HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE ROMANTIC PERIOD TO THE POST MODERN PERIOD

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Printed by
LAXMI PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
113, Golden House, Daryaganj,
New Delhi-110002
for
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara

SYLLABUS

History of English Literature from the Romantic Period to the Post Modern Period

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 triumph of Romanticism (social, economic, political ,cultural conditions, Renaissance of wonder and influence of French Revolution on poets of the Age) ,The triumph of Romanticism (Elements of Medievalism, Escapism, supernaturalism and melancholy in poetry of the Age) , The Victorian Age (social, economic, political, cultural conditions)
2	The Victorian age (women novelists, pre-Raphaelite poetry, Oxford Movement), The Nineteenth Century (Reflection of changes in the English society due toIndustrial Revolution in the nineteenth century novel) , The Nineteenth Century (Feminist movement)
3	The Nineteenth Century (Dickens, Hardy, women novelists), Twentieth century (modern novel-Lawrence, stream of consciousness), Twentieth century (poetic drama , Absurd drama and Problem play)
4	Realism and Naturalism, Imagism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Symbolism, Impressionism, Expressionism
5	Absurd Drama, Existentialism, Black Comedy, Angry Young man, Kitchen Sink Drama, Post Structuralism andDeconstruction, Cultural Studies: growth and development, importance, salient features etc.

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Unit 1: The Triumph of Romanticism (Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Conditions)

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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.

1.1 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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1.2 Social Conditions in the 19th Century

1.2.1 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.

1.2.2 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.

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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.

1.3 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.

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- 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).

1.4 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.

1.5 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

1.6 Further Readings

Books

History of English Literature, Kalyani publishers, New Delhi, 2004: Long. W.J.
A History of English Literature-Arthur-Compton-Rickett, UPSPD, New Delhi.
History of English Literature, Cambridge University Press, London, 1968: Legouis and Cazamian.

Online links

www.postcolonialweb.org/poldiscourse/yang/1.html
www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/ConNarrative.78/chapterId/
www.movinghere.org.uk/galleries/histories/irish/origins/origins.htm

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Unit 2: 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

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

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

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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.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 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.

2.8 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.

2.8.1 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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2.8.2 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

2.9 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.

2.10 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.

2.11 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.

2.12 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

2.13 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

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Notes

Unit 3: 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.

3.1 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:

We look before and after

And pine for what is not.

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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.

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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.

Notes

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.

3.2 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 ..... .

3.3 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.

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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.

3.4 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.

3.5 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.

3.6 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

3.7 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 4: 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.

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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 ..... .

4.5 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

4.6 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.

4.7 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.

4.8 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

4.9 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 5: The Victorian Age (Social, Economic, Political, Cultural Conditions and Women Novelists)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe social, economic, political and cultural conditions.
- Define charlotte bronte and emily bronte.
- Explain Mrs. gaskell and george eliot.

Introduction

The Victorian Age in English literature began in second quarter of the nineteenth century and ended by 1900. Though strictly speaking, the Victorian age ought to correspond with the reign of Queen Victoria, which extended from 1837 to 1901, yet literary movements rarely coincide with the exact year of royal accession or death. From the year 1798 with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads till the year 1820 there was the heyday of Romanticism in England, but after that year there was a sudden decline.

5.1 Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Conditions

Wordsworth, who after his early effusion of revolutionary principles had relapsed into conservatism and positive opposition to social and political reforms, produced nothing of importance after the publication of his White Doe of Rylstone in 1815, though he lived till 1850. Coleridge wrote no poem of merit after 1817. Scott was still writing after 1820, but his work lacked the fire and originality of his early years.

Did u know? The Romantic poets of the younger generation unfortunately all died young—Keats in 1820, Shelley in 1822, and Byron in 1824.

