner and leaving them to speak for themselves, Chaucer's approach to his pilgrims suggests a psychologist rather than a moralist' He presents vices and shortcomings within the context of human individuality, as a product of the curious pressures which stamp a unique

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personality upon each of the pilgrims. The Shipman's easy conscience is an integral part of the tough, self-reliant spirit of the man, which has acquired the wilfulness and moral unconcern of the elements in which he lives. His thefts and murders, the Franklin's epicurism, the Physician's avarice, interest Chaucer not as evidence of a breakdown of moral values but for what they reveal of individual character.

Thus Chaucer's satire is not directed against contemporary morals, but against the comic self-ignorance which gives man two' identities the creature he is, and the more distinguished and inscrutable person he imagines himself to be.

Finally, it may be pointed out here that in several prologues to the tales told by the pilgrims Chaucer acts as a medieval satirist whose method was to have a villain describe his own tricks. Two of these Prologues are the Pardoner's and the Wife of Bath's. The former, like lago, Richard III and Edmund the Bastard in Shakespeare, expresses himself out and out telling the pilgrims about his sensuality, greed, hypocrisy and deceitfulness.

Did u know? The theme of the Wife of Bath's prologue is tribulation in marriage particularly the misery she has caused her five successive husbands.

It is now time that we should ask ourselves as to what extent Chaucer was influenced by classical and medieval traditions of satire. There is no incontrovertible evidence about his knowledge of classical satirists. Juvenal he quotes from and mentions by name, but the quotations he could very easily have gained at second hand. Horace he does not mention at all, but since, as other critics have pointed out, he does not mention Boccaccio either, this negative evidence is worthless. Juvenal had attacked with moral horror the widespread vices of his own time under the satiric disguise of describing historical parsonages of a previous age. This device was not imitated by the Fathers or the medieval satirists who were influenced by him. and the writers of the Middle Ages, with their preoccupation with what was common to all men rather than with what makes one man different from another, were not concerned to give any appearance of particularity to their satire. The result was either the blackened generalised picture of all men as totally corrupt, found in the De Contemptu Mundi, or the combination of allegory with satire, ingeniously used, though not invented, by Langland. The distinctive vices of people in various orders and occupations throughout society he does not generalise but, like Juvenal, reduces the generalization to a description of particular characters. This, however, seems to be Chaucer's only resemblance to Juvenal, since self-evidently there could be no greater difference of tone than there is between Juvenal's savage vehemence and Chaucer's specious mildness.

The resemblances between Chaucer and Horace are more subtle and more specific. The object of Horace's satire had been different from Juvenal's, in that Horace was chiefly concerned with those who disrupted the social harmony of life, the fool, the bore, the miser, and these he portrayed with a minute and particular observation of habit and conversation, which gives the impression that description is of an individual, though by definition not unique, personality.

Chaucer shares some characteristics with Horace. He has in common with him the easy tone of a man talking to friends who share his assumptions and sympathies, though usually with a deceptive twist. When Horace meets the characters in his satires, he expects his audience to sympathise with his misery, whereas Chaucer pretends that the situation was delightful and the characters to be admired. He shares with Horace, too, the use of comic images, the quick observation of human affection, and the suggestion of a recognizable personality. Chaucer, however, extends Horation ridicule to the kind of objects satirized in the Juvenalian tradition, and modifies it by the tone of pretended naivete, not found in Horace's style, but certainly learnt in part from Ovid whom Chaucer imitated as if he were his master.

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10.5 Summary

- Pope, in short, represents the best as well as the worst in the poetic diction of the 18th century.
- Robert Bridges is a great stylist of the 20th century, who tries consciously to cultivate an effective and elevated poetic style.
- Satire differs from humour in that it has a definite moral purpose. "It is our purpose, Crites, to correct/and punish with our laughter....." says Mercury in Cynthia's Revels.
- Winny contends that Chaucer does not see his company of pilgrims simply as an incongruous assortment of pantomime figures, to be enjoyed for their grotesquely comic oddity.

10.6 Keywords

Pope : Pope was called "The Wicked Wasp of Twickenham" for his stinging literary satires of his fellow writers.

Poetic Diction : Poetic diction means the choice and arrangement of words in a line of poetry.

10.7 Review Questions

1. Who was pope? Explain.
2. What is Heroic couplet?
3. What is Poetic Diction? Explain.
4. What is satire? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Essay on criticism
2. English literature
3. Geoffrey Chaucer
4. Alexander pope
5. Sun

10.8 Further Readings

Books

The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 3rd edition CUP, New Delhi 2005: Sampson, George.

An outline of History of English Literature, G. Bell and sons, London, 1930: Hudson, W.H.

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Online links

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neoenglishsystem.blogspot.com/2010/12/heroic-couplet.html

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Unit 11: The Age of Johnson-The Decline of Neoclassicism (Devotional Verse, Popularity of Periodical Essays)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe poets of the age of johnson and prose of the age of johnson.
- Define periodical essays.
- Explain the history of the periodical essay.

Introduction

The later half of the eighteenth century, which was dominated by Dr. Samuel Johnson, is called the Age of Johnson. Johnson died in 1784, and from that time the Classical spirit in English literature began to give place to the Romantic spirit, though officially the Romantic Age started from the year 1798 when Wordsworth and Coleridge published the famous Lyrical Ballads. Even during the Age of Johnson, which was predominantly classical, cracks had begun to appear in the solid wall of classicism and there were clear signs of revolt in favour of the Romantic spirit. This was specially noticeable in the field of poetry. Most of the poets belonging to the Age of Johnson may be termed as the precursors of the Romantic Revival. That is why the Age of Johnson is also called the Age of Transition in English literature.

11.1 Poets of the Age of Johnson

As has already been pointed out, the Age of Johnson in English poetry is an age of transition and experiment which ultimately led to the Romantic Revival. Its history is the history of the struggle between the old and the new, and of the gradual triumph of the new. The greatest protagonist of classicism during this period was Dr. Johnson himself, and he was supported by Goldsmith. In the midst of change these two held fast to the classical ideals, and the creative work of both of them in the field of poetry was imbued with the classical spirit. As Macaulay said, "Dr. Johnson took it for granted that the kind of poetry which flourished in his own time and which he had been accustomed to hear praised from his childhood, was the best kind of poetry, and he not only upheld its claims by direct advocacy of its canons, but also consistently opposed every experiment in which, as in the ballad revival, he detected signs of revolt against it." Johnson's two chief poems, London and The Vanity of Human Wishes, are classical on account of their didacticism, their formal, rhetorical style, and their adherence to the closed couplet.

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Goldsmith was equally convinced that the classical standards of writing poetry were the best and that they had attained perfection during the Augustan Age. All that was required of the poets was to imitate those standards. According to him "Pope was the limit of classical literature." In his opposition to the blank verse, Goldsmith showed himself fundamentally hostile to change. His two important poems, The Traveller and The Deserted Village, which are versified pamphlets on political economy, are classical in spirit and form. They are written in the closed couplet, are didactic, and have pompous phraseology. These poems may be described as the last great work of the outgoing, artificial eighteenth century school, though even in them, if we study them minutely, we perceive the subtle touches of the new age of Romanticism especially in their treatment of nature and rural life.

Before we consider the poets of the Age of Johnson, who broke from the classical tradition and followed the new Romantic trends, let us first examine what Romanticism stood for. Romanticism was opposed to Classicism on all vital points. For instance, the main characteristics of classical poetry were: (i) it was mainly the product of intelligence and was especially deficient in emotion and imagination; (ii) it was chiefly the town poetry; (iii) it had no love for the mysterious, the supernatural, or what belonged to the dim past; (iv) its style was formal and artificial; (v) it was written in the closed couplet; (vi) it was fundamentally didactic; (vii) it insisted on the writer to follow the prescribed rules and imitate the standard models of good writing. The new poetry which showed romantic leanings was opposed to all these points. For instance, its chief characteristics were: (i) it encouraged emotion, passion and imagination in place of dry intellectuality; (ii) it was more interested in nature and rustic life rather than in town life; (iii) it revived the romantic spirit—love of the mysterious, the supernatural, the dim past; (iv) it opposed the artificial and formal style, and insisted on simple and natural forms of expression; (v) it attacked the supremacy of the closed couplet and encouraged all sorts of metrical experiments; (vi) its object was not didactic but the expression of the writer's experience for its own sake; (vii) it believed in the liberty of the poet to choose the theme and the manner of his writing.

Notes The poets who showed romantic leanings, during the Age of Johnson, and who may be described as the precursors or harbingers of the Romantic Revival were James Thomson, Thomas Gray, William Collins, James Macpherson, William Blake, Robert Burns, William Cowper and George Crabbe.

James Thomson (1700-1748) was the earliest eighteenth century poet who showed romantic tendency in his work. The main romantic characteristic in his poetry is his minute observation of nature. In The Seasons he gives fine sympathetic descriptions of the fields, the woods, the streams, the shy and wild creatures. Instead of the closed couplet, he follows the Miltonic tradition of using the blank verse. In The Castle of Indolence, which is written in form of dream allegory so popular in medieval literature, Thomson uses the Spenserian stanza. Unlike the didactic poetry of the Augustans, this poem is full of dim suggestions.

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) is famous as the author of Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, "the best-known in the English language." Unlike classical poetry which was characterised by restraint on personal feelings and emotions, this poem is the manifestation of deep feelings of the poet. It is suffused with the melancholy spirit which is a characteristic romantic trait. It contains deep reflections of the poet on the universal theme of death which spare no one. Other important poems of Gray are The Progress of Poesy and The Bard. Of these The Bard is more original and romantic. It emphasises the independence of the poet, which became the chief characteristic of romantic poetry. All these poems of Gray follow the classical model so far as form is concerned, but in spirit they are romantic.

William Collins (1721-1759). Like the poetry of Gray, Collin's poetry exhibits deep feelings of melancholy. His first poem, Oriental Eclogues is romantic in feeling, but is written in the closed couplet. His best-known poems are the odes To Simplicity, To Fear, To the Passions, the small lyric How Sleep The Brave, and the beautiful "Ode to Evening". In all these poems the poet values the

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solitude and quietude because they afford opportunity for contemplative life. Collins in his poetry advocates return to nature and simple and unsophisticated life, which became the fundamental creeds of the Romantic Revival.

James Macpherson (1736-1796) became the most famous poet during his time by the publication of Ossianic poems, called the Works of Ossian, which were translations of Gaelic folk literature, though the originals were never produced, and so he was considered by some critics as a forger. In spite of this Macpherson exerted a considerable influence on contemporary poets like Blake and Burns by his poetry which was impregnated with moonlight melancholy and ghostly romantic suggestions.

William Blake (1757-1827). In the poetry of Blake we find a complete break from classical poetry. In some of his works as Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience which contain the famous poems—Little Lamb who made thee? and Tiger, Tiger burning bright, we are impressed by their lyrical quality. In other poems such as The Book of Thel, Marriage of Heaven and Hell, it is the prophetic voice of Blake which appeals to the reader. In the words of Swinburne, Blake was the only poet of "supreme and simple poetic genius" of the eighteenth century, "the one man of that age fit, on all accounts, to rank with the old great masters". Some of his lyrics are, no doubt, the most perfect and the most original songs in the English language.

Robert Burns (1759-96), who is the greatest song writer in the English language, had great love for nature, and a firm belief in human dignity and quality, both of which are characteristic of romanticism. He has summed up his poetic creed in the following stanza:

Give me a spark of Nature's fire,

That is all the learning I desire;

Then, though I trudge through dub and mire

At plough or cart,

My Muse, though homely in attire,

May touch the heart

The fresh, inspired songs of Burns as The Cotter's Saturday Night, To a Mouse, To a Mountain Daisy, Man was Made to Mourne went straight to the heart, and they seemed to be the songs of the birds in spring time after the cold and formal poetry for about a century. Most of his songs have the Elizabethan touch about them.

William Cowper (1731-1800), who lived a tortured life and was driven to the verge of madness, had a genial and kind soul. His poetry, much of which is of autobiographical interest, describes the homely scenes and pleasures and pains of simple humanity—the two important characteristics of romanticism. His longest poem, The Task, written in blank verse, comes as a relief after reading the rhymed essays and the artificial couplets of the Age of Johnson. It is replete with description of homely scenes, of woods and brooks of ploughmen and shepherds. Cowper's most laborious work is the translation of Homer in blank verse, but he is better known for his small, lovely lyrics like On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture, beginning with the famous line, Oh, that those lips had language', and Alexander Selkirk, beginning with the oft-quoted line, 'I am monarch of all I survey'.

George Crabbe (1754-1832) stood midway between the Augustans and the Romantics. In form he was classical, but in the temper of his mind he was romantic. Most of his poems are written in the heroic couplet, but they depict an attitude to nature which is Wordsworthian. To him nature is a "presence, a motion and a spirit," and he realizes the intimate union of nature with man. His well-known poem. The Village, is without a rival as a picture of the working men of his age. He shows that the lives of the common villager and labourers are full of romantic interest. His later poems, The Parish Register, The Borough, Tales in Verse, and Tales of the Hall are all written in the same strain.

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Another poet who may also be considered as the precursor of the Romantic Revival was Thomas Chatterton (1752-70), the Bristol boy, whose The Rowley Poems, written in pseudo-Chaucerian English made a strong appeal of medievalism.

Did u know? The publication of Bishop Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry in 1765 also made great contribution to the romantic mood reviving interest in ballad literature.

11.2 Prose of the Age of Johnson

In the Age of Johnson the tradition established by prose writers of the earlier part of the eighteenth century Addison, Steele and Swift was carried further. The eighteenth century is called the age of aristocracy. This aristocracy was no less in the sphere of the intellect than in that of politics and society. The intellectual and literary class formed itself into a group, which observed certain rules of behaviour, speech and writing. In the field of prose the leaders of this group established a literary style which was founded on the principles of logical and lucid thought. It was opposed to what was slipshod, inaccurate, and trivial. It avoided all impetuous enthusiasm and maintained an attitude of aloofness and detachment that contributed much to its mood of cynical humour. The great prose writers, the pillars of the Age of Johnson, who represented in themselves, the highest achievements of English prose, were Johnson, Burke and Gibbon.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was the literary dictator of his age, though he was not its greatest writer. He was a man who struggled heroically against poverty and ill-health; who was ready to take up cudgels against anyone however high he might be placed, but who was very kind and helpful to the poor and the wretched. He was an intellectual giant, and a man of sterling character, on account of all these qualities he was honoured and loved by all, and in his poor house gathered the foremost artists, scholars, actors, and literary men of London, who looked upon him as their leader.

Johnson's best-known works are his Dictionary and Lives of Poets. He contributed a number of articles in the periodicals, The Rambler, The Idler and Rasselas. In them his style is ponderous and verbose, but in Lives of Poets, which are very readable critical biographies of English poets, his style is simple and at time charming. Though in the preceding generations Dryden, Addison, Steele and Swift wrote elegant, lucid and effective prose, none of them set up any definite standard to be followed by others. What was necessary in the generation when Johnson wrote, was some commanding authority that might set standard of prose style, lay down definite rules and compel others to follow them. This is what was actually done by Johnson. He set a model of prose style which had rhythm, balance and lucidity, and which could be imitiated with profit. In doing so he preserved the English prose style from degenerating into triviality and feebleness, which would have been the inevitable result of slavishly imitating the prose style of great writers like Addison by ordinary writers who had not the secret of Addison's genius. The model was set by Johnson.

Though Johnson's own style is often condemned as ponderous and verbose, he could write in an easy and direct style when he chose. This is clear from Lives of Poets where the formal dignity of his manner and the ceremonial stateliness of his phraseology are mixed with touches of playful humour and stinging sarcasm couched in very simple and lucid prose. The chief characteristic of Johnson's prose-style is that it grew out of his conversational habit, and therefore it is always clear, forceful and frank. We may not some time agree to the views he expresses in the Lives, but we cannot but be impressed by his boldness, his wit, wide range and brilliancy of his style.

Burke (1729-1797) was the most important member of Johnson's circle. He was a member of the Parliament for thirty years and as such he made his mark as the most forceful and effective orator of his times. A man of vast knowledge, he was the greatest political philosopher that ever spoke in the English Parliament.

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Burke's chief contributions to literature are the speeches and writings of his public career. The earliest of them were Thoughts on the Present Discontent (1770). In this work Burke advocated the principle of limited monarchy which had been established in England since the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when James II was made to quit the throne, and William of Orange was invited by the Parliament to become the king of England with limited powers. When the American colonies revolted against England, and the English government was trying to suppress that revolt, Burke vehemently advocated the cause of American independence. In that connection he delivered two famous speeches in Parliament. On American Taxation (1774) and on Conciliation with America, in which are embodied true statesmanship and political wisdom. The greatest speeches of Burke were, however, delivered in connection with the French Revolution, which were published as The Reflections on the French Revolution (1790). Here Burke shows himself as prejudiced against the ideals of the Revolution, and at time he becomes immoderate and indulges in exaggerations. But from the point of view of style and literary merit the Reflections stand higher, because they brought out the poetry of Burke's nature. His last speeches delivered in connection with the impeachment of Warren Hastings for the atrocities he committed in India; show Burke as the champion of justice and a determined foe of corruption, high-handedness and cruelty.

The political speeches and writings of Burke belong to the sphere of literature of a high order because of their universality. Though he dealt in them with events which happened during his day, he gave expression to ideas and impulses which were true not for one age but for all times. In the second place they occupy an honourable place in English literature on account of excellence of their style. The prose of Burke is full of fire and enthusiasm, yet supremely logical; eloquent and yet restrained; fearless and yet orderly; steered by every popular movement and yet dealing with fundamental principles of politics and philosophy.

Notes Burke's style, in short, is restrained, philosophical, dignified, obedient to law and order, free from exaggeration and pedantry as well as from vulgarity and superficiality.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) was the first historian of England who wrote in a literary manner. His greatest historical work—The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, which is an authoritative and well-documented history, can pass successfully the test of modern research and scholarship. But its importance in literature is on account of its prose style which is the very climax of classicism. It is finished, elegant, elaborate and exhaustive. Though his style is sometimes marred by affectations and undue elaboration, yet on account of his massive intellect, and unfailing sense of literary proportion, he towers above all competitors as the model historian.

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Johnson was died in ..... .
   (*a*) 1774 (*b*) 1784 (*b*) 1788 (*d*) 1794
2. ..... was the earliest eighteenth century poet who showed romantic tendency in his work.
   (*a*) James Thomson (*b*) Thomas Gray
   (*c*) William Blake (*d*) Robert Burns
3. ..... is famous as the author of Elegy written in a country churchyard, "the best-known in the English language."
   (*a*) William Collins (*b*) James Macpherson
   (*c*) Thomas Gray (*d*) James Thomson

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4. ..... stood midway between the Augustans and the Romantics.
   (*a*) William cowper (*b*) Robert Burns
   (*c*) Samuel Johnson (*d*) George Crabbe
5. ……. was the first historian of England who wrote in a literary manner.
   (*a*) Edward Gibbon (*b*) Burke
   (*c*) William Blake (*d*) Samuel Johnson

11.3 Periodical Essays

The periodical essay and the novel are the two important gifts of "our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century" to English literature. The latter was destined to have a long and variegated career over the centuries, but the former was fated to be born with the eighteenth century and to die with it.

This shows how it was a true mirror of the age. A. R. Humphrey observes in this connection: "If any literary form is the particular creation and the particular mirror of the Augustan Age in England, it is the periodical essay." Generally speaking, it is very difficult to date precisely the appearance of a new literary genre. For example, nobody can say with perfect certainty as to when the first novel, or the first comedy or the first short story came to be written in England or elsewhere. We often talk of "fathers" in literature: for instance, Fielding is called the father of English novel, Chaucer the father of English poetry, and so forth. But that is done, more often than not in a loose and very unprecise sense. This difficulty in dating a genre, however, does not arise in a few cases-that of the periodical essay included. The periodical essay was literally invented by Steele on April 12, 1709, the day he launched his Taller. Before The Taller there had been periodicals and there had been essays, but there had been no periodical essays. The example of The Taller was followed by a large number of writers of the eighteenth century till its very end, when with the change of sensibility, the periodical essay disappeared along with numerous other accompaniments of the age. Throughout the century there was a deluge of periodical essays. The periodical essay remained the most popular, if not the dominant, literary form. Men as different as Pope, Swift, Dr. Johnson, and Goldsmith found the periodical essay an eligible medium. As a matter of fact it was, unlike the novel for example, the only literary form which was patronised without exception by all the major writers of the century. It is hard to name a single first-rate writer of the century who did.not write something for a periodical paper. Mrs. Jane H. Jack says: "From the days of Queen Anne-who had The Spectator taken in with her breakfast-to the time of the French Revolution and even beyond, periodical essays on the lines laid down by Steele and Addison flooded the country and met the eye in every bookseller's shop and coffee-house." Before tracing the history of the periodical essay in the eighteenth century and assigning causes for its phenomenal popularity, let us consider what exactly a periodical essay is.

Task Write a short note on Periodical Essays.