Notes

Though the Romantic Age in the real sense of the term ended in 1820, the Victorian Age started from 1832 with the passing of the first Reform Act, 1832. The years 1820-1832 were the years of suspended animation in politics. It was a fact that England was fast turning from an agricultural into a manufacturing country, but it was only after the reform of the Constitution which gave right of vote to the new manufacturing centres, and gave power to the middle classes, that the way was opened for new experiments in constructive politics. The first Reform Act of 1832 was followed by the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 which gave an immense advantage to the manufacturing interests, and the Second Reform Act of 1867. In the field of literature also the years 1820-1832 were singularly barren. As has already been pointed out, there was sudden decline of Romantic literature from the year 1820, but the new literature of England, called the Victorian literature, started from 1832 when Tennyson's first important volume, Poems, appeared. The following year saw Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, and Dickens' earliest work, Sketches by Boz. The literary career of Thackeray began about 1837, and Browning published his Dramatic Lyrics in 1842.

Notes The Victorian period in literature officially starts from 1832, though the Romantic period ended in 1820, and Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837.

The Victorian Age is so long and complicated and the great writers who flourished in it are so many, that for the sake of convenience it is often divided into two periods—Early Victorian Period and Later Victorian Period. The earlier period this was the period of middle class supremacy, the age of 'laissez-faire' or free trade, and of unrestricted competition, extended from 1832 to 1870. The great writers of this period were Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens and Thackeray. All these poets, novelists and prose-writers form, a certain homogenous group, because in spite of individual differences they exhibit the same approach to the contemporary problems and the same literary, moral and social values. But the later Victorian writers who came into prominence after 1870—Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris, George Eliot, Meredith, Hardy, Newman and Pater seem to belong to a different age. In poetry Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris were the protagonists of new movement called the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, which was followed by the Aesthetic Movement. In the field of novel, George Eliot is the pioneer of what is called the modern psychological novel, followed by Meredith and Hardy. In prose Newman tried to revolutionise Victorian thought by turning it back to Catholicism, and Pater came out with his purely aesthetic doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake', which was directly opposed to the fundamentally moral approach of the prose-writers of the earlier period—Carlyle Arnold and Ruskin. Thus we see a clear demarcation between the two periods of Victorian literature—the early Victorian period (1832–1870) and the later Victorian period (1870–1900).

But the difference between the writers of the two periods is more apparent than real. Fundamentally they belong to one group. They were all the children of the new age of democracy, of individualism, of rapid industrial development and material expansion, the age of doubt and pessimism, following the new conceptions of man which was formulated by science under the name of Evolution. All of them were men and women of marked originality in outlook and character or style. All of them were the critics of their age, and instead of being in sympathy with its spirit, were its very severe critics. All of them were in search of some sort of balance, stability, a rational understanding, in the midst of the rapidly changing times. Most of them favoured the return to precision in form, to beauty within the limits of reason, and to values which had received the stamp of universal approval. It was in fact their insistence on the rational elements of thought, which gave a distinctive character to the writings of the great Victorians, and which made them akin, to a certain extent, to the great writers of the neo-Classical school. All the great writers of the Victorian Age were actuated by a definite moral purpose. Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold wrote with a superb faith in their message, and with the conscious moral purpose to uplift and to instruct. Even the novel broke away from Scott's romantic influence. Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot wrote with a definite purpose to sweep away error and reveal the underlying truth of humanity. For this reason the Victorian Age was fundamentally an age of realism rather than of romance.

Notes

But from another point of view, the Victorian Age in English literature was a continuation of the Romantic Age, because the Romantic Age came to a sudden and unnatural and mainly on account of the premature deaths of Byron, Shelley and Keats. If they had lived longer, the Age of Romanticism would have extended further. But after their death the coherent inspiration of romanticism disintegrated into separate lines of development, just as in the seventeenth century the single inspiration of the Renaissance broke into different schools. The result was that the spirit of Romanticism continued to influence the innermost consciousness of Victorian Age. Its influence is clearly visible on Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Dickens, Thackeray, Ruskin, Meredith, Swinburne, Rossetti and others. Even its adversaries, and those who would escape its spell, were impregnated with it. While denouncing it, Carlyle does so in a style which is intensely charged with emotional fire and visionary colouring. In fact after 1870 we find that the romantic inspiration was again in the ascendent in the shape of the Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic movements.