What is a Periodical Essay

What is called the periodical essay was first of all given by Steele as The Taller. Nothing of this type had before him been attempted in England or even elsewhere. However, to attempt a definition of the periodical essay is neither easy nor helpful. George Sherburn in A Literary History of England, edited by Albert C. Baugh, avers in this connexion: "Rigorous definition of this peculiarly eighteenth century type of publication is not very helpful...The periodical essay has been aptly described as dealing with morals and manners,1 but it might in fact deal with anything that pleased its author. It covered usually not more than the two sides (in two columns) of a folipjialf-sheet: normally it was shorter than that. It might be published independent of other material, as was The Spectator, except for advertising; or it might be the leading article in a newspaper."

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Reasons for the Popularity

The periodical essay found a spectacular response in the eighteenth century on account of various reasons. Fundamentally this new genre was in perfect harmony with the spirit of the age. It sensitively combined the tastes of the different classes of readers with the result that it appealed to ail-though particularly to the resurgent middle classes. In the eighteenth century there was a phenomenal spurt in literacy, which expanded widely the circle of readers. They welcomed the periodical essay as it was "light" literature. The brevity of the periodical essay, its common sense approach, and its tendency to dilute morality and philosophy for popular consumption paid rich dividends. To a great extent, the periodical essayist assumed the office of the clergyman and taught the masses the lesson of elegance and refinement, though not of morality of the psalm-singing kind. The periodical paper was particularly welcome as it was not a dry, high-brown, or hoity-toity affair like the professional sermon, in spite of being highly instructive in nature. In most cases the periodical essayist did not "speak from the clouds" but communicated with the reader with an almost buttonholing familiarity. The avoidance of politics (though not by all the periodical essayists yet by a good many of them) also contributed towards their popularity. Again, the periodical essayists made it a point to cater for the female taste and give due consideration to the female point of view. That won for them many female readers too. All these factors were responsible for the universal acceptance of the periodical essay in eighteenth-century England.

11.3.1 The History of the Periodical Essay

The Tatler

It was Steele's Tatler which began the deluge of the periodical essays which followed. The first issue of The Tatler appeared on April 12, 1709. At that time Addison. Steele's bosom friend, was functioning as Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in that country. Steele had not informed Addison of his design, but if he desired to write in secret he was not lucky; a single month detected him and Addison's first contribution appeared on May 26. Though Addison contributed to The Tatler much less than Steele, yet he soon overshadowed his friend. Of the 271 numbers, 188 are Steele's and 42 Addison's; 36 of them were written by both jointly. The rest were penned by others like Tickell and Budgell. Steele spoke of himself as "a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid," and added: "I was undone by my auxiliary [Addison]: when I had once called him in, I could not subsist without him. "The Tatler appeared thrice a week-on Tuesdays. Thursdays, and Saturdays, that is why the days on which the post went to the country. As regards the aim of the paper, we may quote the words of Steele in the dedication to the first collected volume (1710): "The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, affectation, and recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behaviour." All the material of The Taller was purported by Steele to be based upon discussions in the four famous coffee-houses, and was divided as follows:

"All accounts of gallantry, pleasure and entertainment"-White's Chocolate-house.

- Poetry-Will's Coffee-house.
- Learning-the Grecian.
- Foreign and domestic news-St. James' Coffee-house.
- "What else I shall on any other subject offer"-"My own apartment"

The chief importance of The Toiler lies in its social and moral criticism which had a tangibly salubrious effect on the times. Both Addison and Steele did good work each in his own way. Addison was a much more refined and correct writer than Steele whom Macaulay aptly calls "a scholar among rakes and a rake among scholars." Addison's prose is, according to Dr. Johnson, a model of "the middle style." And this is his famous suggestion: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." Steele, on the contrary, was a thing of moods and moments. His writing has a look of spontaneity and human warmth which Addison's lacks. Comparing

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Steele and Addison, George Sherburn maintains "Steele's prose never attained the elegant ease and correctness of Addison's, and yet it is probable that his tendency to warm to a subject and to write intimately and personally, as the reader's friend, contributed much to the success of the paper. Addison's best essays are the result of his slightly chilly insight into the typical mental attitudes of his day." Later critics are apt to place Steele higher than Addison. Thus Leigh-Hunt, for instance, affirms that he prefers "Steele with all his faults" to "Addison with all his essays."

The Spectator

Without any warning to his readers, Steele suddenly wound up The Taller on January 2, 1711. But two months later-on March 1,171 \-The Spectator began its memorable career of 555 numbers up to December 6,1712. Whereas The Tatler had appeared only three times a week. The Spectator appeared daily, excepting Sundays. The new paper became tremendously popular among English men and women belonging to all walks of life. The best of all the periodical essays, it is an important human document concerning the morals and manners, thoughts and ideas, of the English society of the age of Queen Anne. Addison's fame chiefly rests on The Spectator papers. As A. R. Humphreys puts it: "Were it not for his essays, Addison's literary reputation would be insignificant; into them, diluted and sweetened for popular consumption, went his classical and modern reading, his study of philosophy and natural science, reflections culled from French critics, and indeed] anything that might make learning "polite"'. A particularly happy feature of The Spectator was its envisagement of a club consisting of representatives from diverse walks of life. Among them Sir Roger de Coverley, and eccentric but thoroughly lovable Tory baronet, is one of the immortal creations of English literature. The Spectator drew a large female readership as many of the papers were for and about women. Though both Addison and Steele were Whigs, yet in The Spectator they kept up a fairly neutral political poise and, in fact, did their best to expose the error of the political fanaticism of both the Tories and Whigs. Further, The Spectator evinced much interest in trade and, consequently, endeared itself to the up-and-coming trading community which had its representative in The Spectator Club-4he rich Sir Andrew Freeport. However, much of the charm of The Spectator lay in its style--humorous, ironical, but elegant and polished. The chief importance of The Spectator for the modern reader lies in its humour. As A. R. Humphrey reminds us, The Spectator papers are important much more historically than aesthetically.

Notes The modern reader, "if led to expect more than a charming humour and vivacity, is likely to feel cheated."

"The Guardian" and Other Papers before Dr. Johnson

The tremendous popularity of The Toiler and The Spectator prompted many imitations. Among them may be mentioned The Tory Taller, The Female Tatler, Tit for Tatt, and The North Taller. The best of all was Steele's own Guardian which had a run of 175 numbers, from March 12 to October 1,1713. It was, like The Spectator, a daily. "If," says George Sherburn, "The Spectator had not existed, The Guardian might outrank all periodicals of this kind, but it is shaded by its predecessor, and the fact that Addison—busy with his tragedy Cato-had no part in the early numbers certainly diminished its interest." Another factor which diminished its interest was its open indulgence in political affairs. Apart from Steele and Addison it included contributions from Berkeley and Gay. The Englishmen, the successor of The Guardian, was even more politically biased. Steele's Lover (40 numbers) and Addison's Freeholder (55 numbers) followed The Englishman. Even to name the works of other periodical essayists would be difficult, so large is their number. "None of them," to quote Sherburn, "approached with any consistency the excellency of these (the periodical papers produced by Steele and Addison)."

Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, and Other

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In the second half of the eighteenth century the periodical essay showed a tendency to cease as an independent publication and to get incorporated into the newspaper as just another feature. The series of about a hundred papers of Dr. Johnson, called The Idler, for example, was contributed to newspaper, The Universal Chronicler, and appeared between April 15, 1758 and April 5, 1760. These papers are lighter and shorter than those published in the periodical paper The Rambler. The Rambler appeared twice a week, between March 20, 1750 and March 14,1752, and ran to 208 numbers. Dr. Johnson as a periodical essayist was much more serious in purpose than Steele and Addison had been. His lack of humour and unrelived gravity coupled with his ponderous English make his Rambler papers quite heavy reading. The lack of popularity of The Rambler can easily be ascribed to this very fact.

Among the papers that followed The Rambler may be mentioned Edward Moore's World (209 numbers) and the novelist Henry Mackenzie's Mirror and The Lounger. A significant development was the creation of the "magazine" or what we call "digest" today. It was an anthology of the interesting material which had already appeared in recent newspapers orpenodicals. The first magazine was Edward Cave's monthly, The Gentleman's Magazine, founded i,. 1731. The vogue of the magazine caught on and many magazines including The magazines of Magazines (1750-51), appeared and disappeared. Along with the magazine may be mentioned the initiation of the critical review devoted to the criticism of books. The first such periodical was Ralph Griffith's Monthly Review.

In the end, let us consider the work of Oliver Goldsmith who from 1757 to 1772 contributed to no fewer than ten periodicals, including The Monthly Review. His own Bee (1759) ran to only eight weekly numbers. The Citizen of the World (1762)—Goldsmith his best work—is a collection of essays which originally appeared in The Public Ledger as "Chinese Letters" (1760-61). Goldsmith's essays are rich in human details, a quivering sentimentalism, and candidness of spirit. His prose style is, likewise, quite attractive; he avoids bitterness, coarseness, pedantry, and stiff wit. His style, in the words of George Sherburn, "lacks the boldness of the aristocratic manner, and it escapes the tendency of his generation to follow Johnson into excessive heaviness of diction and balanced formality of sentence structure...It is precisely for this lack of formality and for his graceful and sensitive ease, fluency, and vividness that we value his style."

11.4 Summary

- As has already been pointed out, the Age of Johnson in English poetry is an age of transition and experiment which ultimately led to the Romantic Revival.
- William Cowper (1731-1800), who lived a tortured life and was driven to the verge of madness, had a genial and kind soul.
- Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was the literary dictator of his age, though he was not its greatest writer.
- Burke (1729-1797) was the most important member of Johnson's circle. He was a member of the Parliament for thirty years and as such he made his mark as the most forceful and effective orator of his times.
- The periodical essay and the novel are the two important gifts of "our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century" to English literature.
- In the second half of the eighteenth century the periodical essay showed a tendency to cease as an independent publication and to get incorporated into the newspaper as just another feature. The series of about a hundred papers of Dr. Johnson, called The Idler.

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11.5 Keywords

Age of Johnson : The later half of the eighteenth century, which was dominated by Dr. Samuel Johnson, is called the Age of Johnson.

Work of Ossian : James Macpherson (1736-1796) became the most famous poet during his time by the publication of Ossianic poems, called the Works of Ossian.

11.6 Review Questions

1. What is the pope and prose of the Age of Johnson? Explain.
2. What is the Periodical Essay? Explain.
3. What is the spectator?
4. Who was Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. (b) 1784
2. (a) James Thomson
3. (c) Thomas Gray
4. (d)George Crabbe
5. (a) Edward Gibbon

11.7 Further Readings

Books

History of English Literature, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi 2004: Long. W.J.

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Unit 12: The Age of Johnson-The Decline of Neoclassicism (Gothic Novel)

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define history of the goths.
- Explain elements of gothic novel.
- Define criticism of gothic novel.
- Describe parodic efforts and devotional verse.

Introduction

"Gothic" has come to mean quite a number of things by this day and age. It could mean a particular style of art, be it in the form of novels, paintings, or architecture; it could mean "medieval" or "uncouth." It could even refer to a certain type of music and its fans. What it originally meant, of course, is "of, relating to or resembling the Goths, their civilization, or their language" ("gothic").

Gothic fiction, sometimes referred to as Gothic horror, is a genre or mode of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance. Gothicism's origin is attributed to English author Horace Walpole, with his 1764 novel The Castle of Otranto, subtitled "A Gothic Story". The effect of Gothic fiction feeds on a pleasing sort of terror, an extension of Romantic literary pleasures that were relatively new at the time of Walpole's novel. Melodrama and parody (including self-parody) were other long-standing features of the Gothic initiated by Walpole.

12.1 Early Gothic Romances - Castle of Otranto

Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) is often regarded as the first true Gothic romance. Walpole was obsessed with medieval Gothic architecture, and built his own house, Strawberry Hill, in that form, sparking a fashion for Gothic revival.

His declared aim was to combine elements of the medieval romance, which he deemed too fanciful, and the modern novel, which he considered to be too confined to strict realism. The basic plot created many other Gothic staples, including a threatening mystery and an ancestral curse, as well as countless trappings such as hidden passages and oft-fainting heroines. The first edition was published disguised as an actual medieval romance from Italy discovered and republished by a

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fictitious translator. When Walpole admitted to his authorship in the second edition, its originally favourable reception by literary reviewers changed into rejection. The romance, usually held in contempt by the educated as a tawdry and debased kind of writing, had only recently been made respectable by the works of Richardson and Fielding. A romance with superstitious elements, and moreover void of didactical intention, was considered a setback and not acceptable as a modern production.

Notes Walpole's forgery, together with the blend of history and fiction that was contravening the principles of the Enlightenment, brought about the Gothic novel's association with fake documentation.

Clara Reeve

Clara Reeve, best known for her work The Old English Baron (1778), set out to take Walpole's plot and adapt it to the demands of the time by balancing fantastic elements with 18th century realism. The question now arose whether supernatural events that were not as evidently absurd as Walpole's would not lead the simpler minds to believe them possible.

Ann Radcliffe

Ann Radcliffe developed the technique of the explained supernatural, in which every seemingly supernatural intrusion is eventually traced back to natural causes. Radcliffe made the Gothic novel socially acceptable. Her success attracted many imitators, mostly of low quality, which soon led to a general perception of the genre as inferior, formulaic, and stereotypical. Among other elements, Ann Radcliffe also introduced the brooding figure of the Gothic villain, which developed into the Byronic hero. Radcliffe's novels, above all The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), were best-sellers, although along with all novels they were looked down upon by well-educated people as sensationalist women's entertainment, despite some men's enjoyment of them.

Did u know? Radcliffe provided an aesthetic for the genre in an influential article "On the Supernatural in Poetry", examining the distinction and correlation between horror and terror in Gothic fiction.

12.2 History of the Goths

The Goths, one of the many Germanic tribes, fought numerous battles with the Roman Empire for centuries. According to their own myths, as recounted by Jordanes, a Gothic historian from the mid 6th century, the Goths originated in what is now southern Sweden, but their king Berig led them to the southern shore of the Baltic Sea. They finally separated into two groups, the Visigoths (the West Goths) and Ostrogoths (the East Goths), so named because of where they eventually settled. They reached the height of their power around 5th century A.D., when they sacked Rome and captured Spain, but their history finally subsumed under that of the countries they conquered ("Goths").

Connection to the Gothic Novel

Centuries passed before the word "gothic" meant anything else again. During the Renaissance, Europeans rediscovered Greco-Roman culture and began to regard a particular type of architecture, mainly those built during the Middle Ages, as "gothic" — not because of any connection to the Goths, but because the 'Uomo Universale' considered these buildings barbaric and definitely not in that Classical style they so admired. Centuries more passed before "gothic" came to describe a

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certain type of novels, so named because all these novels seem to take place in Gothic-styled architecture — mainly castles, mansions, and, of course, abbeys ("Gothic...").

12.3 Elements of Gothic Novel

Archetypes in the Gothic Novel

As David De Vore states, "The Gothic hero becomes a sort of archetype as we find that there is a pattern to their characterization. There is always the protagonist, usually isolated either voluntarily or involuntarily. Then there is the villain, who is the epitome of evil, either by his (usually a man) own fall from grace, or by some implicit malevolence. The Wanderer, found in many Gothic tales, is the epitome of isolation as he wanders the earth in perpetual exile, usually a form of divine punishment."

Virginal Maiden – young, beautiful, pure, innocent, kind, virtuous. Shows these virtues by fainting and crying whenever her delicate sensibilities are challenged, usually starts out with a mysterious past and it is later revealed that she is the daughter of an aristocratic or noble family.

Matilda in The Castle of Otranto – She is determined to give up Theodore, the love of her life, for her cousin's sake. Matilda always puts others first before herself, and always believes the best in others.

Adeline in The Romance of the Forest - "Her wicked Marquis, having secretly immured Number One (his first wife), has now a new and beautiful wife, whose character, alas! Does not bear inspection." As this review states, the virginal maiden character is above inspection because her personality is flawless. Hers is a virtuous character whose piety and unflinching optimism causes all to fall in love with her.

Older, Foolish Woman

Hippolita in The Castle of Otranto - Hippolita is depicted as the obedient wife of her tyrant husband who "would not only acquiesce with patience to divorce, but would obey, if it was his pleasure, in endeavouring to persuade Isabelle to give him her hand". This shows how weak women are portrayed as they are completely submissive, and in Hippolita's case, even support polygamy at the expense of her own marriage.

Madame LaMotte in The Romance of the Forest – naively assumes that her husband is having an affair with Adeline. Instead of addressing the situation directly, she foolishly lets her ignorance turn into pettiness and mistreatment of Adeline.

Hero

Theodore in The Castle of Otranto – he is witty, and successfully challenges the tyrant, saves the virginal maid without expectations

Theodore in The Romance of the Forest – saves Adeline multiple times, is virtuous, courageous and brave, self-sacrificial

Tyrant

Manfred in The Castle of Otranto – unjustly accuses Theodore of murdering Conrad, tries to put his blame onto others. Lies about his motives for attempting to divorce his wife and marry his late son's fiancé.

The Marquis in The Romance of the Forest – attempts to get with Adeline even though he is already married, attempts to rape Adeline, and blackmails Monsieur LaMotte.

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Vathek – Ninth Caliph of the Abassides, who ascended to the throne at an early age. His figure was pleasing and majestic, but when angry, his eyes became so terrible that "the wretch on whom it was fixed instantly fell backwards and sometimes expired". He was addicted to women and pleasures of the flesh, so he ordered five palaces to be built: the five palaces of the senses. Although he was an eccentric man, learned in the ways of science, physics, and astrology, he loved his people. His main greed, however, was thirst for knowledge. He wanted to know everything. This is what led him on the road to damnation."

The Stupid Servant – acts as comic relief by asking seemingly stupid questions, transitions between scenes, brings news, messenger, and moves plot forward.

Peter in The Romance of the Forest – whenever he brings information to people, he never gets to the point but prattles on and on about insignificant things. "The reader…eagerly follows the flight of LaMotte, also of Peter, his coachman, an attached, comic, and familiar domestic."

Bianca in The Castle of Otranto – a gossip, helps characters get valuable news, provides comic relief.

Clowns – break the tension and act as comic relief.

Diego and Jaquez in The Castle of Otranto – they appear to talk about random things, and argue foolishly with each other in order to lighten the air of the novel.

Banditti Ruffians

They appear in several Gothic Novels including The Romance of the Forest in which they kidnap Adeline from her father.

Clergy – always weak, usually evil.

Father Jerome in The Castle of Otranto – Jerome, though not evil, is certainly weak as he gives up his son when he is born and leaves his lover.

Ambrosio in The Monk – Evil and weak, this character stoops to the lowest levels of corruption including rape and incest.

Mother Superior in The Romance of the Forest – Adeline fled from this convent because the sisters weren't allowed to see sunlight and highly oppressive environment.

The Setting

The setting of the Gothic Novel is a character in itself. The plot is usually set in a castle, an abbey, a monastery, or some other, usually religious edifice, and it is acknowledged that this building has secrets of its own. It is this gloomy and frightening scenery, which sets the scene for what the audience should expect. The importance of setting is noted in a London review of the Castle of Otranto, "He describes the country towards Otranto as desolate and bare, extensive downs covered with thyme, with occasionally the dwarf holly, the Rosa marina, and lavender, stretch around like wild moorlands…Mr. Williams describes the celebrated Castle of Otranto as "an imposing object of considerable size…has a dignified and chivalric air. A fitter scene for his romance he probably could not have chosen." Similarly, De Vore states, "The setting is greatly influential in Gothic novels. It not only evokes the atmosphere of horror and dread, but also portrays the deterioration of its world. The decaying, ruined scenery implies that at one time there was a thriving world. At one time the abbey, castle, or landscape was something treasured and appreciated. Now, all that lasts is the decaying shell of a once thriving dwelling." Thus, without the decrepit backdrop to initiate the events, the Gothic Novel would not exist.

12.4 Criticism of Gothic Novel

The Gothic novel has received much literary criticism throughout the years. Critics of the genre have engaged in analysis of the various elements of the Gothic novel and tie those elements with

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the repressed feelings of individuals and, in a twentieth century perspective, the unconscious of the human psyche. Vijay Mishra, in his essay entitled "The Gothic Sublime," states the Gothic novel is a "presentation of the unpresentable" (Mishra 1). The Gothic novel deals with understanding attained through horror. Mishra also believes the Gothic novel, in the afore-mentioned sense, is a foil to the typical Romantic novel, wherein the sublime is found through temperance (Mishra 2).

Literary critic, Davis Morris, believes the Gothic novel addresses the horrific, hidden ideas and emotions within individuals and provides an outlet for them (Morris 1). The strong imagery of horror and abuse in Gothic novels reveals truths to us through realistic fear, not transcendental revelation. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about the same idea in her essay, "The Structure of the Gothic Convention," and she adds that the idea of a protagonist having a struggle with a terrible, surreal person or force is a metaphor for an individual's struggle with repressed emotions or thoughts (Sedgwick 1). Personifying the repressed idea or feeling gives strength to it and shows how one, if caught unaware, is overcome with the forbidden desire.

Another author, Joyce Carol Oates, writes of how the repressed emotions, which are personified in the Gothic novel, are horrible not only because of what they are, but also because of how they enslave a person (Oates 1). These desires are mysterious, and mystery breeds attraction, and with attraction, one is easily seduced by them. With this in mind, it is easy to understand how Bertrand Evans points out the hero in the Gothic novel is consistently weaker than the antagonist and usually flees from it rather than defeating it. The similar themes of repression of forbidden desires, and the horror surrounding and penetrating them, are clearly focal points of most Gothic critics. The enlightenment gained from these aspects is the driving force behind the Gothic novel.

12.5 Parodic Efforts

What is a Parody?

Mikhail Bakhtin defines parody as a "'stylization,' that involves the appropriation of the utterances of others for the purposes of inserting a new orientation of meaning alongside the original point(s) of view. . . .The imitator [or the author] usually merges utterances so completely that one 'voice' is heard" (Howard 14).

Who Writes a Gothic Parody and Why?

By the 1790s, many felt that the Gothic novel was an exhausting trend, and other authors were starting to write against it (Roberts 83). Both Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey and Thomas Love Peacock's Nightmare Abbey, published in 1818, were the first to react to the genre in the form of the Gothic parody (271).

When we look at one of the first Gothic parodies, like Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey (1818), we must remember one important aspect raised by Backhtin: the new author parodying the Gothic genre simply "inserts" his or her opinion into the previous author's "point of view(s)" (Howard 14). Austen does directly mock the genre with her references to Anne Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho. She in turn "adopts standard Gothic machinery — an abbey, secret closets, and mysterious manuscripts — only to undercut their significance in her denouement" (Roberts 271). Austen also depicts "General Tilney as a villain — not a true wife murderer — thus still recognizes that the fears of patriarchal authority are ultimately genuine" (Roberts 271). Even though she parodies and mocks the Gothic novel, she still retains part of the genre's overarching themes: "the individual is something so precious that society must never be allowed to violate it" (Morse 29).

In general, the Gothic novel refers "behind its trappings and mysteries, presents a powerful critique of arbitrary power" which many authors who parody it wish to retain. In American history there have been a few who wish to make the Gothic novel into a political parody, Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and Harriet Wilson's Our Nig. It is important to recognize that the Gothic parodies, and even the Gothic movement, extend beyond British literature and the 19th century.

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"The Gothic parody survives into the 20th [and 21st centuries] by way of the related technique of metafiction. Writers such as Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco habitually deploy, self-consciously and ironically, the narrative devices of the Gothic" (Roberts 271).

The English novel seems to have grown out of the grooves of conventional realism and didacticism. The last years of the eighteenth century are often dubbed as the age of transition—transition from the neoclassicism of the school of Pope to the romanticism of the early nineteenth century. In these years we find a shift of emphasis in the novel too. Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto (1765) was the first work of fiction which broke away completely from the traditions of the realistic and didactic (and often, sentimental) novel and started the vogue of what is called "the Gothic romance" or "the novel of terror." Walpole and his followers created in their novels a blood-curdling and hair-raising world of haunted castles, eerie ruins, macabre ghosts, harrowing spectacles of murder, and a hundred other elements calculated to strike terror in the reader and to make him perspire all over. Mostly, the "terror novelists" were crude sensationalists whose works were mere schoolboy exercises devoid of any artistry. Most of them transported themselves to the medieval Europe supposedly full of the spirit of chivalry, romance, and mystery. As most of them turned to the middle Ages for their material, they are called "Gothic" novelists. Very few of these novelists showed any appreciable knowledge of human psychology, perhaps because no such knowledge was at all required for the kind of work they were up to. Most of them turned to the supernatural to add to the atmosphere of awe and terror. All this goes to show that the terror novelists were of the nature of crude and thrill-hungry romantics who came before the true efflorescence of romanticism in the early years of the nineteenth century. But some of them like Horace Walpole were in fact hard-boiled intellectuals who indulged in Gothic romance as an escape from the oppressive boredom of the world of reality. Their medievalism was, thus, a sham, a mode of escape. For the true romanticists like Coleridge and Keats the hazy and romance-bathed Europe of the middle Ages was a real world: they lived and breathed in it; they did not escape into it, as they were always there. But the terror novelists like Walpole were dilettantes and pseudo-medievalists who did not believe a word of all that they wrote. Their world was a make-believe world created just to kill a few idle hours which happened to be free from any intellectual activity.

Task Write a short note on Gothic Novel.

Horace Walpole (1717–97)

Horace Walpole was the pioneer of the Gothic novel in England. Just as Percy with his Reliques and Macpherson with his Ossianic poems heralded the romantic movement in English poetry, Horace Walpole with his novel The Castle of Otranto (1764) heralded the romantic movement in English fiction. He reacted against the realism, didacticism, and sentimentalism of the followers of Richardson and Fielding. He did not think higly of even Richardson and Fielding themselves. After reading the fourth volume of Richardson's novel Sir Charles Grandison he set it aside saying :"I was so tired of sets of people getting together, and saying, 'Pray, Miss, with whom are you in love?' His desire was to shake arid shock such niminy-priminv sentimentalism and to give a story altogether chilling and thrilling. He said good-bye to his own age and chose for the scene of his novel Italy of the twelfth or thirteenth century, full of the spirit of mystery, supernatural ism, and crime. It is of interest to note that he was something of an antiquarian very much interested in the art of the Middle Ages, particularly Gothic architecture. Ifor Evans in A Short History of English Literature observes; "Walpole carried out the medieval cult more completely than most of his contemporaries, and at Strawberry Hill he constructed a Gothic house, where he could dream himself back into the days of chivalry and monastic life." Horace Walpole was the son of Sir Robert Walpole, the famous Prime Minister of England. He was a witness to the boredom of higher political life, and his medievalism was perhaps an escape from this oppressive boredom.

The Castle of Otranto was first published in 1764 and was given out to be the English translation of an old Italian manuscript. In the second edition, however, Walpole admitted that it was all his

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own work. The events narrated are supposed to belong to Italy of the twelfth or thirteenth century. The scene of action is the castle situated at Otranto. Manfred, the villain-hero, is the grandson of the usurper of the kingdom. He intends marrying his son to the beautiful Isabella; but on the day of the marriage his son is mysteriously killed, and he himself decides to marry Isabella after divorcing his wife. But Isabella escapes with Theodore, a young peasant. Manfred decides to kill Isabella, but mistakenly kills his own daughter who loves Theodore and is at that instant accompanying him. The castle is thrown down by the spirit of the true ruler who had been killed by Manfred's grandfather. Theodore is revealed to be the son of that ruler. He marries Isabella and establishes himself as the ruler of the realm in place of Manfred.

The story is puerile in the extreme. Its Gothicism and supernaturalism are also crude and unconvincing. Even the most naive reader will fail to believe such events as the walking of a picture, coming out of three drops of blood from the nose of a statue, and the descent of a huge helmet apparenly from nowhere—not to speak of the account of ghosts and the mysterious fulfilment of a prohecy. Walpole's supernaturalism is not at all psychologically convincing like Coleridge's for example, or Shakespeare's. It is strange to find Walpole comparing himself to Shakespeare in his use of the supernatural. He wrote: "That great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model I copied." Ifor Evans observes about this claim: "It is as if all the poetry and character had been removed from Shakespeare's Macbeth, only to leave the raw mechanism of melodrama and the supernatural." What in reality Walpole sincerely tried to copy from Shakespeare was the mixing of the tragic and comic elements by punctuating the very sombre narrative with instances of the naivete of domestic servants. But Walpole does not succeed here either.

Notes As George Sherburn points out, Walpole draws the domestic servants "so feebly that they fail almost totally in comic power."

Walpole's medievalism is also sham.He never shows any real knowledge of the times and places which he handles in the story. As a historical novel The Castle of Otranto is, thus, worthless. His "medieval escape," as George Sherburn puts it, "simply provided a no man's land where startling, thrilling, sensational happenings might be frequent." Everything, however incredible, passes muster in a Gothic setting. No explanation of the supernatural incidents is considered desirable by Walpole at all, and none is offered.

The Castle of Otranto became, in spite of all its absurdities, quite popular, and was imitated by a large number of writers including Clara Reeve and Ann Radcliffe. Walpole with his own example set the tradition of Gothic romance which was obliged to him for numerous "conventions." According to Moody and Lovett, these conventional elements are:

- "a hero sullied by unmentionable crimes";
- "several persecuted heroines";
- "a castle with secret passages and haunted rooms";
- "a plentiful sprinkling of supernatural terrors."

Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823)

Though Mrs. Radcliffe was an imitator of Walpole yet her attempts at the Gothic romance were much more successful and artistic than Walpole's. She was in fact the ablest and the best of all the practitioners of this kind of writing. She was the loving wife of a journalist, and wrote five romances just to while away her leisurer-The most famous among them are The Mysteries of Udolpho (1764) and The Italian (1797). The scene in both of them is the mysterious land of Italy: in the former Italy of the sixteenth century, and in the latter that of the eighteenth. Mrs. Radcliffe almost always wrote to a formula. A beautiful young woman is kept imprisoned by a hardened, sadistic villain, in a lonely castle, and is ultimately rescued by a somewhat colourless hero. These heroes and heroines are all modelled after the same pattern. The only variety the heroines admit of is of their complexion. Otherwise, all are sentimental, and, in Compton-Rickett's words, "are true

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sisters of Clarissa, both in emotional expression and in moral impeccability." Add to all that the usual paraphernalia of terror elements. "She", observes Louis I. Bredvold, "availed herself to the fullest of loathsome dungeons, secret vaults and corridors, all essential features of the castles of Gothic romance." Let us consider the main points of her work, in most of which she differs from Walpole:

- She is quite timid in her use of the supernatural. Just before the end of a novel she tries to explain away all the supernatural incidents as misunderstood versions of quite natural phenomena. She works very well through subtle suggestion, especially through the description of eerie sounds.
- She introduces in her novels the element of scenic description which was altogether neglected by Walpole. She is perhaps the first of English novelists in her interest in the scenery for its own sake. She never visited the countries she dealt with in her novels, but her descriptions are vivid and entirely credible.
  Her grasp of real history is as poor as Walpole's. On the very first page of The Mysteries of Udolpho she expressly tells us that the incidents of the story belong to the year 1584. However, this year could easily be substituted by another without any difference.
- In her novels she reconciles didacticism and sentimentalism with romance, whereas Walpole had entirely forsaken the realistic, didactic, and sentimental tradition of eighteenth-century novel.

Matthew Lewis or "Monk" Lewis (1775–1818)

Matthew Lewis, nicknamed "Monk" Lewis on account of his Gothic romance of that title, seems to have completely neglected the lesson of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe. The Monk is a blood-curdling nightmare of macabresque ghosts, rotten corpses, weird magic and witchcraft, and a thousand other horrifying elements. According to Samuel C. Chew, "in The Monk (1797), a nightmare of fiendish wickedness, ghostly supernaturalism and sadistic sensuality, there is almost indubitably something else than mere literary sensationalism: it gives evidence of a psychopathic condition perhaps inherent in the extremes of the romantic temperament." He further observes that "The Monk may be considered the dream of an 'oversexed' adolescent, for Lewis was only twenty when he wrote it." Lewis never made any attempt like Mrs. Ann Radcliffe to rationalise his supernatural. He was out for the crudest sensationalism, and therefore he cannot be ranked high among the terror novelists, in spite of being the most terrifying of all.

Miss Clara Reeve (1729–1807), Charles Robert Maturin (1782–1824), and Mrs. Shelley (1797–1851)

They were the most important of the rest of Gothic novelists. Miss Clara Reeve's Champion of Virtue, afterwards entitled The Old English Baron, was obviously inspired by Walpole. She laid the scene in England of Henry VI, but, like Walpole, she did not show much genuine knowledge of the age she handled. Compton-Rickett observes : "Miss Reeve thought to improve upon the original and economised with her supernatural effects; but she only succeeded in exceeding Walpole's tale in its tedium, repeating most of his absurdities and showing even less acquaintance with medieval life."

Maturin wrote his romance The Fatal Revenge (1807) as a follower of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe. However, his masterpiece is Melmoth the Wanderer (1820) which, according to Samuel C. Chew, is "the greatest novel of the school of terror." It differs from most novels of this type in its well-patterned structure and its attempt at the analysis of motive.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Frankenstein (1817) is, in the words of Samuel C. Chew, "the only novel of terror that is still famous." It is the story of the ravages of a man-made monster equivalent to the modern "robot". Decidedly, Mrs. Shelley's work gave many hints to the future writers of science fiction such as H. G. Wells. She may with equal justice be considered the first of the writers of science fiction as the last of the novelists of the terror school.

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William Beckford (1760–1844) the Oriental Romance

Beckford, in Compton-Rickett's words, "was certainly a man of considerable force of intellect and brilliant though hectic imagination." Though he was a novelist of the terror school yet we cannot include him among the Gothic romancers, as his novel Vathek (1786) had for its background not a European country of the Middle Agess but the Arabia of yore. He was probably influenced by the Mass of translated versions of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Chinese tales which were flooding the England of his times. In Vathek there is, to be sure, the usual presence of a good quantity of the terror apparatus. Vathek is a caliph, a kind of Moslem Faustus, who sells his soul to Eblis (the Devil). The description of his end and the fiery hell is, indeed, the most terrifying. In league with Eblis Vathek commits the most blood-curdling crimes, and his end is as horrifying as his deeds. Beckford succeeds in conveying a rich impression of Oriental magnificence and splendour combined with unchecked sensuality. Vathek was immensely popular for the exotic thrills offered by it.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... the castle of otranto (1764) is often regarded as the First true Gothic romance.
2. The English novel seems to have grown out of the grooves of conventional realism and ..... .
3. Horace walpole was the pioneer of the Gothic Novel in ..... .
4. The ..... was first published in 1764.
5. Mary Wollstonecraft shelley's Frankenstein (1817) is in the words of ....., "the only novel of terror that is still famous."

12.6 Devotional Verse

In the Devotional style of poetry has a long tradition. For some it is the only poetry; for others it is cloying or annoying but harmless.

These poems share with other poetry that they serve as a vehicle for creativity often releasing the writer from the limits of their present circumstances. Some of these poems are a bridge to psychological peace and are written in extremes of feeling. Emotions are often large and confident, expressed in obvious language. This poetry may tend to avoid the creative and subtle use of language, which is why many readers avoid these writers.

Did u know? "Devotional" seems to be a good general name for this style of writing. The writer is clearly devoted religiously or romantically, devoted without any equivocation whatsoever.

Devotional Poems Pinnacle of Renaissance Wit

Devotional verse poses a special problem for those readers who hold both spiritual and literary values. More often than not those who compose religious verse are moved more by a desire to express a doctrinal truth than to contrive intellectually and aesthetically satisfying verse. Fortunately for those readers in the Christian tradition, the English Renaissance provides an abundance of poets of the first order who chose to express tenets of the Faith in well-crafted verse. Among these was a coterie of poets who have been styled the Metaphysical Poets, the foremost being John Donne.

The previous number of this series investigated Donne's career as a contriver of amorous poetry, before his ordination in 1615 as an Anglican priest. It has been a continuing fascination for readers that even though the vested John Donne left off writing poems in defense of the pleasures of the

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world and the flesh and took on the Devil as his adversaries, his poetic modus operandi remained much the same challenging the readers' minds with unusual juxtapositions and intricate word-play.

Donne's religious background was mixed. He was collateral descendent of Sir Thomas More, the victim of Henry VIII's intolerance. His family remained fiercely allied with Rome, and one brother died in prison for having concealed a Roman priest from the Protestant authorities. Despite the religious ban on Roman Catholics, Donne attended both Oxford and Cambridge because he enrolled at such a young age. But he did not finish a university degree. When the legal career which he seems to have envisioned for himself (he studied at the Inns of Court) did not materialize, he sought preferment in the Church. (No serious doubts have ever been raised concerning the sincerity of either his conversion to Anglicanism or his priestly vocation.) His keen mind led to powerful sermons, both in the pulpit and in print, and one piece of his religious prose, the 17th of the Meditations on Emergent Occasions, is one of the most often quoted works in our literature: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...; any man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Donne's devotional verse by reading in the Holy Sonnets, published posthumously. Donne used the sonnet structure which has come to be associated with Shakespeare's name: three quatrains and a concluding rhymed couplet. They are not a sonnet-sequence, having neither narrative nor unifying theme, other than the Gospel.

We can detect in Sonnet 7 some of the characteristics of Metaphysical verse delineated in the previous Donne lecture. It begins with the paradox of a "round earth's imagined corners," a recognition on the poet-priest's part that some of the metaphors of Scripture (such as the earth having four corners) must be taken figuratively. He calls on the angels of judgment to rouse from the grave all those who have fallen prey to the ills of humanity: "All whom the flood did, and fire shall overthrow." But the sonnet is not a perfected utterance; like his amorous poems, it is thought-in-process. He changes his mind, and asks the Almighty to postpone the Second Coming, so that he as a sinner can have time to "mourn a space" for his sinfulness. "Teach me to repent," he asks, saying that only by that reaction to God's grace can he be confident of his salvation.

Sonnet 13 demonstrates the unorthodoxy of analogy that distinguishes Donne's verse and that of the others such as Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, and Traherne who are linked with him in the Metaphysical school. The poem allegorizes the conversion experience of the soul from the Devil to God. With arrogance not unlike that in "The Sun Rising," the poet accuses the Almighty of not making a strong enough effort to save him, to overthrow me," so that "I may rise, and stand." "Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You/ As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend." He then continues the martial metaphor, saying that he could be seen as a town under siege. He "labours to admit you," (with that phrase Donne introduces the sexual imagery), but to no avail. God's presence in the human mind, Reason, should help him, but Reason has been captured and is useless. The result is that the narrator's soul is pledged to the Devil, "your enemy." He calls on the Trinity to effect a divorce, putting asunder the bonds that the Devil has put him in. "Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again." The metaphorical reference is again sexual, with implications of a forced entry. The sonnet concludes with a statement of the essential Christian paradox of perfect freedom being found only in perfect submission, but the paradox is couched in language that suggests rape. He says to God, "Take me to You, imprison me," for only in that imprisonment can perfect freedom be found. Likewise, purity will elude him until God has taken him, as it were, against his sinful will: "for I,/ Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,/ Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me."

Rehearsal for the Afterlife

The poet's drawing his imagery from the world of war is not unorthodox, since the Bible and Christian tradition abound with comparisons to the Christian as a warrior and life as a battle against sin. It is the frank statement of the metaphor of the action of grace on the unredeemed soul as akin to rape that disconcerted readers like Dr. Johnson. Interestingly enough, the reverse occurs

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in one of his amorous poems, "The Canonization." He likens the phenomenon of sexual climax followed by renewal of ardor to the mystery of the Resurrection of the Body (a metaphor that works for the poet because in Renaissance parlance, "die" was a commonplace for orgasm). "We die and rise the same, and prove/ Mysterious by this love." No poem of John Donne's is more widely read or more directly associated with Donne than the tenth of the Holy Sonnets, Death, be not proud." (Donne's reputation as a moribund preacher was well-known. had a portrait of himself made while posed in a winding-sheet so that he could contemplate a personalized memento mori.) Donne draws upon a popular subject in medieval and Renaissance art, Le roi mort or King Death. With an impudence that is characteristically Donne's, he deflates Death in the opening salvo. He discounts the power of death as a mere fiction: "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee/ Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so./ For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow/ Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me."

The rhetorical theme of the poem goes back and forth between the two perceptions of death inherent in the Judeo-Christian belief-system. The first is the perception of death as a natural and desirable end to life and its vicissitudes, and adding to that the Christian idea that death is the avenue to eternal salvation. In the second quatrain, Donne says that if fatigue-induced sleep, one of life's greatest boons, is the very picture of death, then how much more pleasure will come from death itself? Even the virtuous must go with Death, to the "Rest of our bones, and soul's delivery."

The second perception about death comes in the third quatrain—the image of death as vile accompaniment to evil forces in life: "Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,/ And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell." The poet even notes that narcotics or witchcraft ("poppies or charms") can outdo death in making people sleep, since drug-induced or hex-generated trances are not as permanent as death. The superiority of these human-based modes of death takes away the last shred of dignity for death: "Why swell'st thou then?" His confident reliance is on the victory of Christ over Death through the Resurrection: "One Short sleep past, we wake eternally,/ And death shalt be no more. Death, thou shalt die." The verbal gymnastics that Donne performs in this sonnet cannot disguise the fact that as a Christian he must entertain these two ideas of death: death as rescuer, death as punisher of even the most noble. In the end, all that he can do in order to deal with the enormity of death is to turn the sting of death against death itself.

The Anglican Reformation brought about a need for hymns in English to replace the Latin canticles. Donne wrote many religious poems and hymns, although none have taken a place in the standard repertory of English hymnody.

Notes "A Hymn to God the Father," can be found in the 1982 Hymnal from which Episcopalians m America sing.