There was also another reason of the continuation of Romanticism in the Victorian Age. There is no doubt that the Reform Act set at rest the political disturbances by satisfying the impatient demand of the middle classes, and seemed to inaugurate an age of stability. After the crisis which followed the struggle against the French Revolution and Napoleon, England set about organizing herself with a view to internal prosperity and progress. Moreover, with the advent to power of a middle class largely imbued with the spirit of Puritanism, and the accession of a queen to the throne, an era of self-restraint and discipline started. The English society accepted as its standard a stricter conventional morality which was voiced by writers like Carlyle. But no sooner had the political disturbances subsided and a certain measure of stability and balance had been achieved then there was fresh and serious outbreak in the economic world. The result was that the Victorian period, quiet as it was, began to throb with the feverish tremors of anxiety and trouble, and the whole order of the nation was threatened with an upheaval. From 1840 to 1850 in particular, England seemed to be on the verge of a social revolution, and its disturbed spirit was reflected, especially in the novel with a purpose. This special form of Romanticism which was fed by the emotional unrest in the social sphere, therefore, derived a renewed vitality from these sources. The combined effect of all these causes was the survival and prolongation of Romanticism in the Victorian Age which was otherwise opposed to it.

Moreover, Romanticism not only continued during the Victorian Age, but it appeared in new forms. The very exercise of reason and the pursuit of scientific studies which promoted the spirit of classicism stirred up a desire for compensation and led to a reassertion of the imagination and the heart. The representatives of the growing civilization of the day—economists, masters of industry, businessmen—were considered as the enemies of nobility and beauty and the artisans of hopeless and joyless materialism. This fear obsessed the minds of those writers of the Victorian Age, to whom feelings and imagination were essentials of life itself. Thus the rationalistic age was rudely shaken by impassioned protestations of writers like Newman, Carlyle and Ruskin who were in conflict with the spirit of their time.

The Victorian Age, therefore, exhibits a very interesting and complex mixture of two opposing elements—Classicism and Romanticism. Basically it was inclined towards classicism on account of its rational approach to the problems of life, a search for balance and stability, and a deeply moral attitude; but on account of its close proximity to the Romantic Revival which had not completely exhausted itself, but had come to a sudden end on account of the premature deaths of Byron, Shelley and Keats, the social and economic unrest, the disillusionment caused by industrialization and material prosperity, the spirit of Romanticism also survived and produced counter currents.

Task Write a short note on Victorian period.

Notes

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The ..... in English literature began in second quarter of the nineteenth century and ended by 1900.
2. Dickens, Thackeray, ... wrote with a definite purpose to sweep away error and reveal the underlying truth of humanity.
3. ..... not only continued during the Victorian Age, but it appeared in new forms.
4. The Victorian Age, therefore, exhibits a very interesting and complex mixture of two opposing element ..... and Romanticism.
5. In Fact after 1870 we find that the romantic inspiration was again in the ascendent in the shape of the pre-Raphaelite and ..... .

5.2 Women Novelists

The Victorian era is known for the galaxy of female novelists that it threw up. They include Mrs. Trollope, Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Marsh Mrs. Bray, Mrs. Henry Wood, Charlotte Yonge, Mrs. Oliphant, Mrs. Lynn Lynfon, M. E. Braddon, "Ouida," Rhoda Broughton, Edna Lyall, and still many more now justly forgotten, but the four most important women novelists, who yet are quite important, are :

- Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855)
- Emile Bronte (1818-1848)
- Mrs. Gaskell (1810-1865)
- George Eliot (1819-1880)

Mrs. Gaskell may need some special pleading for being included among the rank of the great women novelists of the Victorian era, but as for the rest, their place in the history of English literature appears to be secure enough. Of the four, the two first-named were sisters and their methods and achievements as novelists met at many planes. But each of the remaining two pursued her own line and made herself known in the field of English novel in her own particular way.

After these preliminary remarks, let us consider individually the work and achievement of the important women novelists of the Victorian era.