Dr. Donne's religious hymns show a breadth of knowledge which we associate with the cliché Renaissance man, which indeed he was. Canon law, Scripture, and Church history were areas that he had complete intellectual mastery over, but his academic province stretched far beyond that. Interestingly enough, despite the fact that he did have university experience, his verse is relatively free of Greco-Roman allusion, the mainstay of Renaissance verse for the poetic mainstream of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Milton. This anti-Olympianism, as it were, is a characteristic not only of Donne's verse but the Metaphysicals in general. Both his secular and religious verses show him to have more than a layman's knowledge of the sciences, a branch of human intellectual endeavor that has seldom been congenial with theological studies. Of the sciences, he was most fascinated with the physical ones mathematics, geometry, chemistry, astronomy, and geography. His fascination with the shape of the physical planet, not just as the home of souls, and the nature of the physical heavens as other than the abode of the Divine place him as very decidedly in the Renaissance Zeitgeist which prized exploration.

But Donne's religious poems and hymns show not just a quick, fertile intellect at work. They reveal a personal intimacy and confessional disposition that one would not expect from a clergyman

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of Donne's public stature—after all, King James named him Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, the largest church in the kingdom, in 1621, and he was in line for a bishopric when he died. (His name is on the list of deans in Wren's St. Paul's, but at his own request his grave in the churchyard was not marked.)

Donne's 17th century biographer Isaak Walton gives the circumstances in which various Donne poems were composed. More modern biographers have often proved Walton wrong, but the feeling still persists that Donne wrote in reaction to various occasions.

Did u know? "Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness" was written after his recovery from the same especially severe illness of 1623 that produced the Devotions on Emergent Occasions.

The first stanza sees himself, the sick man, as in a rehearsal room, waiting to go on the celestial stage to sing with the Eternal Choir. Hence, he must look over his part and tune his instrument, i.e., prepare spiritually for death. In the next stanza, he introduces the controlling metaphor for the poem—the human body as a map. In this ingenious figure, his physicians ("by their love," he adds tongue-in-cheek) have become map-readers, studying him to discover the cause of impending death, just as cosmographers of the Age of Discovery studied the charts to find a passage through the American Continent to the Indies. (He puns on the word straits, meaning a water-passage as well as an unfavorable situation. Donne finds comfort that whatever "southwest discovery" might be (and he cites the names of all the famous straits), all such straits take him into the Western Sea (the sea of eternal peacefulness), just as all modes of death lead to the next life. "What shall my west hurt me?/ As west and east In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,/ So death doth touch the Resurrection." The poem concludes with a reference to an old Catholic tradition that the Cross was made from wood that grew from the Edenic Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil. The dying man becomes a meeting-place for both the First and Last Adam: his fevered grow shows the curse of Adam, while his soul is embraced by Christ. In his sickbed suffering, Donne sees his imitatio Christi and he calls for the crown other than the crown of suffering, i.e., the crown of eternal life.

"A Hymn to God the Father" is a death-bed confessional, written, Walton claims, right before Donne's passing. The poetic voice lists all the sins that he has—original sin, sins of commission, omission, and collusion. Readers will hear echoes of the penitent voice of Jack Donne the Elizabethan rake in the stanza. "Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won/ Others to sin, and made my sin their door?/ Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun/ A year or two, but wallowed in a score?" In each instance, he concludes his catalogue of sins with "When thou hast done, thou hast not done," punning on the word done meaning completed and as a homonym for his name. In the last stanza, this consummate Renaissance man, poet and prelate, who had reason to be proud, confronts in himself the sin of pride. He fears that his ultimate sin will be to doubt the efficacy of Grace of God through Christ to save such a titanic sinner as himself, and that he will "perish on the shore." He asks for a reaffirmation of the Covenant (punning on "sun"/"Son") by which he is saved through the light of Christ. Only then, in what a later 17th century preacher would call Grace Abounding, can he die secure: "And having done that, thou hast done./ I fear no more."

12.7 Summary

- Clara Reeve, best known for her work The Old English Baron (1778), set out to take Walpole's plot and adapt it to the demands of the time by balancing fantastic elements with 18th century realism.
- As David De Vore states, "The Gothic hero becomes a sort of archetype as we find that there is a pattern to their characterization.
- Mrs. Radcliffe was an imitator of Walpole yet her attempts at the Gothic romance were much more successful and artistic than Walpole's.

Notes

- Devotional verse poses a special problem for those readers who hold both spiritual and literary values.
- The poet's drawing his imagery from the world of war is not unorthodox, since the Bible and Christian tradition abound with comparisons to the Christian as a warrior and life as a battle against sin.

12.8 Keywords

Gothic : "Gothic" has come to mean quite a number of things by this day and age.

Goths : The Goths, one of the many Germanic tribes, fought numerous battles with the Roman Empire for centuries.

12.9 Review Questions

1. What is early Gothic romances-castle of otranto?
2. What is history of the Goths?
3. What is elements of Gothic Novel? Explain.
4. What is a Parody?
5. Who writes a Gothic Parody and why?
6. What is devotional verse? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Horace walpole's
2. didacticism
3. England
4. Castle of otranto
5. Samuel C.Chew

12.10 Further Readings

Books

The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 3rd edition CUP, New Delhi 2005: Sampson, George.

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Online links

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Unit 13: The Eighteenth Century-Approach/Transition Towards Romanticism (Progress of Education, Philosophical Thought and Science)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the nature of the revolt.
- Explain reaction against reason.
- Describe imagination, feeling and emotion.
- Define revolt against social authority.

Introduction

It must be pointed out at the very outset that "romanticism" is a thoroughly controversial term, and to define it is as hopeless a task as ever. F. L. Lucas in The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal (1948) counted as many as 11,396 definitions of romanticism. And none of them is completely off the target A few of the most important definitions may be glanced at here.

According to Theodore Watts-Dunton, the' Romantic Revival was equivalent to the "Renascence of Wonder." According to Walter Pater, romanticism means the addition of strangeness to beauty (whereas classicism is order in beauty). Herford points out that the Romantic Movement was primarily "an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. Cazamian observes:" The Romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision, and in its turn stimulating or directing such exercise." The bewildering mass of such definitions has led some critics to recommend the very abolition of terms like "romanticism" and "classicism" altogether. Let us quote one of such critics : "I ask you to distrust the familiar labels,-'classical,' 'neo-classical,' 'pseudo classical', 'pre-romantic' and all the others. I sometimes doubt if we shall ever understand the poetry of this century [the eighteenth] till we get rid of the terms 'classical' and 'romantic' in one and all of their forms. Johnson, Coleridge, and Hazlitt- perhaps our three greatest critics-did not find the need of them; nor should we." Likewise, F. L. Lucas finds romanticism a wholly wooly term fit only for slaughter. Nevertheless, these terms have been retained in criticism because they are useful, even if not very accurately definable.

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13.1 A Reaction

The Romantic Movement was a European, not only an English, phenomenon. Its repercussions were felt towards the end of the eighteenth century, but its efflorescence came at different times in different countries and in different ways. Germany was perhaps the first country to manifest a marked change in its sensibility which affected its philosophical thought more than literature. England turned romantic about the beginning of the nineteenth century, and France, the witness to the famous French Revolution (1789), manifested the influence of romanticism around 1830, when the Romantic Movement was already starting to decline in England. Romanticism meant different things in different countries, and even in the same country it implied different things with different writers. Thus in England it is customary to herd Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, and Byron all as romantics. But how different, say, Byron and Wordsworth are! A critic recommends the use of the term "romanticisms. "rather than "romanticism" in consideration of the variety of its fundamental features. Whatever be the interpretation of the term "romanticism," it is clear that it was essentially of the nature of a reaction. In England the Romantic Movement implies a reaction against the school of Dryden, Pope, and Dr. Johnson. However greatly may Wordsworth and Byron differ in their conception and practice of poetry, it is indisputable that both of them reacted against the set conventions and rules of poetry formulated and traditionalised over the decades by the poets of the neoclassic school. The Romantic Movement was thus a revolt against literary tradition. But it was more; it was also a revolt against social authority. It was perhaps Schlegel who first defined romanticism as "liberalism in literature." Most of the romantic poets were for the liberation of the individual spirit from the shackles of social authority as well as literary tradition. This emphasis on individual predilection, which in philosophical terms approaches subjectivism, renders the romantic output somewhat chaotic. When there is no tradition or uniting authority, it is not surprising that the romantic poets take widely divergent paths.

Did u know? Thus, even if we may accept that there was a classical or neoclassical school of poetry, it is difficult to conceive of the existence of a romantic "school".

13.2 The Nature of the Revolt

"The romantic movement" says William J. Long, "was marked, and is always marked, by a strong reaction and protest against .the bondage of rule and custom which in science and theology as well as literature, generally tend to fetter the free human spirit." It is of interest to note that just as the romantics revolted against the literary traditions of the eighteenth century, Dryden and Pope themselves had revolted in their turn against the tradition of the previous age. The romantics looked for inspiration and guidance to Spenser and Milton, whereas Dryden and Pope had looked to the roman poets of antiquity. Thus both the neoclassicists and romantics, while breaking away from the traditions existing immediately before them, respected a more ancient tradition. Let us consider in what respects the romantics parted with the neoclassic tradition.

Task Write a short note on the nature of the Revolt.

13.3 Reaction Against Reason

Cazamian observes: "The literary transition from the Renascence to the Restoration is nothing more or less than the progress of a spirit of liberty, at once fanciful, brilliant, and adventurous, towards a rule and discipline both in inspiration and in form."The transition from neoclassicism to romanticism is just the reverse of this. The neoclassicists were champions of common sense and reason, and were in favour of normal generalities against the whims and eccentricities of individual genius. "Nature" and reason were glorified. Much of the satire of the eighteenth century was

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directed against fancy and un-reason. Swift in the fourth book of Gulliver Travels, to consider an example, chastises Yahoos for being creatures of impulse and devoid of reason or common sense. On the other hand, Houyhnhnms are glorified for being endowed with "right reason." The romantics starting with Blake rebelled against the curbing influence of reason which could variously manifest itself as good sense, intellect, or just dry logic-chopping. Most of the romantic poets believed in a kind of transcendentalism, intuition, or mysticism and none believed in the dictum that poetry is an intellectual exercise whose worth is entirely dependent on effective expression. Pope said:

True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,

What oft was thought but ne 'er so well express 'd.

The romantics discredited wit as against real poetic inspiration. Poetry to them did not mean just a set of smart gnomes but something inner and spiritually enlightening. "Poetry", wrote Wordsworth in the Preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads, "is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science." He advised the student of Chemistry to lay aside his books and turn to poetry for true learning. The romantic conception of a poet and poetry was thus entirely different from the classical one. Dryden and Pope had believed that a poet was a "civilised" man of the world but much wittier and more talented than other civilised men. To the romantics a poet became a seer, a clairvoyant, a philosopher, and, in the words of Shelley, an unacknowledged legislator of mankind. Neoclassic poetry was mainly a product of intellect, and it was to intellect that it chiefly appealed. The attitude of most romantics was, however, keenly anti-intellectual. Thus, Wordsworth strongly denounced "that false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions". Blake represented reason as clipping the wings of love, and Keats declared that "Philosophy will clip an angel's wings." Thus anti-intellectualism", avers Samuel C. Chew, "was no sudden manifestation of a spirit of revolt; it had been swelling in volume for many years".

Notes In the thought of the predecessors of the great romantic poets there had been a tendency to view learning with suspicion as allied to vice and to commend ignorance as concomitant with virtue.

13.4 Imagination, Feeling and Emotion

The romantics revolted against the neoclassical exaltation of wit. They gave the place of wit to imagination and that of intellect to feeling and emotion. Wordsworth emphasised the role of feeling and emotion in all poetry. These are his famous words: "I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species, ofreaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind." Cazamian observes: "Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the new literature." Feeling and imagination came to have a supreme importance with the romantics. In the Preface to Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth wrote: "...each of these poems has a purpose: the feeling therein developed gives importance to action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling." The neoclassicists had held imagination suspect. They had admitted fancy now and then but the true imagination of Coleridge's conception was almost non-existing. They had neglected love as a theme of poetry; their poetry was mostly didactic, and this didacticism quite often took the shape of satire. Even when some romantics now and then become didactic, they are not just being intellectual or rhetorical; they rather appeal primarily to our emotions and take a generous help from imagination. Consider, in this context, Shelley's sonnet Ozymandias or Wordsworth's Ode to Duty.

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This special stress on imagination sometimes led the romantics away from the humdrum world of actuality and its pressing problems to make them citizens of their own respective worlds of imagination and to gloat in imaginary

Casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

The exaltation of imagination sometimes almost took the form of a revolt against realism, amounting to escapism. All neo-classical poets were hard-boiled realists, men of the world, and sometimes men of affairs. Blake is the most notorious example of a romantic moving in the world of visions. He went so far as to assert that the "vegetable world of phenomena" is only a shadow of "the real world which is the Imagination." Swift, from what we gather from Section IX of The Tale of a Tub, would have certainly put such a man as Blake behind the bars of a bedlam! "The romanticist", according to Samuel C. Chew, "is amorous of the far'. He seeks to escape from familiar experience and from the limitations of 'that shadow-show called reality' which is presented to him by his intelligence. He delights in the marvellous and abnormal". This escape from actuality assumes many forms. In Coleridge it takes the form of love of the supernatural; in Shelley, of that of the dream of a golden age to come; in Keats, a striving after ideal beauty and the effort to recall the ancient Hellenic glory; in Scott it is manifested by his escape to the hoary Middle Ages; in Byron it takes the form of a haughty disdain of all humanity and absorption in his own self, amounting almost to a kind of egotheism, and, lastly, in Wordsworth it appears in his insistence on giving up the mechanical and spirit-throttling civilization and escaping into the untainted company of nature.

This condemnation of civilization is incidentally a basic tenet of European romanticism. Walter Jackson Bate observes: "It also encouraged the common romantic emphasis on the virtues of simple and rural life and in its extremer form...found outlet in continuing the cult of the 'noble savage' who is unspoiled by contact with civilization. It lent a kind of sanction to the vogue of the untutored and 'original genius, and the frequent dilating on the natural innocence and goodness of childhood is an equally common expression of it." The neoclassicists had expected a child to be a little gentleman, but most romantics, like Blake and Wordsworth, gave him a spiritual importance for being full of the "intimations of immortality." Rousseau, the French thinker, was chiefly responsible for this vital change of conception.

13.5 Diction and Metre

The Romantic Movement was a revolt not only against the concept of poetry held by the neoclassicists, it was also a revolt against traditional poetic measures and diction. About this part of the romantic revolt, Legouis observes: "To express their fervent passions they sought a more supple and more lyrical form than that of Pope, a language less dulled by convention, metres unlike the prevailing couplet. They renounced the poetical associations of words, and drew upon unusual images and varied verse forms for which they found models in the Renaissance and the old English poetry." Some of these verse forms were personal inventions of the new poets. They sounded the death-knell of the heroic couplet which had reigned supreme upwards of a century.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. F.L. Lucas in the Decline and Fall of the ..... (1948) counted as many as 11,396 definitions of romanticism.
2. The Romantic Movement was a ..... , not only an English, phenomenon.
3. The romantics revolted against the neoclassical exaltation of ..... .
4. ..... and imagination came to have a supreme importance with the romantics.
5. ..... is the most notorious example of a romantic moving in the world of visions.

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13.6 Revolt Against Social Authority

The romantic revolt against social authority took as many shapes as the one against literary tradition. Most of the romantics were radical in their political views and crusaders for the emancipation of the individual. The French Revolution affected all the romantic poets, though in different ways. The young Wordsworth and Coleridge were thrilled with joy at the fall of the Bastille, which signified for them the cracking of the tyrannic chains which had kept in bondage the human spirit for so long. Later, however, with the Reign of Terror, the Lake Poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey) turned conservative, and Wordsworth earned the censure of Browning as "the lost leader." The later romantics-Shelley, Keats, and Byron-were stronger and more consistent radicals than the earlier ones. All of them devoted themselves to the cause of freedom in all lands. Byron upheld the cause of Greek freedom in his poetry and his person-not only financially and morally.

Did u know? The Romantic Movement was much less a political than a poetic movement.

The revolt against social authority did not only mean condemnation of political tyranny and support for democracy; it also meant, sometimes, an open rebellion against long-standing social taboos on free love and even incest. Shelley was an arch rebel against all such curbs. Incest provides the theme of his play The Cenci. The Revolt of Islam is, likewise, a call for rebellion against tyranny and social authority alike. Shelley revolted against even God and earned his dismissal from Oxford with his pamphlet The Necessity of Atheism. His too insistent and serious belief in free love compelled his first wife to take her own life. On account of their rebellious notions, most romantics proved misfits in society and some were dubbed insane by it. Samuel C. Chew observes: "Emphasising the abnormal element, some scholars have singled out the morbidly erotic and deranged as distinguishing marks of romanticism, interpreting this as evidence of the part played by the less conscious impulses of the mind and nothing that a large number of English whters of the period approached the borders of insanity or went beyond, than can be accounted for on the ground of mere coincidence." This aspect of romanticism is what exactly prompted T. E. Hulme to observe that classicism is "healthy" and romanticism "sickly".

13.7 Summary

- It must be pointed out at the very outset that "romanticism" is a thoroughly controversial term, and to define it is as hopeless a task as ever.
- England turned romantic about the beginning of the nineteenth century, and France, the witness to the famous French Revolution (1789), manifested the influence of romanticism around 1830, when the Romantic Movement was already starting to decline in England.
- "The romantic movement" says William J. Long, "was marked, and is always marked, by a strong reaction and protest against the bondage of rule and custom which in science and theology as well as literature, generally tend to fetter the free human spirit."
- The Romantic Movement was a revolt not only against the concept of poetry held by the neoclassicists, it was also a revolt against traditional poetic measures and diction.
- The romantic revolt against social authority took as many shapes as the one against literary tradition.

13.8 Keywords

Cazamian Observes : The literary transition from the Renascence to the Restoration is nothing more or less than the progress of a spirit of liberty, at once fanciful, brilliant, and adventurous, towards a rule and discipline both in inspiration and in form.

Lyrical Ballads : "Poetry", wrote Wordsworth in the Preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads, "is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge: it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science."

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13.9 Review Questions

1. What is reaction against reason?
2. What is imagination, feeling and emotion? Explain
3. What is Diction and Metre?
4. What is revolt against social authority?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Romantic Ideal
2. European
3. Wit
4. Feeling
5. Blake

13.10 Further Readings

Books

An Outline of History of English Literature, G. Bell and sons, London, 1930: Hudson, W.H.

History of English Literature, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2004: Long. W.J.

A History of English Literature-Arthur-Compton-Rickett, UPSPD, New Delhi.

Online links

www.aei.org/article/education/the-age-of-educational-romanticism/

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Unit 14: The Eighteenth Century-Approach/Transition Towards Romanticism (Decline of Novel, Agricultural Revolution and Industrial Revolution)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe decline of novel and agricultural revolution.
- Define the spirit of freedom.
- Explain technological developments during industrial revolution.

Introduction

The death of the novel is the common name for the theoretical discussion of the declining importance of the novel as literary form. Many 20th century authors entered into the debate, often sharing their ideas in their own fiction and non-fiction writings.

14.1 Decline of Novel

The novel was well-defined by the 19th century. In the 20th century, however, many writers began to rebel against the traditional structures imposed by this form. This reaction against the novel caused some literary theorists to question the relevancy of the novel and even to predict its 'death.'

Some of the earliest proponents of the "death of the novel" were José Ortega y Gasset, who wrote his Decline of the Novel in 1925 and Walter Benjamin in his 1930 review Krisis des Romans. In the 1950s and 1960s, contributors to the discussion have included Gore Vidal, Roland Barthes, and John Barth.

Did u know? Ronald Sukenick wrote the story The Death of the Novel in 1969.

Tom Wolfe in the 1970s predicted that the New Journalism would displace the novel. Italo Calvino is considered to have turned round the question "is the novel dead?", as "is it possible to tell stories that are not novels?"

The years around the termination of World War II (1945) constitute something like a watershed in the history of the English novel. Both Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, who were among the

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greatest of the Modernists, died in 1941. And it seemed that a great era had come to an end with them. Thereafter is a perceptible decline in the British novel. The post-Ulysses novel lacks, what Karl Calls, "the moral urgency of a Conrad, the verbal gifts and wit of a Joyce, the vitality and all-consuming obsession of a Lawrence.''

On the whole, there has been less of experiment and innovation in the post-1950 English novel and more and. more of parochialization and what is called "Little Englandism" Lacking the force and originality of their great Modern predecessors, the English novelists of recent years sometimes look like feeble imitators of the giants gone by. "One common characteristic" of most novelists of recent years is, in Karl's words, "their inability to deepen and develop with time. When Elizabeth Bovven, for example, experiments in The Heat of the Day, she does little more than what Virginia Woolf had tried in Mrs Dalloway fifteen years earlier. When Joyce Gary in The Horse's Mouth and elsewhere tampers with language, he barely scrapes the surface of what Joyce attempted with words. When Durrell talks about love in his Alexandria Quartet, he points towards but hardly reaches Lawrence's examination of love. When Graham Green uses moral issues without a religious frame of reference, he is dealing with a subject that many nineteenth-century novelists wrote about extensively and with greater range."