5.2.1 Charlotte Bronte

The three Bronte sisters-Anne, Charlotte, and Emily-collectively known often as the "stormy sisterhood," who took the England of their time by storm, were in actual life shy and isolated girls with rather uneventful lives. All of them died young and died of tuberculosis as their two other "non-literary" sisters did. They were daughters of a strict Irish person who made them lead a life of what Compton-Rickett calls, "the sternest self-repression." But behind their outwardly rippleless lives lurked tempest-tossed souls which found an outlet in their novels which are all so patently autobiographic. They poured their inner life into the mould of the novel. This consideration leads Hugh Walker to assert: "The Brontes belong to that class of writers whom it is impossible to understand except through the medium of biography." But too much of preoccupation with biography should not be allowed to lead us to a lopsided appreciation of their novels. Thus Samuel C. Chew observes: "The three Bronte sisters have been overlaid with so much biography, criticism, and conjecture that in reading about them there is danger lest their own books be left unread." Charlotte Bronte wrote the following four novels:

- The Professor
- Vuette
- Jane Eyre
- Shirley

Notes

The first two novels were based on her personal experiences at a Brussels boarding-house where she most probably fell in love with the Belgian scholar Heger who perfectly answered her conception of a dashing hero of the Byronic type. Her soul had always yearned for such a Lochinvar, but she being the daughter of a village parson, the men who made proposals to her actually were lacklustre curates with one of whom she ultimately settled down in 1854-a year before her death. But she worshipped a dashing, splendid, masculine figure as Heger was. Her frustrated passion for him provides the groundwork of her first two novels. The heroine of her third novel is a governess, just like her sister Anne. Her tempestuous love-affair with Rochester-a combination of wonderful nobility and meanness is the staple of this novel. In Shirley, to quote Legouis, "she set a story of intimate emotion against a background of Yorkshire in the time of the industrial disturbances." Perhaps the elemental and unchastened presence of the Yorkshire moor among which the Brontes lived is to some extent responsible for the fierce passions and elemental emotions which are characteristic of their works.

Charlotte Bronte in her novels revolted against the traditions of Jane Austen, Dickens, and Thackeray. Thackeray's Vanity Fair she praised in glowing terms, but she herself never attempted anything of the kind. Her novels are novels not of manners but of passions and the naked soul. Her characters-mostly the effusions of her own soul-are elemental figures acting in the backdrop of elemental nature. The social paraphernalia is altogether dispensed with. "Gone", says David Cecil, "is the busy prosaic urban world with its complicated structure and its trivial motives, silenced the accents of everyday chatter, vanished are newspapers, fashions, business houses, duchesses, footmen, and snobs. Instead the gale rages under the elemental sky, while indoors, their faces rugged in the fierce firelight, austere figures of no clearly defined class or period declare eternal love and hate to one another in phrases of stilted eloquence and staggering candour."

According to Compton-Rickett three characteristics "detach themselves from the writings of Charlotte Bronte." They are:

- the note of intimacy;
- the note of passion; and
- the note of revolt.

The note of intimacy is caused by the markedly autobiographic slant of her novels. The note of passion is struck by a lonely sensitive woman on behalf of another woman. Her point of view is specifically the point of view of a woman. Like Mrs. Browning she effectually represents in her life and novels the pangs of a forlorn woman whose Prince Charming is yet to come. She pictures and highlights the primeval woman A s regards the note of revolt, we must point out that she was a rebel by nature and a Puritan by training. She could not reconcile these two elements. "Charlotte", says Compton-Rickett, "had the soul of a primitive woman, leashed in by a few early Victorian conventions, and she is always straining against the leash while upbraiding at herself for doing so." Though she did not fully, even appreciably, revolt against social conventions, she at least revolted against the prevailing conventions of the novel.

5.2.2 Emily Bronte

Emily was a poet as well as a novelist, and her only novel withering Heights is a poem as well as a- novel "There is no other book." says Legouis, "which contains so many of the-troubled, tumultuous, and rebellious elements of romanticism," She-is fiercer than even Charlotte but her fierceness is strangely accompanied by numerous strokes of intuitive illumination. She looks like a Byron in petticoats. She is also a rebel, but her rebelliousness is tempered by a sense of spirituality. She expresses, as very few do, the Infinite passion and the pain of finite hearts that yearn.

Wuthering Heights is a story of primal passions enacted amongst elemental environment. Catherine Earnshaw in her wildness and beauty is like a panther. Heathcliff, with his consuming passion for Catherine and his flaming desire for revenge, looks like a character from an ancient Greek tragedy. Catherine's call to Heathcliff from her grave has about it all the mystery of the hidden forces of the universe. Indeed, Walter Allen observes: "The central fact about Emily Bronte is that she is a mystic." Her mysticism lies not only in her handling of the voice of the dead Catherine calling

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Heathcliff to her, but also in her use of symbols. It trickles in other forms throughout the novel in expressions like the following coming from Catherine:

"Nelly, I am Heathcliff! If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be: and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it."

"There is no evidence", says Samuel C. Chew, that "she was deeply read in the literature of mysticism, but there is equally no doubt that she was a mystic." This critic believes that at least once, early in her youth, "Emily had attained the mystical experience in its entirety."

Notes Charlotte Bronte in Shirley refers to Shirley's (Emily's) visions and trances.

In many of her poems, too, Emily tries to give expression to her mystical experience; for instance, at one place she exclaims:

Speak, God of visions, plead for me,

And tell me why I have chosen thee.

5.2.3 Mrs. Gaskell

Mrs. Gaskell had nothing of this passion and frustration of the Bronte sisters. She was the wife of a quiet Unitarian clergyman in Manchester-one of the buzzing centres of English industry. She was mother of seven children, and she had, according to Walter Allen, "what may be called the serenity of the fulfilled" and accepted everything with the air of, what David Cecil calls, "serene satisfaction." Her sense of humour and deep human sympathy are obvious manifestations of her serenity.

What distinguishes the novels of Mrs. Gaskell is her deep social consciousness combined with a compassionate observation of the life around her. Her novels divide themselves into two well-defined categories.

First, we have novels like Mary Barton (1848) and North and South (1855) which deal with the social and industrial problems arising out of the masters-workmen struggles which were a feature of the industrial age which had then just got under way. Being herself a resident of Manchester, Mrs. Gaskell was a witness to the "blessing" ' of the Industrial Revolution. She pressed into service her personal observation of the situation prevailing in "the hungry forties." In Mary Barton the heroine who gives her name to the title is daughter of a workman who led by the fervour of trade unionism, murders Henry Carson, a fiery master, after his wife and son are dead from starvation. The novel gives a realistic picture of the poverty of the working classes and their animus against their masters whose cruelty is, however, considerably exaggerated by Mrs. Gaskell. North and South is a realistic, thoughtful, and thought-provoking presentation of the conflict then raging between the industrial North and the feudal, agricultural South.

Secondly, we have novels like Cranford, Ruth, Wives and Daughters, and Sylvia's Lovers which eschew all industrial problems and are concerned with rural life and manners which Mrs. Gaskell knew so well, thanks to her long stay at Knutsford with her aunt, before she settled at Manchester with her husband. Of all the novels of this category the best and the best known is Cranford which is a disguised name for her own Knutsford. Cranford is a classic of its own kind. It portrays a world inhabited by women alone. These women belong to middle-class families, and their main occupation is gossip, tea-making, and tea-drinking. W. J. Long observes: "The sympathy, the keen observation, and the gentle humour with which the small affairs of a country village are described make Cranford one of the most delightful stories in the English language." In Ruth Mrs. Gaskell foreshadows the psychological novel of George Eliot. Wives and Daughters is a social comedy, and contains the character of Cynthia Kirkpatrick— "one of the most striking young women in English fiction." Sylvia's Lovers is a rather didactic story in a domestic setting.

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5.2.4 George Eliot

With George Eliot we come to the most philosophical of all the major Victorian novelists, both female and male. Philosophy is both her strength and weakness as a novelist. It keeps her from falling into pathos or triviality, but at the same time gives her art an ultra serious and reflective quality which makes it "heavy reading." Even her humour-the faculty in which she doubtlessly is quite rich-has about it the quality of ponderous reflective ness. But often there are some aphoristic strokes which do tell-as the following:

- "Animals are such agreeable friends; they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms."
- "What a man wants in a wife mostly is to make sure of one fool as'll tell him he's wise."
- "I'm not denyin' the women are foolish-God Almighty made'em to match the men."
- "I'm not one of those who see the cat in the dairy and wonder what she's come after."

George Eliot's important novels are the following:

- The Mill on the Floss
- AdamBede
- Romola
- Felix Holt
- Daniel Deronda
- Middlemarch.