14.2 Agricultural Revolution

Between the eighth century and the eighteenth, the tools of farming basically stayed the same and few advancements in technology were made.

The farmers of George Washington's day had no better tools than had the farmers of Julius Caesar's day; in fact, early Roman plows were superior to those in general use in America eighteen centuries later.

What was the Agricultural Revolution?

The agricultural revolution was a period of agricultural development between the 18th century and the end of the 19th century, which saw a massive and rapid increase in agricultural productivity and vast improvements in farm technology.

Listed below are many of the inventions that were created or greatly improved during the agricultural revolution.

Plow and Moldboard

By definition a plow (also spelled plough) is a farm tool with one or more heavy blades that breaks the soil and cut a furrow (small ditch) for sowing seeds. A moldboard is the wedge formed by the curved part of a steel plow blade that turns the furrow.

Task Write short note on agricultural revolution.

History of Plows

Seed drills sow seeds, before drills were invented seeding was done by hand. The basic ideas in drills for seeding small grains were successfully developed in Great Britain, and many British drills were sold in the United States before one was manufactured in the States. American manufacture of these drills began about 1840. Seed planters for corn came somewhat later, as machines to plant wheat successfully were unsuited for corn planting. In 1701, Jethro Tull invented his seed drill and is perhaps the best known inventor of a mechanical planter.

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Jethro Tull

Machines That Harvest - Sickles, Reapers and Harvesters

By definition a sickle is a curved, hand-held agricultural tool used for harvesting grain crops. Horse drawn mechanical reapers later replaced sickles for harvesting grains. Reapers developed into and was replaced by the reaper-binder (cuts grain and binds it in sheaves), which was in turn was replaced by the swather and then the combine harvester.

Notes The combine harvester is a machine that heads, threshes and cleans grain while moving across the field.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The ..... was well-defined by the 19th century.
2. ..... in the 1970s predicted that the New Journalism would displace the novel.
3. ..... sow seeds, before drills were invented seeding was done by hand.
4. In 1701, Jethro Tull invented his seed drill and is perhaps the best known inventor of a ..... .
5. By definition a ..... is a curved, hand-held agricultural tool used for harvesting grain crops.

14.3 Industrial Revolution

Literature is an expression of the personality of the writer, and that personality itself is formed and moulded by the times in which he or she lives. It is moreso in the case of a writer as sensitive as George Eliot was. It is, therefore, necessary that before proceeding to a study of her works, we try to form an idea of the age in which she lived and created her works. The present chapter examines her social milieu, while the next one is devoted to a study of the literary context of her novels.

The Spirit of Questioning

George Eliot was born in 1819 and her first novel was written in 1858. Thereafter, novel after novel flowed from her pen in quick succession. In other words, the formative years of her life were passed in the opening decades of the Victorian era. There was an intellectual ferment in England, such as had never been witnessed before. This spirit of questioning, this intellectual unrest is everywhere reflected in her works.

Industrial Revolution: It's Impact

In the beginning of the Victorian era, there was a widespread faith in unlimited progress. This sense of self-satisfaction, of complacency resulted from the immense strides that England had taken in the industrial and scientific fields. The nation was prospering and growing richer and richer everyday. The British Empire was already a reality, the "white man's burden," or the colonising mission of the English was already bringing in rich dividends. They attributed all this prosperity to their glorious and dominant Queen Victoria. It was an era of prosperity, an era of aggressive nationalism, an era of rising imperialism. Hence, nobody wanted that the status-quo should be disturbed; any questioning of the present order was frowned upon. Emphasis was on faith, faith in one's religion, faith in the Queen and those in authority, and faith in continuous progress. If there were doubts anywhere, they needed to compromise with the existing order.

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However, such a state of affairs could not continue for ever. The Industrial Revolution gradually destroyed old agricultural England. As a result, there was migration on a large scale from the villages to the cities. The country-side was de-populated. Industrialisation shocked the supremacy of the aristocratic class and the landed gentry, and brought into being a new merchant class. This new class, quite naturally, clamoured for power and prestige, both political and social, and did not agree to the accepted order of things. Victorian traditions and conventions were thus subjected to greater and greater pressures, and soon there were large cracks in the Victorian fabric. Moreover, the lower classes, too, were acquiring increasing political rights. There was mental and cultural emancipation all around.

The Spirit of Freedom

This spirit of emancipation is nowhere seen to better advantage than in the freedom which women gradually acquired. Victorian tradition and Victorian prudery placed excessive emphasis on the chastity of women. Their proper sphere was within the four walls of the home: any contact with the outside world was supposed to corrupt and spoil them. Their sole business was to look after the comforts of their men folk. But with the passing of time the movement for women's emancipation gained ground; women were given political rights and more and more of them came out of their homes to take up independent careers. Florence Nightingale did valuable service to the cause of women. Problems of sex and married life were receiving increasing attention from thinkers and writers.

Notes Havellock Ellis and Freud were working on their epoch-making works.

The Advance of Science

This break-up of Victorian 'compromise', traditions and conventions was accelerated by the rapid advance of science. Science with its emphasis on reason rather than on faith encouraged the spirit of questioning. Victorian beliefs, both religious and social were subjected to a searching scrutiny and found wanting. The publication of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859 is of special significance from this point of view. His celebrated theory of Evolution contradicted the account of men's origin as given in the Bible. His theory carried conviction as it was logically developed and supported by overwhelming evidence.

Man's faith in orthodox religion was shaken; he could no longer accept without question, God's omnipotence, benevolence, mercy, etc., for such orthodox notions of God were contradicted by facts. Similarly, Darwin, with his emphasis on the brutal struggle for existence which is the law of Nature, exploded the romantic view of her as a, 'Kindly Mother,' having a 'Holy plan' of her own. The process started by Darwin was completed by philosophers like Huxley, Spencer, Mill, etc. The impact of these developments in science and philosophy on the works of George Eliot is far-reaching.

The Rise of Pessimism

Thus established order, faiths and beliefs, traditions and customs, were losing their hold on the minds of the people, and the new order of things had not yet been established. Man had lost his mooring in God, Religion and Nature. The mechanistic view of the universe precluded any faith in a benevolent creator. Man felt, 'Orphaned and defrauded.' He took a gloomy view of life, for he felt miserable and helpless with nothing to fall back upon. It was for the first time, says David Cecil, that, "conscious, considered pessimism became a force in English literature." The melancholy poems of Arnold, the poetry of Fitzgerald, Thomson's The City of God and the works of Thomas Hardy, and George Eliot, all reflect the pessimistic outlook of the late Victorian era. The growth of pessimism was further encouraged by the flow of pessimistic thought from Europe, where pessimism was much in the air at the time.

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Religious Conflicts

It was an era also of religious conflicts and tensions. There are two forms of religious traditions. One is the practical, kindly, undogmatic tradition of Anglicanism or the official Church of England. They believe in doing a good turn, a kindly, humane act and do not bother much about the theoretical questions of right and wrong. Such men were interested in conduct than in faith; they had a respected position in the structure of society, which enabled them, to some extent, to mitigate the rigours of class difference. Even when comparatively poor, they were accepted by the gentry as one of themselves, but they knew where the shoe pinches for their uneducated parishioners. Sometimes, they were men of deep intellectual interests; and were the sort of men who to-day would be university or sixth-form teachers.

The other religious tradition, much more vehement and fanatical, is loosely called Evangelical. They were dissenters from the Church of England. By the year 1830, the Evangelical movement was nothing new, but such is the conservatism of the Middle-marchers, that they regard it as something new and are suspicious of it. Evangelicals or Methodists laid stress on the strict adherence to religious dogma. They made a rigid distinction between those who had received divine Grace and those who had not. They believed in the doctrine of the original sin, and that all men were consequently depraved, till they received divine Grace and were controlled and guided by His will. The Evangelicals thought that they were the chosen of God, and so would never admit that there was any evil in them. Thus they were self-righteous, firmly convinced of the rightness of their conduct, and critical of others who did not belong to their sect.

In the novel, the two sects are in conflict, and the old is suspicious of the new. The old is giving way to the new in every direction. The old in religious, social and economic sphere is decaying and disintegrating, and the new is gradually taking its place.

Non-conformist sects receive little attention and no respect. Methodism, which then had a strong hold on many parts of the Midlands, is referred to indirectly as a religion encouraging one to be dull and strait-laced. Dissenters' godly folk's a word used with certain amount of disapproval and even contempt, for non-conformist congregations included dealers in stolen goods and other unscrupulous people. They were proud of their profession of religion, critical of those who did not accept their view of life.

Persistence of the Agricultural Way of Life

The age played an important part in formulating the critical and philosophical views of George Eliot. During her childhood she saw the dawn of a new era, the era of the Industrial Revolution. Year after year people were leaving the serene, clean countryside for the slums of the city. Writers like Dickens were focusing attention on the unhealthy conditions prevalent in the cities due to over-population. Industrial Revolution was slowly encroaching upon the countryside and shattering the agricultural fabric. But despite the rise of factories in Coventry and other industrial centres, there were still some parts of countryside untouched by the Industrial Revolution and it is these beautiful, remote places, such as Hayslope and Raveloe that George Eliot describes in her novels.

The New Economy

At this time the new economic theory of Utilitarianism was attracting much attention. The foremost Utilitarian philosopher at that time was Jeremy Bentham. The Utilitarians could get passed a number of bills, such as that for the abolition of imprisonment for not paying debts, and that for the reform of the legal system. But Jeremy Bentham also believed that government should not place any restrictions on commerce and industry. He accepted the theory of Laissez-faire. Many of the corrupt businessmen and manufacturers used this theory for exploiting the workers.

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Exploitation of the Workers

All these events and circumstances naturally affected Victorian literature. Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold were affected by the condition of man in contemporary society. George Eliot was deeply affected by the plight of the humble folk whom she had known all her life and it is this sympathy for the common-people that plays an important part in her novels. The exploitation of women and children in factories was the order of the day. They were made to work for long hours and given very low wages. A number of Reform Acts were passed, a number of writers focused attention on the evils of industrialisation, and the plight of slum dwellers, but all this was of no avail. The Reform Act of 1832 and the events which followed from the historical background to Middlemarch. As we must know the eighteenth century in its social spirit, literary tendencies, revolutionary aims, romantic aspirations, philosophy and science, to know Goethe, so must we know the nineteenth century in its scientific attainments, agnostic philosophy, realism and humanitarian aims, in order to know George Eliot.

Innovations and Inventors of the Industrial Revolution

Technology, arguably the greatest aspect of the Industrial Revolution, can be simplified into a few different innovations and inventors, most inspired by one product. The first product to undergo the "revolution" from the cottage industry to the mechanized age was cotton. Britain, at the time, had a large wool trade. In 1760, the amount of wool exported was almost thirty times that of cotton. Demand for cotton grew with a change in the upper class fashion, and Britain started to allow more cotton production. Soon, enough cotton could not be made to satisfy the demand (Haberman 48). This demand was the inspiration for the following four inventions.

John Kay's "flying shuttle"

John Kay, a mechanic from Lancashire, patented the flying shuttle. Using cords attached to a picking peg, a single weaver, using one hand, could operate the shuttle on the loom (Simkin). With this invention it took four spinners to keep up with one cotton loom, and ten people to prepare yarn for one weaver. So while spinners were often busy, weavers often waited for yarn (Gernhard). As such, the flying shuttle effectively doubled a weaver's production of cloth (Haberman 48).

James Hargreaves' "spinning jenny"

In 1764, James Hargreaves invented the "spinning jenny," a device which allowed one person to spin many threads at once, further increasing the amount of finished cotton that a worker could produce. By turning a single wheel, one could now spin eight threads at once, a number that was later increased to eighty. The thread, unfortunately, was usually coarse and lacked strength. Despite this shortcoming, over 20,000 of the machines were in use in Britain by 1778 (Simkin).

Richard Arkwright's "water frame"

Also in 1764, Richard Arkwright created the "water frame" to produce yarn faster (Haberman 48). The "Spinning-Frame," its earlier name, was too large to be operated by hand. After experimenting with other sources of power, he decided to employ the power of a water wheel, and his machine became known as the water frame (Industrial Revolution: The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain). Rollers produced yarn of the correct thickness, while a set of spindles twisted fibers together. The machine was able to produce a thread far stronger than any other available at the time (Simkin).

Samuel Crompton's "Crompton's mule"

In 1779, Samuel Crompton combined both the spinning jenny and the water frame to create a machine known as "Crompton's mule," which produced large amounts of fine, strong yarn (Simkin).

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With the arrival of these inventions, yarn had effectively become industrialized. By 1812, the cost of making cotton yarn had dropped by nine-tenths and the number of workers needed to turn wool into yarn had been reduced by four-fifths (Gernhard). The addition of these inventions to the work force moved the stress from the production to the supply of raw cotton. Within just a 35 year period, more than 100,000 power looms with 9,330,000 spindles were put into service in England and Scotland (Technology throughout History). Britain took advantage of the Americas' available new cotton, using it to help absorb the demand. By 1830, the importation of raw cotton had increased to eight times its past rate and half of Britain's exports were refined cotton. At this point, the demand was high enough to provide inspiration for what is probably the most well known invention of the Revolution: the steam engine.

James Watt's "steam engine"

In 1769, James Watt patented the steam engine and in effect created a new source of power. Early-model steam engines were introduced to drain water and raise coal from the mines, but the crucial development was the use of steam for power (Industrial Revolution: The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain). The first steam engine was actually produced by Thomas Newcomen, but Watt later improved and patented it. The original idea was to put a vertical piston and cylinder at the end of a pump handle and then to put steam in the cylinder and condense it with a spray of cold water. The vacuum created allowed atmospheric pressure to push the piston down, but Watt made it a reciprocating engine, creating the true steam engine (Gernhard).

Robert Fulton's "steamboat"

In 1807, Robert Fulton used steam power to create the first steamboat, an invention that would change the way and the speed in which materials could be moved between the colonies of Britain (Haberman 48). In the beginning, the ship was more expensive to build and operate than sailing vessels, but the steamship had some advantages. It could take off under its own power and it was more steadfast in storms (Gernhard).

Stephenson's "steam powered train"

Finally, in 1814, Stephenson used the steam engine to create a steam powered train, which would eventually allow increased communication and trade between places before deemed too far. Soon, the steam-powered train had become an icon of success throughout the world (Haberman 48). Britain encouraged the building of railroads in other European countries, often with British capital, equipment, and technicians. Railroads became a standard item of British export (Gernhard).

From a suitable product comes a mass of inventions that will lead other areas of trade and production towards industrialization. These first innovations have greatly affected the basic elements of the era: agriculture, power, transportation, textiles, and communication.

Technological Developments during Industrial Revolution

In the last part of the 18th century, a new revolution gripped the world that we were not ready for. This revolution was not a political one, but it would lead to many implications later in its existence. Neither was this a social or cultural revolution. This revolution was an economic one.

The Industrial Revolution, as it know called by historians, changed the ways by how the world produced its goods. It also changed our societies from a mainly agricultural society to one that in which industry and manufacturing was in control.

The industrial revolution first got its start in Great Britain, during the 18th century, which at the time was the most powerful empire on the planet. So, it was inevitable that the country with the most wealth would lead in this revolution. After it adoption in England, other countries such as Germany, the United States and France joined in this revolution.

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During this time there was also much new technological advancement, socioeconomic and cultural problems that arised.

On the technology front, the biggest advancements were in steam power. New fuels such as coal and petroleum were incorporated into new steam engines. This revolutionized many industries including textiles and manufacturing. Also, a new communication medium was invented called the telegraph. This made communicating across the ocean much faster.

But, along with this great leap in technology, there was an overall downfall in the socioeconomic and cultural situation of the people. Growth of cities was one of the major consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Many people were driven to the cities to look for work, in turn the ended living in the cities that could not support them. With the new industrial age, a new quantitative and materialistic view of the world took place. This caused the need for people to consume as much as they could. This still happens today, living small wages that required small children to work in factories for long days.

Also, during this time much international strife was occurring at this time. The American Revolution was occurring in the beginning part of the Industrial Revolution. The French Revolution was in the process at the turn of the 19th century. This was a great time, but resulted in newly found democratic rights that spread through Europe and North America.

The Industrial Revolution was not a good revolution for the planet. From the time of its start, the factories and industry has increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by two-folds. Also in our drive for consumerism, our planets natural resources are being depleted at an alarming rate.

Did u know? Pollution by nuclear waste, pesticides and other chemicals are the result of the Industrial Revolution.

14.4 Summary

- By definition a plow (also spelled plough) is a farm tool with one or more heavy blades that breaks the soil and cut a furrow (small ditch) for sowing seeds.
- This spirit of emancipation is nowhere seen to better advantage than in the freedom which women gradually acquired.
- This break-up of Victorian 'compromise', traditions and conventions was accelerated by the rapid advance of science.
- Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold were affected by the condition of man in contemporary society.
- In 1764, James Hargreaves invented the "spinning jenny," a device which allowed one person to spin many threads at once, further increasing the amount of finished cotton that a worker could produce.
- In 1807, Robert Fulton used steam power to create the first steamboat, an invention that would change the way and the speed in which materials could be moved between the colonies of Britain.
- The industrial revolution first got its start in Great Britain, during the 18th century, which at the time was the most powerful empire on the planet.

14.5 Keywords

Karl Calls : The moral urgency of a Conrad, the verbal gifts and wit of a Joyce, the vitality and all-consuming obsession of a Lawrence.

The Agricultural Revolution : It was a period of agricultural development between the 18th century and the end of the 19th century, which saw a massive and rapid increase in agricultural productivity and vast improvements in farm technology.

Notes

14.6 Review Questions

1. What is decline of Novel?
2. What is the spirit of Questioning and the spirit of freedom?
3. What is the rise of pessimism?
4. What is the new economy?
5. What is technological developments during Industrial Revolution?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Novel
2. Tom Wolfe
3. Seed drills
4. mechanical planter
5. sickle

14.7 Further Readings

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Notes

Unit 15: The Triumph of Romanticism (Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Conditions)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe casual work and cheap housing.
- Define a political issue and open sewers.
- Describe life and labour of the London poor.
- Explain the french revolution.

Introduction

It is rarely that the perceptible limits of a literary 'period coincide so closely with crucial political events as is the case with what we call the Romantic Movement. The name is convenient; but it would be misleading to give it any narrow meaning or to equate it with an 'escapist' or a past-ward yearning. Almost all the 'romantic' writers were acutely ware of their environment, and their best work came out of their impulse to come to terms with it.

15.1 Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Conditions of Romanticism

Beginning in America in 1776, an age of revolution swept across Western Europe, releasing political, economic, and social forces that produced, during the next century, some of the most radical changes ever experienced in human life. Another way to date the Romantic period is to say that it started with the French Revolution in 1789 and ended with the Parliamentary reforms of 1832 that laid the political foundations for modern Britain. The era was dominated by six poets: Three (William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge) were born before the period began and lived through most or all of it, while three others (the "second generation" of Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and George Gordon, Lord Byron) began their short careers in the second decade of the new century but died before 1825. It was a turbulent, revolutionary age, one in which England changed from an agricultural society to an industrial nation with a large and restless working class concentrated in the teeming mill towns.

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The American Revolution had lost for England her thirteen colonies. This was a great economic loss, but it was also a loss of prestige and of confidence. The more radical revolution in France, which started with the storming of the prison called the Bastille on July 14, 1789, had far more serious repercussions. For the ruling classes in England, the French Revolution came to represent their worst fears: the overthrow of an anointed king by a democratic "rabble." To English conservatives, the French Revolution meant the triumph of radical principles, and they feared that the revolutionary fever would spread across the Channel.

But democratic idealists and liberals like Wordsworth felt exhilarated by the events in France. During the revolution's early years, they even made trips to France to view the "new regime" at first hand, as if it were a tourist attraction like the Acropolis in Greece. Wordsworth later wrote, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!"

Even Wordsworth became disillusioned, however, when in 1792 the "September massacre" took place in France. Hundreds of French aristocrats—some with only the slightest ties to the regime of King Louis XVI—had their heads severed from their bodies by a grisly new invention, the guillotine.

And that wasn't the end of it. In the midst of the blood and turmoil and calls from France for worldwide revolution, control of the French government changed hands again. Napoleon Bonaparte, an officer in the French army, emerged first as dictator and then, in 1804, as emperor of France.

Notes In the end, Napoleon— whose very name today suggests a tyrant—became as ruthless as the executed king himself.

All of these bewildering changes in Western Europe made conservatives in England more rigid than ever. England instituted severe repressive measures: They outlawed collective bargaining and kept suspected spies or agitators in prison without a trial. In 1803, England began a long war against Napoleon. English guns first defeated Napoleon's navy at the Battle of Trafalgar and, finally, in 1815, with the help of allies, sent his army packing at Waterloo, Belgium.

The conservatives in England felt they had saved their country from a tyrant and from chaos; the early supporters of the revolution, like Wordsworth, felt betrayed. For them, Waterloo was simply the defeat of one tyrant by another.