All of them are marked by extreme seriousness of purpose and execution. As Samuel C. Chew observes, "in George Eliot's hands the novel was not primarily for entertainment but for the serious discussion of moral issues" She is, indeed, too didactic and makes every incident a text for moralistic expatiation. "She", says the critic just quoted, "inculcates the importance of being earnest: but the virtues so earnestly striven after-industry, self-restraint nscientiousness-are very drab; 'school-teacher's virtues' they have been unkindly called." In her novels we invariably meet with the clash of circumstances with the human will. She, indeed, believed that circumstances influenced character, but she did not show circumstances entirely determining character. A man called upon to choose between two women or a woman to choose between two men is the common leitmotif of her novels. She emphasizes the need for a moral choice uninfluenced by any selfish motives. She herself did not believe in any conventional moral creed and lived with Lewes as his wife without marriage, in spite of the defamatory rebukes of her priggish contemporaries. But inspite of her frank agnosticism and contempt for strait-jacketing traditionalism, she valued ethics both in her life and her work as a novelist.

Another important feature of her novels is their very deep concern with human psychology. Her novels are all novels of character. "She", says Compton-Rickett, "was the first novelist to lay the stress wholly upon character rather than incident; to make her stones spiritual rather than physical dramas." In her characterisation she displays both subtlety and variety. Her studies of the inner man, but more particularly the inner woman, are marvellous. She puts all the emphasis on the inside, very little on the outside. David Cecil observes in this connexion: "We do not remember her serious characters by their appearance or the way they talk, indeed we do not remember these things clearly at all. Her portraits are primarily portraits of the inner man."

George Eliot excels at portraying the tragedy of unfulfilled female longings. She identifies herself with her chief female characters and unfolds their inner feelings with masterly strokes. Compton-Rickett points out: "Maggie's cry was for fuller life, Ramola's for ampler knowledge, Darothea's for larger opportunity, for doing good.' These themes are dealt with by George Eliot with a striking psychological profundity which makes her a very worthy forerunner of the psychological novelists like Henry James. Let us conclude with David Cecil's words: "She stands at the gateway between the old novel and the new, a massive caryatid, heavy of countenance and uneasy of attitude, but noble, monumental, profoundly impressive."

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5.3 Summary

- The Romantic Age in the real sense of the term ended in 1820, the Victorian Age started from 1832 with the passing of the first Reform Act, 1832.
- The Victorian Age is so long and complicated and the great writers who flourished in it are so many, that for the sake of convenience it is often divided into two periods—Early Victorian Period and Later Victorian Period.
- The three Bronte sisters-Anne, Charlotte, and Emily-collectively known often as the "stormy sisterhood," who took the England of their time by storm, were in actual life shy and isolated girls with rather uneventful lives.
- With George Eliot we come to the most philosophical of all the major Victorian novelists, both female and male.

5.4 Keywords

Emily Bronte : Emily was a poet as well as a novelist, and her only novel withering Heights is a poem as well as a- novel "There is no other book."

Mrs. Gaskell : Mrs. Gaskell had nothing of this passion and frustration of the Bronte sisters. She was the wife of a quiet Unitarian clergyman in Manchester-one of the buzzing centres of English industry. She was mother of seven children.

5.5 Review Questions

1. What is the Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Conditions in Victorian Age? Explain.
2. Who was charlotte Bronte and Emily Bronte?
3. What is the difference between Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Victorian Age
2. George Eliot
3. Romanticism
4. Classicism
5. Aesthetic movements

5.6 Further Readings

Books

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

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Unit 6: The Victorian Age (Pre-Raphaelite Poetry)

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CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define literary repercussions.
- Describe the antecedents of pre-raphaelitism.
- Explain salient features of pre-raphaelites.

Introduction

Those poets who had some connection with the Pre-Raphaelite circle include Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Pre-Raphaelitism in poetry had major influence upon the writers of the Decadence of the 1890s, such as Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Michael Field, and Oscar Wilde, as well as upon Gerard Manley Hopkins and William Butler Yeats, both of whom were influenced by John Ruskin and visual Pre-Raphaelitism.

Pre-Raphaelitism in painting had two forms or stages, first, the hard-edge symbolic naturalism of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood that began in 1849 and, second, the moody, erotic medievalism that took form in the later 1850s. Many critics imply that only this second, or Aesthetic, Pre-Raphaelitism has relevance to poetry. In fact, although the combination of realistic style with elaborate symbolism that distinguishes the early movement appears in a few poems, particularly in those by James Collinson and the Rossettis, this second stage finally had the largest at least the most easily noticeable influence on literature.