The historical upper limit of this period is unmistakably the outbreak of the Colonists' rebellion in North America, their successful defence and their achievement of independence. The American victory was a stimulus to those who for one reason or another felt confined by the existing institutions the Dissenters, kept down by civil disabilities; the manufacturers, harassed by the archaic excise system; the farmers by tithe and game laws; the lower middle class and working classes by indirect taxes which weighed on every article of common use as well as on luxuries. All this was imposed by a Parliament in which there was no representation of the ordinary people, the productive classes, neither of masters nor men. Not a penny of the money collected was returned as social services.

The chief subject of romantic literature was the essential nobleness of common men and the value of the individual and the history which lies between the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the English Reform Bill of 1832. We are in the presence of such mightly political upheavals that "the age of revolution" is the only name by which we can adequately characterize it. Its great historic movements become intelligible only when we read what was written in this period; for the French Revolution and the American Commonwealth, as well as the establishment of a true democracy in England by the Reform Bill were the inevitable results of ideas which literature had spread rapidly through the civilized world. Liberty is fundamently an ideal; and that ideal—beautiful, inspiring, compelling, as a loved banner in the wind was kept steadily before men's minds by a multitude of books and pamphlets as far apart as Burns's Poems and Thomas Paine's Rights of Man,—all read eagerly by the common people, all proclaiming the dignity of common life, and all uttering the same passionate cry against every form of class or caste oppression.

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15.2 Social Conditions in the 19th Century

15.2.1 Poverty and Slum Housing

Casual Work

Many of the jobs created in the port during the 19th century were badly paid. Others were seasonal or casual, which meant that people were only paid when work was available. As a result, the dockers and their families lived in poverty.

The casual nature of much of their work meant that the dockers did not receive a regular income. There was no income at all during periods of unemployment unless they could find alternative work. Sometimes the poor were forced to turn to crime, others begged to make ends meet, while many more ended up in the workhouse.

Cheap Housing

Families relying on an income from casual work could only afford basic accommodation. Builders knew that they would never be able to charge the poor high rents. They built their houses quickly and cheaply, often without facilities such as bathrooms and toilets.

Sometimes houses were divided in half to accommodate two families. This often meant that one family had to make do without a easily accessible supply of drinking water.

The 1890 Housing Act made it the responsibility of local councils to provide decent accommodation for local people. Things gradually improved, but conditions remained bad well into the 20th century.

15.2.2 Social Investigation

A Political Issue

As the 19th century progressed journalists and social reformers carried out surveys in the East End. These revealed the full extent of the plight of the poor.

The studies were part of a new emphasis given to social investigation into the extent and causes of poverty in large industrial cities. They also examined solutions to the problems.

Fear of Unrest

A series of riots, including the 1887 'Bloody Sunday' demonstration against unemployment, sparked fears of social unrest. These concerns were further fuelled by sensational press reports about life in the East London slums.

Did u know? Issues such as crime, unemployment and poverty were now very much on the political agenda.

Open Sewers

The novelist Charles Dickens visited Canning Town in 1857. He described the squalid conditions there. People who worked at the recently opened Victoria Docks were forced to live in a slum built on a marsh. There were few roads; no gas supply and open sewers ran through the streets.

"Rows of small houses, which may have cost for their construction eighty pounds a-piece, are built designedly and systematically with their backs to the marsh ditches; which, with one exception,

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are all stopped up at their outlet; and, in many parts of their course also, if there were an outlet, or if it could be said that they had any course at all. Two or three yards of clay pipe "drain" each house into the open cesspool under its back windows, when it does not happen that the house is so built as to overhang it.

In winter time every block becomes now and then an island, and you may hear a sick man, in an upper room, complain of water trickling down over his bed. Then the flood cleans the ditches, lifting all their filth into itself, and spreading it over the land. No wonder that the stench of the marsh in Hallsville and Canning Town of nights is horrible".

Disease

"Ague [a form of malaria] is one of the most prevalent diseases of the district: fever abounds. When an epidemic comes into the place, it becomes serious in its form, and stays for months. Disease comes upon human bodies saturated with the influences of such air as this breathed day and night, as a spark upon touchwood. A case or two of small-pox caused, in spite of vaccination, an epidemic of confluent small-pox, which remained three or four months upon the spot".

Child of the Docks

Canning Town is the child of the Victoria Docks. The condition of this place and of its neighbour prevents the steadier class of mechanics from residing in it. They go from their work to Stratford or to Plaistow.

Many select such a dwelling-place because they are already debased below the point of enmity to filth; poorer labourers live there, because they cannot afford to go further, and there become debased. The Dock Company is surely, to a very great extent, answerable for the condition of the town they are creating".

Life and Labour of the London Poor

Not all writing on the slums was as sensationalist as Mearns's. The first volume of *Life and Labour of the London Poor,* Charles Booth's 17-volume study, appeared in 1892.

Booth's study was the first to examine the problems of poverty in general rather than by looking at specific individual harrowing cases as Mearns had done.

Notes Booth divided the poor into different categories depending on earnings and occupation.

Booth's surveys caused a storm in liberal circles. His scientific cold approach left the public in no doubt about the degradation that existed in the East End. In one part of the survey he described a typical dock labourer's family, in the following words.

Historical Summary

The period we are considering begins in the latter half of the reign of George III and ends with the accession of .Victoria in 1837. When on a foggy morning in November, 1783 King George entered the House of Lords and in a trembling voice recognized the independence of the United States of America, he unconsciously proclaimed the triumph of that free government by free men which had been the ideal of English Literature for more than a thousand years: though it was not till 1832. When the Reform Bill became the law of the land, that England herself learned the lesson taught her by America, and became the democracy of which her writers had always dreamed.

Notes

Task Write a short note on the peried history of romanticism.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The ..... had lost for England her thirteen colonies.
2. In 1803, England began a long war against ..... .
3. Democratic idealists and liberals like wordsworth felt exhilarated by the events in ..... .
4. Even wordsworth became disillusioned, however, when in 1792 the ..... took place in France.
5. The Novelist charles Dickens visited ..... in 1857.
6. Canning Town is the child of the ..... .

The French Revolution

The half century between these two events is one of great turmoil, yet of steady advance in every department of English life. The storm centre of the political unrest was the French Revolution, that frightful uprising which proclaimed the natural rights of man and the abolition of class distinctions. Its effect on the whole civilized world is beyond computation. Patriotic clubs and societies multiplied in England, all asserting the doctrine of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the watchwords of the Revolution. Young England, led by Pitt the younger, hailed the new French Republic and offered it friendship; old England, which pardons no revolutions but her own looked with horror on the turmoil in France and misled by Burke and the nobels of the realm, forced the two nations into war. Even Pitt saw a blessing in this at first; because the sudden zeal for fighting a foreign nation—which by some horrible perversion is generally called patriotism might turn men's thoughts from their own to their neighbour's affairs, and so prevent a threatened revolution at home.

Economic Conditions

The causes of this threatened revolution were not political but economic. By her inventions in steel and machinery, and by her monopoly of the carrying trade, England had become "the workshop of the world." Her wealth had increased beyond her wildest dreams: but the unequal distribution of that wealth was a spectacle to make angels weep. The invention of machinery at first threw thousands of skilled hand-workers out of employment; in order to protect a few agriculturists, heavy duties were imposed on corn and wheat, and bread rose to famine prices just when labouring men had the least money to pay for it. There followed a curious spectacle. When England increased in wealth and spent vast sums to support her army and sub-sidize her allies in Europe, and while nobles, landowners, manufacturers, and merchants lived in increasing luxury, a multitude of skilled labourers were clamouring for work. Fathers sent their wives and little children into the mines and factories, where sixteen hours' labour would hardly pay for the daily bread; and in every large city were riotous mobs made up chiefly of hungry men and women. It was this unbearable economic condition, and not any political theory, as Burke supposed, which occasioned the danger of another English revolution.

Literary Characteristics of the Age

It is intensely interesting to note how literature at first reflected the political turmoil of the age; and then. When the turmoil was over and England began her mighty world of reform, how literature suddenly developed a new creative spirit, which shows itself in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge. Byron. Shelley, Keats, and in the prose of Scott, Jane Austen. Lamb. Hazlitt and De Quincey.—a wonderful group of writers, whose patriotic enthusiasm suggests the Elizabethan days, and whose

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genius has caused their age to be known as the second creative period of English Literature. Thus in the early days, when old institutions seemed crumbling with the Bastille, Coleridge and Southey formed their youthful scheme of a "Tantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna."—an ideal commonwealth, in which the principles of More's Utopia should be put in practice. Even Wordsworth, fired with political enthusiasm, could write,

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive

But to be young was very heaven.

The essence of Romanticism was, it must be remembered, that literature must reflect all that is spontaneous and unaffected in nature and in man and be free to follow its own fancy in its own way. In Coleridge we see this independence expressed in Kubla Khan and The Ancient Mariner, two dream pictures, one of the populous Orient, the other of the lonely sea. In Wordsworth this literary independence led him inward to the heart of common things. Following his own instinct, as Shakespeare does he too find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks. Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

And so more than any other writer of the age, he in vests the common life of nature, and the souls of common men and women, with glorious significance.

Notes Coleridge and Wordsworth, best represent the romantic genius of the age in which they lived, though Scott had a greater literary reputation, and Byron and Shelley had larger audiences.

The second characteristic of this age is that it is emphatically an age of poetry. The previous century, with its practical outlook on life, was largely one of prose; but now as in the Elizabethan Age, the young enthusiasts turned as naturally to poetry as a happy man to singing. The glory of the age is in the poetry of Scott, Wordsworth. Coleridge. Byron, Shelley, Keats and others. Of its prose works those of Jane Austen, Scott and Charles Lamb had attained a wide reading. It was characteristic of the spirit of the age, so different from our own that Southey could say that, in order to earn money, he wrote in verse "what would otherwise have been better written in prose."

Literary Criticism

In this age literary criticism became firmly established by the appearance of such magazines as the Edinburgh Review (1802), The Quarterly Review (1808), and Blackwood's Magazine (1817). The Westminster Review (1824), the Spectator (1828). The Athenaeum (1828), and Eraser's Magazine (1830). These magazines, edited by such men as Francis Jeffrey. John Wilson (who is known to us as Christoper North), and John Gibson Lockhart, who gave us the Life of Scott, exercised an immense influence on all subsequent literature. At first their criticisms were largely destructive, as when Jeffrey hammered Scott, Wordsworth and Byron most unmercifully and Lockhart could find no good in Keats: but with added wisdom, criticism assumed its true function of construction. And when magazines began to seek and to publish the works of unknown writers, like Hazlitt, Lamb and Leigh Hunt, they discovered the chief mission of the modern magazines which is to give every writer of ability the opportunity to make his work known to the world.

15.3 Summary

- Beginning in America in 1776, an age of revolution swept across Western Europe, releasing political, economic, and social forces that produced, during the next century, some of the most radical changes ever experienced in human life.
- The 1890 Housing Act made it the responsibility of local councils to provide decent accommodation for local people.

Notes

- Not all writing on the slums was as sensationalist as Mearns's. The first volume of Life and Labour of the London Poor, Charles Booth's 17-volume study, appeared in 1892.
- In this age literary criticism became firmly established by the appearance of such magazines as the Edinburgh Review (1802), The Quarterly Review (1808), and Blackwood's Magazine (1817).

15.4 Keywords

Bastille on July 14, 1789 : The more radical revolution in France, which started with the storming of the prison called the Bastille on July 14, 1789, had far more serious repercussions.

The French Revolution : The storm centre of the political unrest was the French Revolution, that Frightful uprising which pro-claimed the natural rights of man and the abolition of class distinctions.

15.5 Review Questions

1. Describe the triumph of romanticism along with its social, Economic, political, cultural conditions.
2. What is social conditions in the 19th century ? Explain.
3. What is the French Revolution?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. American Revolution
2. France
3. September massacre
4. Napoleon
5. Canning Town
6. Victoria Docks

15.6 Further Readings

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Unit 16: The Triumph of Romanticism (Renascence of Wonder and Influence of French Revolution on Poets of The Age)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the role of imagination.
- Describe medievalism and hellenism.
- Explain influence of french revolution on the poets of the age.
- Describe coleridge and southey.

Introduction

Various definitions of romanticism and various interpretations of the Romantic Movement in England and the Continent have been given. F. L. Lucas in The Decline and fall of the Romantic Ideal (1948) lists as many as 11,396 such definitions! Bewildered by the enormous number of such attempts to define romanticism, some critics have counselled that such terms as "romanticism" and "classicism" should be given up altogether F.L. Lucas calf "romanticism" a "wholly woolly term fit only for slaughter."

But we should not accept this counsel of despair as, in spite of their vagueness, most modem critics have accepted these terms on the strength of their utility to criticism.

The Romantic Movement in England was directed against the traditions of the neoclassical poetry of the school of Dryden, Pope, and Dr. Johnson. There was politics, too, which was involved, but essentially, this Movement was not political but poetic. Neoclassical poetry was intellectual, correct, reasonable, and traditional in its selection of themes and metre-which was invariably the heroic couplet. At the end of the eighteenth century (more specifically, with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads in 1798) the coup de grace was given to the already decadent poetry which had followed from the footsteps of Pope. In the later part of the eighteenth century could already be felt a kind of reaction against the Popean school of poetry. Poets like Thomson, Gray, Cowper, Collins, Burns, and Blake had already broken away at various points from the time-honoured

traditions of the Augustan or neoclassical school. But it was Wordsworth and Coleridge who in their joint work, the Lyrical Ballads, produced, as were, the Magna Carta of English poetry.

Notes

Notes According to a critic, reatterton and Gray had been the early birds, Cowper was the dawn, and Wordsworth the broad day-light of Romanticism.

16.1 Wonder and Intellectual Curiosity

All poetic works of all the romantic poets do not follow the s-e pattern. Romanticism emphasized the liberty of the individual genius from the deadening weight of tradition and rules, thereby encouraging a kind of chaotic tendency. The only bond of union among the romantic poets was their impatience of tradition and their craving for novelty. They looked at everything anew and were struck by the spirit of wonder while exploring the new Americas of feeling, emotion, and spirit, and many of them built their spiritual homes in the imaginary worlds of their own making. According to Pater, classicism signifies "order in beauty", whereas romanticism stands for the addition of "strangeness to beauty." Pater was the reluctant leader of the Aesthetic Movement. He stressed beauty as the end of all art. Classicism and romanticism, to him, differed in that whereas the former stood for tradition, sameness, and well-defined patterns, the latter put a special premium on intellectual curiosity and departure from the ordinary and the normal. Theodore Watts-Dunton, likewise, interpreted the Romantic Movement as the "Renascence of Wonder." He meant that in their perception of life and people the neoclassicists, being devotees of set patterns and traditions, had been covered by the dulling film of familiarity which they never tried to see through. The romantics scraped this film and draped the world in the light of their own imagination; and therefore, everything struck them with iridescent, prismatic effects. They were struck with the newness of things, which bred the sense of wonder. The neoclassicists projected only the cold light of reason on every object, but the romantics looked at everything with the eyes of the imagination. Consequently the classicists were more realistic than the romantics, in the ordinary sense.

Did u know? The romantic poets lived in the world of Forms more real than living man, Nurslings of immortality.

16.2 The Role of Imagination

According to Herford, Romanticism was primarily "an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility." This imaginative sensibility opened up new vistas which were to be the wonder of both the poet and the reader alike. Samuel C. Chew observes: "The romanticist is 'amorous of the far'. He seeks to escape from familiar experience and from the limitation of 'that shadow-show called reality' which is presented to him by his intelligence. He delights in the marvelous and abnormal. To be sure, loving realistic detail and associating the remote with the familiar, he is often 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home.' But he is urged on by an instinct to escape from actuality: and in this escape he may range from the most trivial literary fantasy to the most exalted mysticism. His effort is to live constantly in the world of the imagination above and beyond the sensuous, phenomenal world. For him the creations of the imaginations are 'forms more real than living man.' He practises willingly, that 'suspension of disbelief which 'constitutes poetic faith.' In its most uncompromising form this dominance of the intuitive and the irrational over sense experience becomes mysticism- 'the life which professes direct intuition of the pure truth of being, wholly independent of the faculties by which it takes hold of the illusory contaminations of this present world.' Wordsworth described this experience as, 'that serene and blessed mood in

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which the burden of the mystery' being lighted, he sees into 'the life of things'. Blake, who seems to have lived almost continuously in this visionary ecstasy, affirmed that the 'vegetable universe' of phenomena is but a shadow of that real world which is the Imagination."

This "escape from actuality" was attempted by different romantic poets in different ways. Each invented an interesting and wondrous world of his own. Coleridge escaped to the world of the supernatural which was to him curiously exciting as well as satisfying. Scott threw a romantic veil over the middle Ages in which he found his spiritual home. Keats was lost in the world of ancient Hellenic beauty. Byron twitched his nose at the whole world and lived in the make-believe world of his own egocentric creation. Moore was interested in the world of Oriental splendour and gorgeousness. The contemplation of all these "worlds" was productive of the feelings of wonder as they were all imaginary worlds having little to do with the world of gnawing, humdrum reality. Of all the important romantic poets it was only Wordsworth who kept his feet firmly planted on the real world. But even he looked at this world through the spectacles of romance, with the result that it excited his wonder in the same measure as the various imaginary worlds did that of the other romantic poets.

16.3 Coleridge and the Supernatural

Coleridge, perhaps the most romantic of all the romantic poets, always lived in the wonderful world of his dreams and imagination. Though Keats, Scott, and Coleridge were all fascinated by the world of the supernatural, yet for the last named it meant something like a natural habitat. Coleridge's most outstanding poems, namely, The Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, and Christabel have all a strong tincture of the supernatural. In dealing with the supernatural in his works Coleridge was by no means the pioneer. Not to speak of Shakespeare, even in the eighteenth century many writers had taken up the supernatural as almost their cult. The spate of "Gothic" novels was an outcome of this cult. To name only a few, Horace Walpole, Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, and William Beckford had introduced a lot of supernatural characters and incidents in their novels. However, their work is singularly free from any artistic merit. They only catered for the ordinary people who had long been bored by the literature of reason and common sense and were then craving for cheap thrills. They candidly and crudely produced blood-curdling and spine-curling concoctions emanating from a ghoulish fancy. There is something morbid in their works which are so abundantly peopled with "death-pale spectres and clanking chains." To naive readers, they cause terror; to the knowing they cause disgust; but they cause wonder to none. The supernaturalism of the writers of the novel of terror is as counterfeit as their Gothicism.

Coleridge's supernaturalism, however, is neither shocking nor disgusting. It excited his wonder, and he conveyed this feeling of wonder to his readers. His treatment of supernaturalism is suggestive, delicate, refined, elegant, and eminently psychological. He altogether differed from the sensation-mongering of the exponents of Gothicism. As he himself pointed out in Biographia Liter aria, his subject and approach in the Lyrical Ballads were to be different from those of Wordsworth. His own endeavours were to be directed to persons and incidents supernatural, yet was he to make them look natural and credible by dint of his subtle, psychological approach. The supernatural is, generally, terrifying; but "naturalised supernatural" is not terrifying but conducive to the feeling of wonder. Even when Coleridge is describing something ordinary, he makes it suggestive of the supernatural. Lines like the following represent Coleridge at his best and are perhaps unrivalled for their suggestiveness in the whole range of English poetry:

A savage place; as holy and enchanted

As ever beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon lover.

A critic asserts that this is magic pure and simple; the rest is poetry.

Notes

Scott's treatment of the supernatural is somewhat crude, but Keats gives a good account of himself in his ballad La Belle Dame Sans Merci which is delicately tinctured with the supernatural.

16.4 Medievalism and Hellenism

Many romantic poets, while they did not feed their curiosity on the world of the supernatural, yet transported themselves to the remote in time and space to create a similar effect of wonder. Almost all of them looked at the middle Ages as the period of chivalry, adventure, action, and art. In doing so, however, they conveniently forgot the seamy facets of that period-squalor, pestilence, superstition, and fanaticism. Keats viewed ancient Greece as the abode of art and unexampled beauty, so much so that Shelley said that Keats was "a Greek." With the exception of Wordsworth and Shelley, who were always lost in the world of his own vision and dreams of the golden age to come-all the romantic poets, loved the middle Ages. The middle Ages, according to Walter Pater, "are unworked sources of romantic: after, of a strange beauty to be won by strong imagination out of things unlikely or remote."

Notes The enthusiasm for the middle Ages satisfied the emotional sense of wonder as the intellectual sense of curiosity.

16.5 Nature-Wordsworth and Others

Wordsworth, who is generally recognised to be the greatest of all the romantic poets, has not much to do with supernaturalism, medievalism, or Hellenism. Nor is he ensconced in the world of his own imagination. Nevertheless, he shows a strong tendency towards wonder and curiosity even while keeping his gaze fixed on the ordinary world. He was the greatest poet of Nature, as also her greatest priest. He brings a fresh curiosity and wonder to bear upon his study of Nature. His creed is strongly pantheistic, as Nature for him becomes something like a ubiquitous goddess. In the writing of the Lyrical Ballads it was mutually agreed upon by Coleridge and him that the endeavours of the former would be directed to persons and characters supernatural or at least "romantic," whereas he himself was to propose to himself as his subjects familiar, everyday things, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural by awakening the mind's attention from the "lethargy" of custom and directing it to the loveliness and wonder of the world before us-an inexhaustible treasure which because of its film of familiarity we have eyes but see not, ears but hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

So when Wordsworth is dealing with familiar objects his intention is not to present them photographically-as, for as instance, Crabbe does. Crabbe, an uncompromising realist and a kind of "Pope in worsted stockings", had nothing of the romantic in him. He looked at the miseries of rural life without batting his eyelids. His claim was:

I paint the Cot

As Truth would paint it, and as Bards will not.

We read his descriptions of people, natural phenomena, and the sights and sounds of Nature with the boredom of recognition rather than the wonder of strangeness. When we read about the grave of a child:

I have measured it from side to side;

It is three feet long and two feet wide

It does not excite wonder or curiosity. There is indeed no romance in giving the exact measurement of a meadow or the exact height of an oak. Wordsworth, it must be admitted, does also sometimes succumb to such prosaic realism; however, it is his definite aim to sketch objects not as they are, but after removing from their surfaces the dull Film of familiarity and then projecting over them a certain colouring of-the imagination. Coleridge, by virtue of his subtle imagination, gives realistic

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touches to things otherwise strange; Wordsworth, on the other hand, gives subtle, exalting touches to things otherwise real and common. Coleridge naturalises the supernatural and Wordsworth "supernaturalises" the natural. Thus both meet at the same via media of romance which is realistic as well as wonderful. Such common objects as a leech-gatherer, a solitary reaper, and a cuckoo become in Wordsworth poetry objects of wonder and curiosity. It is easy to excite wonder in strange or supernatural things, but to do so in ordinary objects require the artistic imagination of a real poet. Wordsworth transforms plain reality into beautiful romance. Led by Wordsworth almost all the romantic poets took interest in Nature and loved to dwell on her multifarious moods and aspects. Shelley looked at the West Wind, the skylark, and the clouds not as dull and never-changing objects of never-changing Nature, but as objects of wonderful freshness and perennial interest. Keats, Coleridge, and Byron had each his own conception of Nature, but all of them evinced much interest in the world of Nature and studied and described her with infectious wonder and curiosity, as if she by herself were an unexplored world waiting to be discovered and studied with fresh attention and virgin wonder.

16.6 Influence of French Revolution on the Poets of the Age

It would be peremptory to treat the French Revolution as just another historical incident having political significance alone. The French Revolution exerted a profound influence not only on the political destiny of a European nation but also impinged forcefully on the intellectual, literary, and political fields throughout Europe. It signalised the arrival of a new era of fresh thinking and introspection.

The conditions prevailing in England at that time made her particularly receptive to the new ideas generated by the Revolution. In literature the French Revolution was instrumental in the creation of anew interest in nature and the elemental simplicities of life. It accelerated the approach of the romantic era and the close of the Augustan school of poetry which was already moribund in the age of Wordsworth.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Romantic movement in England was directed against the traditions of the neoclassical poetry of the school of Dryden, pope and ..... .
2. Theodore watts-Dunton, likewise, interpreted the Romantic movement as the ..... .
3. Moore was interested in the world of oriental splendour and ..... .
4. Coleridge's most outstanding poems, namely, the Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, and ..... have all a strong tincture of the supernatural.
5. The supernaturalism of the writers of the novel of terror is as counterfeit as their ..... .
6. Coleridge naturalists the supernatural and wordsworth "....." the natural.

16.7 Poetry and Politics

The age of Wordsworth was an age of revolution in the field of poetry as well as of politics. In both these fields the age had started expressing its impatience of set formulas and traditions, the tyranny of rules and the bondage of convention. From the French Revolution the age imbibed a spirit of revolt asserting the dignity of the individual spirit and hollowness of the time-honoured conventions which kept it in check. Thus both in the political and the poetic fields the age learnt from the Revolution the necessity of emancipation-in the political field, from tyranny and social oppression; and in the poetic, from the bondage of rules and authority. The French Revolution, in a word, exerted a democratising influence, both on politics and poetry. Inspired by the French Revolution, poets and politicians alike were poised for an onslaught on old, time-rusted values. It was only here and there that some conservative critics stuck to their guns and eyed all zeal for change and liberation with suspicion and distrust. (Thus, for instance, Lord Jeffrey wrote in the Edinburgh Review that poetry had something common with religion in that its standards had

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been fixed long ago by certain inspired writers whose authority it would be ever unlawful to question.) But such views did not represent the spirit of the age which had come under the liberating influence of the French Revolution.

It is perhaps quite relevant to point out here the folly of the belief that the new literary and political tendencies, which had a common origin and were almost contemporaneous with each other, always influenced a given person equally strongly, that a person could not be a revolutionary in politics without being a revolutionary in literature, and vice versa. Scott, for example, was a romantic, but a Tory. Hazlitt, on the contrary, was a chartist in politics but was pleased to call himself an "aristocrat" in literature. Keats did not bother about the French Revolution, or even politics, at all.

Notes Wordsworth and Coleridge, the two real pioneers of the Romantic Movement in England, started as radicals and ended as tenacious Tories.

16.8 Three Phases of the French Revolution

It is wrong to think of the French Revolution as a sudden coup unrelated to what had gone before it. In fact, the seeds of the Revolution had been sown long before they sprouted in 1789. We can distinguish three clear phases of the French Revolution, which according to Compton-Rickett, are as follows:

- The Doctrinaire phase-the age of Rousseau;
- The Political phase-the age of Robespierre and Danton;
- The Military phase-the age of Napoleon."

All these three phases considerably influenced the Romantic Movement in England.

16.8.1 The Influence of the Doctrinaire Phase

The doctrinaire phase of the French Revolution was dominated by the each thinker Rousseau. His teachings and philosophic doctrines were the germs that brought about an intellectual and literary revolution all over England. He was, fundamentally considered, a naturalist who gave the slogan "Return to Nature." He expressed his faith in the elemental simplicities of life and his distrust of the sophistication of civilisation which, according to him, had been curbing the natural (and good) man. He revived the cult of the "noble savage" untainted by the so-called culture. Social institutions were all condemned by him as so many chains. He raised his powerful voice against social and political tyranny and exhorted the downtrodden people to rise for emancipation from virtual slavery and almost hereditary poverty imposed upon them by an unnatural political system which benefited only a few. Rousseau's primitivism, sentimentalism, and individualism had their influence on English thought and literature. In France they prepared the climate for the Revolution.

Rousseau's sentimental belief in the essential goodness of natural man and the excellence of simplicity and even ignorance found a ready echo in Blake and, later, Wordsworth and Coleridge. The love of nature and the simplicities of village life and unsophisticated folk found ample expression in their poetic works. Wordsworth's love of nature was partly due to Rousseau's influence. Rousseau's intellectual influence touched first Godwin and, through him, Shelley. Godwin in Political Justice embodied a considerable part of Rousseauistic thought. Like him he raised his voice for justice and equality and expressed his belief in the essential goodness of man.

Notes Referring reverently to Political Justice Shelley wrote that Rousseau's had learnt "all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue from that book."

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16.8.2 The Influence of the Political Phase and the Military Phase

The political phase of the Revolution, which started with the fall of the Bastille, sent a wave of thrill to every young heart in Europe. Wordsworth became crazy for joy, and along with him, Southey and Coleridge caught the general contagion. All of them expressed themselves in pulsating words. But such enthusiasm and rapture were not destined to continue for long. The Reign of Terror and the emergence of Napoleon as an undisputed tyrant dashed the enthusiasm of romantic poets to pieces. The beginning of the war between France and England completed their disillusionment, and Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, who had started as wild radicals, ended as well-domesticated Tories. The latter romantics dubbed them as renegades who had let down the cause of the Revolution. Wordsworth, in particular, had to suffer much criticism down to the days of Robert Browning who wrote a pejorative poem on him describing him as "the lost leader."

Wordsworth

As we have already said, Wordsworth's theory and work as a poet were much influenced by the teachings of Rousseau. It was under this powerful influence that he came out with his epoch-making work (in collaboration with Coleridge), the Lyrical Ballads (1978), which, in the words of Palgrave, "was a trumpet that heralded the dawn of a new era by making the prophecy that poetry, an unlimited and unlimitable art of expressing man's inner and deep-seated joys and sorrows, would not be fettered by the narrow and rigid bonds of artificial conventions and make-believe formalism." The Lyrical Ballads led a revolt against the artificial sentiment and equally artificial and mechanical poetic style of the eighteenth century, as also established he truth that poetry, if at all it is to remain poetry, must express the feelings and joys and fears of common men and women close to the soil, and interpret their day-to-day activities of life. Thus the sense of mystery which led many persons to a remote past was believed by Wordsworth to be capable of satisfaction closer at hand. Wordsworth found it-instead of the Middle Ages and Greek art-in the simplicities of everyday life-an ordinary sunset, the fleecy clouds, a morning walk over the hills, a cottage girl, the song of the nightingale and so forth. He turned for the subjects of his poetry to the life of the unsophisticated village folk who lived away from the recognised centres of culture.

At the time of the Revolution (1789) Wordsworth was a young man of only nineteen. In The Prelude he describes how thrilled he was by the occasion. He felt that Europe itself was thrilled with joy, France standing at the top of golden hours, and human nature seeming born again. And further:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven.

He believed that in front of the Frenchmen

shone a glorious world,

Fresh as a banner bright unfurled

To music suddenly.

He visited the land of his dreams twice-in 1790 and 1791. But his youthful rapture came to an end with the Reign of Terror and the emergence of Napoleon. This rude blow sent him reeling into the arms of his first love-Nature. Thus Wordsworth passed through a mental and spiritual crisis, and though he recovered himself finally yet the influence of the Revolution remained as vital impression on his mind. Though he ultimately became a Tory yet he continues believing in the dignity of man, and consequently, applying his poetic faculty to the commonest objects and the lowest people. It is a noteworthy point that the best poetic work of Wordsworth was done during the period of his revolutionary fervour.

Notes

16.9 Coleridge and Southey

The impact of the French Revolution on Coleridge and Southey was of the same pattern as in the case of Wordsworth-youthful exuberance at the rising of the masses ending in despair and disillusionment with the Reign of Terror but after this disillusionment Wordsworth and Coleridge followed different paths in search of an anodyne. Whereas Wordsworth found consolation in Nature, Coleridge sought to burke his discontent with abstract philosophy and intellectual idealism. Coleridge failed to receive from Nature the joy which he was wont to. Metaphysics interested him and claimed his almost full attention. His poetic spirit also declined with the decline of his revolutionary fervour. By 1811 he had become not only an "anti-revolution" Tory but also an incorrigible "antiGallican."

Byron

On Byron the French Revolution exerted no direct influence. But he was a revolutionary in his own right. He was against almost all social conventions and institutions, and felt an almost morbid pleasure in violating and condemning them with the greatest abandon. In his poetry he most vigorously championed the cause of social and political liberty and died almost as a martyr in the cause of Greek independence. A critic observes: "Byron excelled most other poets of England in his being one of the supreme poets »f Revolution and Liberty. His poetry voices the many moods of the spirit of Revolution which captured the imagination of Europe in the early years of the last century. A rebel against society but also against the very conditions of human life, Byron is our one supreme exponent of some distinctive forces of the Revolution. Of its constructive energy, its social ardour, its utopianism, there is no trace in his work.''

Did u know? Byron was excited by the imposing personality of Napoleon who appealed to him as a "Byronic" hero.

Shelley

When Shelley started writing, the French Revolution had already become, as a historical incident, a thing of the past However, the spirit of the Revolution breaths vigorously in his poetry. After his characteristic way he overlooked physical realities, and was attracted by abstractions only. Says Compton-Rickert: "Ideas inspired him, not episodes; so he drank in the doctrines of Godwin, and ignored the tragic perplexities of the actual situation." To Shelley the Revolution, to quote the same critic, appealed "as an idea, not as a concrete historical fact." In all his important poems, such as The Revolt of Islam, Queen Mab, Prometheus Unbound, and the incomparable Ode to the West Wind, breathes a revolutionary spirit impatient of all curbs and keenly desirous of the emancipation of man from all kinds of shackles-political, social, and even moral. Love and liberty are the two ruling deities in Shelley's hierarchy of values, and in his exaltation of them both he comes very near the Rousseauistic creed. The French Revolution had failed miserably in the implementation of its three slogans "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." But Shelley always envisioned ahead a real Revolution which would rectify all wrongs once and for all. This hope for the millenium is the central theme of much of his poetry.

Keats

Keats was almost entirely untouched by the French Revolution, as by everything earthly. A critic observes: "In the judgment of Keats, philosophy, politics and ethics were not suitable subjects for verse. While, therefore, Wordsworth and Coleridge were reflecting upon the moral law of the universe, while Byron was voicing the political ideas of Europe in the poetry of revolt, and Shelley was writing of an enfranchised humanity, the music of Keats luxuriated in classical myths and medieval legends, and was inspired by an insatiable love of Beauty." From a study of Keats's poetry it is hard to believe that such an incident as the French Revolution ever took/place at all.

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Conclusion

From what has gone before it is clear how powerful an influence the French Revolution exerted on English literature. The ideas that awoke the youthful passion of Wordsworth and Coleridge, that stirred the wrath of Scott, that worked like leaven on Byron and brought forth new matter, that Shelley reclothed and made into a prophecy of the future, the excitement, the turmoil, and the life-and-death struggle which gathered round the Revolution were ignored by few poets of England. Henceforth their poetry spoke of man, of his destiny, and his wrongs, his rights, duties, and hopes, and particularly, the gyved and fettered humanity. One is tempted to endorse G. K. Chesterton's paradoxical remark that the greatest event of English history occurred outside England!

Task Write down the role of imagination in romantic literature.

16.10 Summary

- Romanticism emphasized the liberty of the individual genius from the deadening weight of tradition and rules, thereby encouraging a kind of chaotic tendency.
- Coleridge, perhaps the most romantic of all the romantic poets, always lived in the wonderful world of his dreams and imagination.
- The age of Wordsworth was an age of revolution in the field of poetry as well as of politics.
- The political phase of the Revolution, which started with the fall of the Bastille, sent a wave of thrill to every young heart in Europe.
- When Shelley started writing, the French Revolution had already become, as a historical incident, a thing of the past However, the spirit of the Revolution breaths vigorously in his poetry.

16.11 Keywords

Hellenism : Hellenism, as a neoclassical movement distinct from other Roman or Greco-Roman forms of neoclassicism emerging after the European Renaissance, is most often associated with Germany and England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Medievalism : Medievalism is the system of belief and practice characteristic of the middle ages.

16.12 Review Questions

1. What is the role of imagination?
2. What is Coleridge and the supernatural? Explain.
3. What is the difference between Medievalism and Hellenism?
4. How many phases of the French Revolution?
5. What is Coleridge and Southey?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Dr. Johnson
2. Renascence of wonder
3. Gorgeousness
4. Christable
5. Gothicism
6. Supernaturalises

16.13 Further Readings

Notes

Books

The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, 3rd edition CUP, New Delhi 2005: Sampson, George.

A critical history of English Literature, IV Vol, 2nd ed. Ronald, New York, 1970: Daiches, David.

History of English Literature, Cambridge University Press, London, 1968: Legouis and Cazamian.

Online links

www.crvp.org/seminar/05-seminar/mclean.htm

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Unit 17: The Triumph of Romanticism (Elements of Medievalism, Escapism and Supernaturalism)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define pater's explanation.
- Describe coleridge and scott.
- Explain escapism.
- Define supernaturalism.

Introduction

The generation of a new interest in the middle ages was one of the hallmarks of the Romantic Movement in England, as in the rest of Europe. Heine went so far as to define romanticism as the reawakening of the middle Ages. H. A. Beers in A History of English Romanticism (1902) was also mainly concerned with the revival of medievalism. It is, however, too lop-sided an interpretation of romanticism which was, in fact, a very complex and composite phenomenon.

17.1 Elements of Medievalism

Why were most romantic poets interested in the Middle Ages? The answer to this question is not far to seek. The romantics were, essentially, critical of intellectualism, sophisticated civilisation, and harsh humdrum reality. The desire to get rid of them made them "amorous of the far." They sought an escape into regions and states of beings as far removed in time and space as possible. It is this love of the remote, the strange, and the mysterious which induced in them an interest in the Middle Ages. The romantic poet is impatient of the real and the earth-bound. He is often discontented with the state of things as they are. Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Scott are notably so. Being dissatisfied with oppressive reality they either sing of the glorious past or project their imagination into the womb of futurity to raise a shape that answers their own desire. Thus Keats sings of the glory that was Greece; Scott endeavours to recapture the splendour of the past ages, particularly the Middle Ages; Shelley sings of the golden age to come; and Coleridge is lost in a world of his own making. Says Shelley:

Jayatee Bhattacharya, Lovely Professional University

We look before and after

And pine for what is not.

Notes

Samuel C. Chew observes about the romantics' interest in the middle Ages: "With such currents of thought and feeling flowing, it was natural that the middle Ages were regarded with a fresh sympathy, though not, be it said, with accurate understanding. It is true that there were those who, like Shelley, seeking to reshape the present in accordance with desire, did not revert to the past but pursued their ideal into a Utopian future. But to others the Middle Ages offered a spiritual home, remote and vague and mysterious. The typical romanticist does not 'reconstruct' the past from the substantial evidence provided by research, but fashions it a new, not as it was but as it ought to have been. The more the writer insists upon the historical accuracy of his reconstruction the less romantic is he." Thus some romantics who love the middle Ages not only try to escape from the real and present world but from the real medieval world too; they fashion it a new as it ought to have been, ignoring its unpalatable features known to all historians. They glorify its splendour and chivalry and forget its dirt, disease, squalor, superstition, and social oppression.

Pater's Explanation

As to what led most romantic poets to make their spiritual home in the Middle Ages is explained by Walter Pater in the following words: "The essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty, and it is as the accidental effect of these qualities only, that it seeks the Middle Ages, because in the overcharged atmosphere of the Middle Ages there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of a strange beauty to be won by strong imagination out of things unlikely or remote." Romanticism is interpreted by Pater as the addition of the sense of strangeness to beauty. "Strangeness" implies the combination of the emotional sense of wonder and the intellectual sense of curiosity. Both these senses are gratified by the romance-clad, remote, and mysterious middle Ages.

Not All Romantic Poets are Medievalists

In spite of the views of Heine and Beers already referred to, medievalism is not an essential feature of all romantic poetry, even though it be one of the hallmarks of the Romantic Movement in England. Many important poets did not, for different reasons, evince much interest in the middle Ages; but they were "romantics" all the same. Among such poets must be mentioned the names of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron. Wordsworth found a constant spiritual anchor in Nature. He was as keenly dissatisfied with the world of humdrum reality as any other romantic poet. But whereas others escaped to the remote in time and space, Wordsworth found in the healing power of Nature a balm for all his pains and frustrations. Why should he have looked to the middle Ages when the panacea for all his ills was present right in front of him? There is not any strong element of romantic agony and earning in Wordsworth's poetry as Nature led him "from joy to joy." Medievalism for Wordsworth, then, was an utter irrelevancy. As regards Shelley, the absence of interest in the middle Ages may be explained by his persistent "futurism." He found his spiritual home not in the supposedly near-ideal bygone ages but in the golden age to come. He looked "after" rather than "before"; the unborn tomorrow appealed to him as more real than the dead yesterday. He, however, did love to dwell upon mystery, spirit foreign lands, and remote times. At any rate, the love of the middle Ages does not manifest itself as a specific and noteworthy element in his poetry. Byron's temper and approach were in many respects quite different from those of most romantic poets. But the love of the remote was equally shared by him with others. However, he was much more interested in the Orient than in medieval Europe. His "Oriental Tales"-77ze Giaour, the Bride of Abydos (both 1813) and The Corsair (1817) have for their background the world of Oriental romance; however, their interest resides not in the romantic atmosphere but the personality of the hero in each case. Only in Lara (1814) do we find Byron employing, to quote-Samuel C. Chew, "the Gothic mode for the delineation of the Byronic hero." Thus, on the whole, Byron manifests little interest in medievalism.

Notes

Difference from the Gothic Romancers

The medievalism of romantic poets was quite different from that of the Gothic romancers who had earlier shown in their crude Gothic stories new interest in the Middle Ages. Horace Walpole and Mrs. Ann Radcliffe were the most important among them. Walpole, like some other dilettanti of the second half of the eighteenth century, did something practically Gothic by erecting an actual castle (not one in the air) after the Gothic style-at least, what he thought was the Gothic style. Critics are forward enough to dub his Gothicism-both that of his architecture and his Castle of Otranto-as, sham. These Gothic novelists had little real knowledge of the middle Ages. They were crude sensation-mongers who found the Middle Ages a convenient repository in which all supernatural and blood-curdling events and characters could be dumped with impunity. Their approach to the middle Ages was neither sincere nor psychological, nor artistic. For one thing, none of them really believed in all that he wrote about. Walpole was an enervated intellectual who cultivated the creed of Gothicism just to kill boredom. Mrs. Radcliffe, wife of a journalist, wrote her stories just to keep herself occupied during the frequent hours of leisure. None of the Gothicists made the middle Ages his or her spiritual home. Coleridge, Scott, and Keats on the other hand, dealt with the middle Ages with extreme sensitiveness and psychological integrity. Coleridge and Keats, at least, believed in their own "romanticised" versions of the middle Ages. They breathed the very air of the period and made themselves quite at home in that atmosphere. Their approach to the middle Ages was not the approach of a painstaking historian or cold dilettante. They transported themselves into the spirit of those times though without bothering about fidelity to historical details. Their interest lay in living rather than describing the Middle Ages.