Nonetheless, if one looks for a poet whose work parallels the artistic project of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, one immediately notices Robert Browning , whose work was enormously popular with them all and a particular influence on Rossetti, who wrote out Pauline (1833) from the British Museum copy. Like the paintings of the Brotherhood, Browning's poems simultaneously extend the boundaries of subject and create a kind of abrasive realism, and like the work of the young painters, his also employ elaborate symbolism drawn from biblical types to carry the audience

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beyond the aesthetic surface, to which he, like the painters, aggressively draws attention. One must mention the Browninesque element in Pre-Raphaelite poetry because it appears intermittently all the way up to Hopkins in self-consciously difficult language, the dramatic monologue, and elaborate applications of biblical typology.

Aesthetic Pre-Raphaelitism, nonetheless, has most in common with the poets of this group, all of whom draw upon the poetic continuum that descends from Spenser through Keats and Tennyson upon the poetic line, in other words, that emphasizes lush vowel sounds, sensuous description, subjective psychological states, elaborate personification, and complex poetic forms, such as the sestina, borrowed from Italian and Provencal love poetry.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement, which was initiated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the mid-nineteenth century, was originally not a literary but an artistic movement. Rossetti, himself a painter (and a poet as well), felt that contemporary paintings had become too formal, academic, and unrealistic. He desired to see it taken back to the realism, sensuousness, and devotion to detail which characterize the art of the Italian painters before Raphael. Raphael (1483-1520) was, no doubt, an excellent and noted painter of his day, but Rossetti and his ilk perhaps rightly thought that he had started the movement towards academism in art. Led by Rossetti some painters organised themselves in London in 1848 into a group which came to be called the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood." Apart from Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Millais, Thomas Woolner, and James Collinson were the important members of this group. In painting, they broke the shackles of stereotyped traditions. Like Rousseau they affected "a return to Nature" by giving up the bulk of traditionalized sophistication which had accumulated over the centuries after Raphael. The creed of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was "an entire adherence to the simplicity of art." Ruskin, who came to champion the cause of the Pre-Raphaelites in the teeth of severe opposition, said that "they imitate no pictures: they paint from nature only." And again: "Every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background is painted to the last touch in the open air from the thing itself...Every minute accessory is painted in the same manner." And when he said this, he said a great deal. The anti-conventionalism of the Pre-Raphaelites marks them as neo-romantics.

6.1 Literary Repercussions

Rossetti and some other members of the Brotherhood were both painters and poets. Consequently, Pre-Raphaelitism, not remaining confined to painting, made itself felt in English poetry. The qualities which distinguished Pre-Raphaelite painting also characterised Pre-Raphaelite poetry. In poetry the movement came in the shape of a revolt against contemporary poetry of the kind of Tennyson's which was full of tradition and involved in the immediate, mundane problems of contemporary society. To justify their ideas, the Brotherhood started a periodical publication, The Germ, which did not, however, extend beyond four numbers. As an organised group the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood ceased to exist beyond the early 1850's. But with the meeting of Rossetti and William Morris in 1856,'the movement was revitalised. Other poets like Swinburne, Coventry Patmore, and Austin Dobson also came under Rossetti's influence. But they did not go unattacked. Robert Buchanan came out with a stinging onslaught on what he considered was the indecently erotic nature of Pre-Raphaelite poetry. This attack was delivered in his article The Fleshly School of Poetry.

Notes Rossetti and Swinburne were quick to join issues with him, and the result was a fair mass of polemics.