Coleridge

Coleridge was the pioneer in the psychological and artistic handling of the middle Ages. His medievalism and supernaturalism go hand in hand. The middle Ages for him provide a very appropriate period for his poems which contain supernatural and mysterious events rich in romance. His greatest poems – "Christabel" and "The Ancient Mariner" have both for their backdrop the England of the Middle Ages. In the former we have the usual medieval accoutrements-such as an old-fashioned castle, a feudal lord, mystery, superstition, magic, and terror. The castle is surrounded by a moat and is "ironed within and without/' There is the witch woman Geraldine who casts her evil spell on the chaste Christabel who is every inch the beautiful and young heroine of a typical medieval romance. The medieval atmosphere, along with Coleridge's subtle and imaginative handling of his subject, gives the poem a colour of credibility. It also enables him to dispense with any elaborate machinery for the generation of eerie and remote terror. As is usual with him, Coleridge works in Christabel through subtle suggestion rather than explicit description. It must be noted that Coleridge values the middle ages not for their own sake but for their capacity to provide a suitable setting for the supernatural which it is his purpose to hint at or to display openly. Only once does he go beyond this-while describing the shadowy picture in Christabel of

The charm carved so curiously

Carved with figures strange and sweet

For the Lady's chamber meet.

Otherwise, the medieval atmosphere is kept vague rather than concretely depicted, though it permeates everything. Even when he alludes to the trials by combat in Part II of Christabel he does not give precise details. Contrast his approach with Keats's description of Madeline's chamber in The Eve of St. Agnes and we will find the difference between Coleridge and other romantic poets in this particular.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is, likewise, provided by Coleridge with a medieval setting. The references to the crossbow, the vesper bell, the shriving hermit, the prayer to Mary-all point to the medieval setting of the poem. The deliberate archaisms like eftsoons", "countree," and "swound" serve the same purpose. The supernatural events in the poem find a befitting backdrop in this medieval setting.

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Scott

In his medievalism and supernaturalism Scott followed in the footsteps of Coleridge and found tumultuous response from the reading public. Scott was a very copious and versatile writer, better known as a novelist than a poet. As a historical novelist he covered in his novels the history of England and Scotland from the Dark Ages to the then recent eighteenth century.

Did u know? Scott was at home in the past, particularly the Middle Ages in which he created an unprecedented interest and even enthusiasm.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805), Scott's first important original work, has for its setting the England-Scotland border of the mid-sixteenth century with all its feuds and suggestions of magic and mystery. A Tale of Flodden Field Marmion (1808) is, likewise, set in the year 1513 and is based on some historical incidents generously peppered with many others of the poet's own creation. The Lady of the Lake (1810), which like the two above-mentioned works is a poem in six cantos, also like them transports the reader to England and Scotland of the Middle Ages and has for characters chivalrous knights who participate in numerous feuds for the hand of a beautiful maiden. Scott's treatment of the middle ages is somewhat less artistic and delicate than Coleridge's. He is much more interested in action and vigorous narration than in subtle and psychological suggestions.

Keats

Keats, like most romantic poets, revelled in the past. He was most pleased with the middle ages and the ancient Greece with all its glory, splendour, and beauty. His most important poems conceived in the medieval setting are the incomparable The Eve of St. Agnes and the ballad La Belle Dame Sans Merci. The former is based on the medieval legend of St. Agnes. "The Eve of St. Agnes "says a critic "is a glorious record of the fondness of Keats for all that is understood by the phrase 'medieval accessories." There are very obvious "medieval accessories" such as an old castle, an adventurous, love-struck knight, a young lady who looks like the typical heroine of a medieval romance, the beadsman, and family feuds and enmity. All this is certainly medieval. "But, observes a critic, "it is medievalism seen through the magical mist of the imagination of Keats." Keats's approach to the middle ages is conditioned by his sensuous temper. He loves this period for its romance and mystery, no doubt, but also for its picturesqueness and its appeal to the senses. His treatment lacks the subtlety and psychological veracity of Coleridge's.

Notes "The reliance," says Samuel C. Chew, "upon elaborate and vivid presentation rather than upon suggestion differentiates the quality of Keats's romanticism from Coleridge's."

The setting of La Belle Dame Sans Merci is also medieval and is equally charged with the spirit of chivalry and the supernatural. The love-lorn knight-at-arms who is smitten by the sight of the femme fatale-"a fairy's child"-the "elfin grot", and the mysterious incidents are all abundantly suggestive of the Middle Ages. The whole poem has, unlike The Eve of St. Agnes, the naivete of a medieval lay.

17.2 Escapism

Escapism is mental diversion by means of entertainment or recreation, as an "escape" from the perceived unpleasant or banal aspects of daily life. It can also be used as a term to define the actions people take to help relieve persisting feelings of depression or general sadness.

Many activities that are normal parts of a healthy existence (e.g., eating, sleeping, exercise, sexual activity) can also become avenues of escapism when taken to extremes.

Notes

Notes In the context of being taken to an extreme, the word "escapism" carries a negative connotation, suggesting that escapists are unhappy, with an inability or unwillingness to connect meaningfully with the world.

However, there are some who challenge the idea that escapism is fundamentally and exclusively negative. For instance, J. R. R. Tolkien, responding to the Anglo-Saxon academic debate on escapism in the 1930s, wrote in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" that escapism had an element of emancipation in its attempt to figure a different reality. C. S. Lewis was also fond of humorously remarking that the usual enemies of escape were jailers.

Some social critics warn of attempts by the powers that control society to provide means of escapism instead of actually bettering the condition of the people. For example, Karl Marx wrote about religion as being the "opium of the people". Escapist societies appear often in literature. The Time Machine depicts the Eliot, a lackadaisical, insouciant race of the future, and the horror their happy lifestyle belies. The novel subtly criticizes capitalism, or at least classism, as a means of escape. Escapist societies are common in dystopian novels; for example, in Fahrenheit 451 society uses television and "seashell radios" to escape a life with strict regulations and the threat of the forthcoming war.

German social philosopher Ernst Bloch wrote that utopias and images of fulfillment, however regressive they might be, also included an impetus for a radical social change. According to Bloch, social justice could not be realized without seeing things fundamentally differently. Something that is mere "daydreaming" or "escapism" from the viewpoint of a technological-rational society might be a seed for a new and more humane social order, as it can be seen as an "immature, but honest substitute for revolution".

Task Write short note on Escapism.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Romanticism is interpreted by Pater as the addition of the sense of strangeness to ..... .
2. As regards Shelley, the absence of interest in the middle ages may be explained by his persistent ..... .
3. ..... was the pioneer in the psychological and artistic handling of the middle ages.
4. ....., like most romantic poets, revelled in the past.
5. C.S. Lewis was also Fond of humorously remarking that the usual enemies of escape were ..... .

17.3 Supernaturalism

Supernaturalism is the theological belief that a force or power other than man or nature is ultimate. This supernatural force (God) regulates both man and nature, making both of them subordinate to it.

- God as creator.
- Man is considered to be higher than the rest of nature.

Supernaturalism is a belief in an otherworldly realm or reality that, in one way or another, is commonly associated with all forms of religion. Evidence of neither the idea of nature nor the experience of a purely natural realm is found among primitive people, who inhabit a wonder world charged with the sacred power (or mana), spirits, and deities. Primitive man associates whatever is experienced as uncanny or powerful with the presence of a sacred or numinous power; yet he constantly lives in a profane realm that is made comprehensible by a paradigmatic, mythical sacred realm.

Notes

What is supernaturalism? It is the belief that events and values require supernatural powers or authority for their explanation. Natural explanations may be reliable on an immediate level, but they in turn must eventually require a supernatural cause. According to supernaturalism, a supernatural order is the original and fundamental source of all that exists. It is this supernatural order which defines the limits of what may be known.

The difference between these two positions is one of the fundamental differences between atheists and theists - it is a difference which tends to cause the most disagreement and most friction. Atheists tend to be naturalists - taking the perspective that this natural world is all there is, all there is to know, and does not require anything "supernatural" to explain it. Theists tend to be supernaturalists - assuming that a supernatural realm exists beyond what we see and is necessary in order to explain our universe.

Supernaturalism is the belief that there are beings, forces, and phenomena such as God, angels or miracles which interact with the physical universe in remarkable and unique ways. Supernaturalism is a fundamental premise of theism. Theists by definition hold to a supernaturalistic worldview which stands in contrast to the atheistic premise of naturalism, which denies the existence of any supernatural phenomena.

The word supernatural comes from the Latin word super meaning "above" + nature. It should however, be noted that although some supernatural phenomena may not be perceived by natural or empirical senses, a great many supernatural events have been witnessed in biblical and modern times. Numerous events in Earth's history require a supernaturalistic belief before they can be correctly understood or interpreted.

17.4 Summary

- The generation of a new interest in the middle ages was one of the hallmarks of the Romantic Movement in England, as in the rest of Europe.
- The medievalism of romantic poets was quite different from that of the Gothic romancers who had earlier shown in their crude Gothic stories new interest in the Middle Ages.
- The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805), Scott's first important original work, has for its setting the England-Scotland border of the mid-sixteenth century with all its feuds and suggestions of magic and mystery.

17.5 Keywords

Escapism : Escapism is mental diversion by means of entertainment as an "escape" from the perceived unpleasant or banal aspects of daily life.

Supernaturalism : Supernaturalism, a belief in an otherworldly realm or reality that, in one way or another, is commonly associated with all forms of religion.

17.6 Review Questions

1. What is difference from the Gothic Romancers?
2. What is Coleridge and Scott? Explain.
3. What is Escapism? Explain.
4. What is supernaturalism? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. beauty
2. futurism
3. Coleridge
4. Keats
5. jailers

Notes

17.7 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 18: The Triumph of Romanticism (Melancholy in Poetry of the Age)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define wordsworth.
- Describe coleridge and shelley.
- Explain keats and byron.

Introduction

Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him-whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might.
And be among her cloudy trophies hung. — Keats

Melancholy is one of the inevitable products of the typical romantic temper. Apart from such personal factors as ill-health, an unhappy marriage or social ostracisation, most romantic poets were led to 'occasional fits of melancholia by the inherent quality of their creed. Their romantic approach to life shuttlecocke them between hope and despair. All of them, fundamentally considered, were optimists; and like all optimists they fell into moments of despair. Romantic melancholy is essentially different from other kinds of melancholy we associate with Hardy or the melancholy of Sir Thomas Browne. Hardy's melancholy is the natural product of his profound pessimism which hinges mainly on his deterministic conception of the universe. Browne's melancholy has an essentially subjective origin; it arises from his persistent interest in the themes of decay and fatality and their appurtenances. His is a macabre imagination exulting m the contemplation of these themes which always inspire him to give his best.

Notes The eighteenth-century poetry of the "graveyard school" is instinct with the same kind of melancholy.

Notes

Romantic melancholy, however, is of its own kind. It is the product of moments of depression inherent in almost every optimistic philosophy or attitude towards life. Few poets can remain always balanced on the crest of a euphoric certainty that God is in his Heaven:

All is light with the world.

A man like Hardy can be a firm pessimist, but few can be firm optimists. Almost all the romantic poets were, essentially speaking, optimists. Their fits of melancholy were due mainly to two factors:

- Their occasional (and very painful) awareness of the unbridgeable gulf between the world of reality and the world of their imagination.
- Their recognition of the impossibility of the materialization of their visionary projects. Melancholy is natural during moments when the infeasibility of pet imaginations comes to be realised.

Thus romantic melancholy is, pre-eminently, the outcome of a basic dichotomy which at times gives rise to the feelings of disillusionment. Samuel C. Chew observes in this very context: "The attempt to find some correspondence between actuality and desire results in joy when for fleeting moments the vision is approximated but in despondency of despair the realization comes that such reconciliations are impossible. Thus Byron's Lucifer tempts Cain to revolt by forcing upon him an awareness of the inadequacy of his state to his conceptions.' A sense of this contrast is expressed by Shelley in those poems in which there is a sudden fall from ecstasy into disillusionment. The same sense adds a new poignancy to the melancholy strain inherited by the romantic poets from their predecessors."

Disillusionment resulting in melancholy is also evident in the political belief of some romantic poets. Further, as most romantic poets were turbulent characters unable to adjust themselves in society they ventilated melancholy feeling. They thought the world to be out of step, but the world threw the opposite charge into their teeth.

Did u know? The feeling of being solitary, especially in the case of Shelley, found melancholy expression.

18.1 Wordsworth

Wordsworth was the least melancholy of all the romantic poets. It was mainly due to the fact that he seldom felt himself to be in a state of utter solitariness. There was his sister and there was the ever-consoling Nature always at his elbow. He believed, and actually felt, that Nature leads one from joy to joy. He was an incorrigible optimist though he was aware, like Crabbe, of the miseries of villagers who lived, unlike townsmen, right in the heart of Nature. When Michael finds his son tost in the ignominious ways of the town, he is shocked. Wordsworth points out that love sustained Michael, for

There is a comfort in the strength of love
Which makes a thing endurable, which else
Will overset the brain or break the heart

Wordsworth's optimism finds its way even in the midst of elegiac sentiments. Consider, for instance, the last of his Elegiac Stanzas:

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights, of what is to be borne!
Such sights or worse, as are before me here,
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

Notes

In spite of his normal optimism Wordsworth often expresses himself on the misfortunes inevitable to the human predicament. In his years of maturity he was particularly aware of them. For example, he says in Tintern Abbey:

For I have learned

To look on Nature, not as in the hour

Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often times

The still, sad music of humanity

Thus even his mysticism is not without a chastening element of melancholy.

Wordsworth's political disillusionment was also responsible for some utterances of melancholy. The French Revolution (1789) fired him as it did a large number of young hearts throughout Europe, with new hopes of the deliverance of humanity from the shackles of age-old tyranny. The fall of the Bastille was for them an incident to rave over. Recalling the days of the Revolution, Wordsworth writes:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,

But to be young was very heaven!

Later on, however, with the Reign of Terror and the rise of Napoleon, his enthusiasm for the slogan "liberty, fraternity, and equality" declined steeply. He felt that the Revolution was not Nature-but man-made. The ensuing melancholy feelings drove him straight away to the lap of Nature who nursed his wounds and healed them up. Momentary moods of depression, however, continued visiting him as ever. In Resolution and Independence he describes one such moment in the following lines where he represents himself as absorbed in "untoward thoughts":

We poets in our youth begin in gladness:

But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

This mood does not, however, continue for long, for study of the fortitude of an extremely old leech-gatherer comes to him with the message of a new hope.

Wordsworth's emotional career was calculated to arouse melancholy feelings. His ill-fated alliance with a French girl sent him brooding; but his poetry is surprisingly free from the expression of melancholy bred purely by subjective causes.

18.2 Coleridge

Coleridge went through the same vicissitudes of political feelings as Wordsworth. He and his poetry are, however, much more melancholy than Wordsworth and his poetry because he could not find the same "healing power" in Nature as Wordsworth did. No doubt, to start with, Coleridge felt identically with Wordsworth that "Nature did never betray the heart that loved her." But later on, this Wordsworthian panacea stopped working for Coleridge's peculiar ailment. In the Ode to Dejection Coleridge sets forth his contradictory view of Nature which he regards not as a spirit capable of leading even the most cheerless man to a heaven of joy, but as something essentially external, which only mirrors a man's mood, be it of joy or sorrow. Says he:

O Lady! —we receive but what we give,

And in our life alone does Nature live;

Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud.

What makes Nature look cheerful is the inner joy peculiar to every man, present in some, absent in most. He says, accordingly:

I may not hope from outward forms to win

The passion and the life whose fountains are within

This "passion and the life" are internal, having nothing to do with Nature or anything external

Notes

We in ourselves rejoice!

And thence flows all that charms our ear or sight;

All melodies the echoes of that voice,

All colours suffusion from mat Light.

Unlike Wordsworth, Coleridge was a victim of protracted spells? the darkest melancholy arising from a feeling of guilt and from the gnawing consciousness of the approaching demise of his always certain poetic inspiration. Coleridge was an opium addict living alternately in the Arabian Nights world of utter despair fast approaching with its monstrous jaws wide open. His Ode to Dejection is a soul-rending dirge on the death of his poetic talent. What distinguishes it as a poem of melancholy is its overwhelming sincerity.

Notes The Coleridge of KublaKhan, Christabel and The Ancient Mariner was dead and only a mental wreck remained behind.

18.3 Shelley

Shelley was, essentially, an optimistic dreamer. He was used to visualising and giving expression to the golden age which he believed was always round the corner. All of his long poems, like Queen Mab, Prometheus Unbound and The Revolt of Islam, are permeated with a remarkable spirit of optimism which makes light of all conceivable hurdles. Nowhere in them does he strike a note of pessimism, melancholy, or disillusioning scepticism. However, his lyrics are almost invariably melancholy in their predominant tone. Therein we find him always lamenting and complaining,

O world! O life! O time!

On whose last steps I climb.

Trembling at that where I had stood before;

When will return the glory of your prime?

No more—Oh, never morel

And listen to the "lyric cry" in the following lines from Ode to the West Wind:

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd-

One too like thee:

tameless, and swift, and proud.

According to Ian Jack "Shelley's lyrics are the utterance of a solitary." They, he further says, "are soliloquies, not dramatic monologues." The longer poems and lyrics are reflections of the two opposite moods-the moods, respectively, of optimism and pessimism. According to Ian Jack, there is no basic contradiction between these two moods. "Shelley, "says this critic, "was optimistic about the future of the human race, pessimistic (almost always) about his own future as an individual." Being the most directly personal of all his poems, his short lyrics are naturally the most melancholy. Religion has been described as what man makes of his solitude: the same description might he applied to Shelley's lyrics. As Mary Shelley pointed out, "It is the nature of that poetry...which overflows from the soul oftener to express sorrow, and regret than joy; for it is when oppressed by the weight of life, and away from those he loves that the poet has recourse to the solace of expression in verse."

At times Shelley's melancholy arises from objective observation rather than personal feelings. A good example is to be found in To a Skylark:

Notes

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not.
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

18.4 Keats

Without mincing matters it may be said that more than any other romantic, Keats was an escapist. He built up his spiritual home in the romance-draped middle ages and the Greece of yore which he considered to be a land of ideal beauty. Any intimate contact with the harsh world of reality was abhorrent to him. He was a patient of tuberculosis which ultimately cut him down in the flower of youth. By turns he feared and courted death. His sonnet "When I have fears that I may cease to be" is quite typical of him. In the 'Ode to a Nightingale' he gives vent to really poignant feelings. He is in love with "easeful Death." He desires

To cease upon the midnight with no pain

The nightingale is a denizen of some other immortal and romantic world, unaware of the misery of this world in which human beings are destined to live.

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other goan,
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Melancholy is one of the inevitable products of the ..... .
2. ..... political disillusionment was also responsible for some utterances of melancholy.
3. Wordsworth's emotional career was calculated to arouse ..... feelings.
4. ..... was, essentially, an optimistic dreamer.
5. Without mincing matters it may be said that more than any other romantic, keats was an ..... .

18.5 Byron

Byron shared very little of the true romantic melancholy. However, he was the most cynical and misanthropic of all the major romantic poets. He was a megalomaniac who regarded himself to be superior to the entire world which he openly and persistently despised. What we are aware of in him are not exactly spells of melancholy but of withering scorn and scarifying contempt which often lead him to a end of all-denying cynicism not free from depression. Well does Joseph warren Beach describe Byron as "the elevated soul tortured by his own perversities and doomed by his superiority to a life of lonely pride." But whereas Shelley's loneliness led him to melancholy, Byron's led him to spells of gross ill-temper.

Task Write short note on melancholy in poetry of the Age.

Notes

18.6 Summary

- The French Revolution (1789) fired him as it did a large number of young hearts throughout Europe, with new hopes of the deliverance of humanity from the shackles of age-old tyranny.
- Keats built up his spiritual home in the romance-draped middle ages and the Greece of yore which he considered to be a land of ideal beauty.
- Byron shared very little of the true romantic melancholy. However, he was the most cynical and misanthropic of all the major romantic poets.

18.7 Keywords

Wordsworth : Wordsworth was the least melancholy of all the romantic poets. It was mainly due to the fact that he seldom felt himself to be in a state of utter solitariness.

Coleridge : Coleridge went through the same vicissitudes of political feelings as Wordsworth.

18.8 Review Questions

1. What is wordsworth ? Explain.
2. What is Coleridge and Shelley?
3. What is difference between Keats and Byron?
4. Why were most romantic poets interested in the middle ages?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. typical romantic temper
2. Wordsworth's
3. Melancholy
4. Shelley
5. escapist

18.9 Further Readings

Books

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