6.2 The Antecedents of Pre-Raphaelitism

Before we discuss the features of Pre-Raphaelite poetry, it will be profitable to cast a glance at the antecedents of Pre-Raphaelitism. First, of course, was the work of thirteenth-century Italian poets,

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which like that of the compatriot painters of the same age, was marked by sensuousness, devotion to detail, and realism. A kind of mysticism and love of symbolism also characterised their work. Next, there was Spenser whose poetry in its symbolism, sensuousness, and mystical overtones is near Pre-Raphaelite poetry. Last but not least was the poetry of nineteenth century English romantic poets, particularly Keats. Saintsbury in A History of Nineteenth Century Literature considers Pre-Raphaelitism a direct and legitimate development of the Romantic Revival in England. Coleridge's supematuralism, Keats's sensuousness, Shelley's mysticism, Wordsworth's concern for "the meanest flower that blows"-all merge into the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites. The Pre-Raphaelites' insistence on realism has to be taken with a grain of salt. In poetry, at last, they were as keen escapists as most of the Romantics themselves had been. A critic observes: "Despite their professed aim of realism, the Pre-Raphaelite poet tended ultimately toward the creation of a poetic realm in which medievalism, musicality, and vague religious feeling combined to achieve a narcotically escapist effect." Lastly we may mention Tennyson himself, the metrical artist and connoisseur of sounds.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The ....., which was initiated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the mid-nineteenth century, was originally not a literary but an artistic movement.
2. Dante Gabriel Rossetti desired to see it taken back to the realism, sensuousness, and devotion to detail which characterize the art of the Italian painters before ..... .
3. Rossetti and some other members of the ..... were both painters and poets.
4. The qualities which distinguished pre-Raphaelite painting also characterized ..... .
5. Saintsbury in a history on nineteenth century literature considers Pre-Raphaelitism a direct and legitimate development of the ..... in England.

6.3 Salient Features of Pre-Raphaelites

6.3.1 Break with Tradition

Pre-Raphaelite poetry broke with the set tradition of poets like Tennyson. The Pre-Raphaelites revolted against the over-concern of poets like Tennyson with contemporary socio-political problems. Consequently, none of the Pre-Raphaelites concerns himself with sordid realism and the mundane issues of his day, but escapes to a dream world of his own making.

6.3.2 Medievalism

This dream-world is often provided by the middle Ages which had, even before the Pre-Raphaelites, exercised a strong hold on the minds of some Romantics like Coleridge, Keats, and Scott. Medieval Italy, being the land of artists before Raphael, held for them a very special attraction. The medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelites had "a subtle something" which differentiates it from that of the Romantics before them. Saintsbury observes in this context: "The return of this school was to a medievalism different from the tentative and scrappy medievalism of Percy, from the genial but slightly superficial medievalism of Scott, and even from the more exact but narrow and distinctly conventional medievalism of Tennyson." Some Pre-Raphaelites, such as Hunt and Millais the painter, were somewhat sceptical of medievalism but Rossetti and Morris, in particular, felt a compulsive fascination for the romance, chivalry, gorgeousness, mystery and supernaturalism of the middle Ages. Many of Rossetti's poems (like The Blessed Damozel and Sister Helen) are redolent of the spirit of the middle Ages. "As a medievalist," says Compton-Rickett in A History of English Literature: "Rossetti is obviously in congenial surroundings for the mingled warp of sensuousness and super sensuousness, so characteristic of the middle Ages, suited to a nicety his peculiar genius." However, it was Rossetti alone who, among the members of the original Brotherhood, exalted medievalism to a cult. Later, Morris also came under the medieval spell.

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Morris was particularly interested in Chaucer, the fourteenth-century English poet. Though there is no resemblance worth the name between Morris and Chaucer, yet Morris' interest in the middle Ages (to which Chaucer belonged) is noteworthy. Like Rossetti he found asylum from the sordidness of contemporary life in the splendour of the middle Ages. Most of Morris' works (such as Guinever and Other Poems, The Haystack in the Flood, and some poems in the collection Earthly Paradise) are steeped in the medieval spirit. Explaining Morns' return to the middle Ages, Alfred Noyes observes in William Morris (English Men of Letters): "Morris turned to the Middle Ages not as a mere aesthete seeking an anodyne, not as an aesthetic scholar composing skilful exercises, but as a child turns to the fairy land."

6.3.3 Devotion to Detail

The Pre-Raphaelites, as a rule, bothered more about the particular than about the general. Both in their painting and their poetry we come across a persistent tendency to dwell scrupulously on each and every detail, however minor or even insignificant by itself. They do not wield a broad and hurried brush, but love to linger on details for their own sake. They tried to paint the thing itself-not a traditional copy of it. For a perfect faithfulness of description the fidelity to details was, therefore, necessary. Sometimes this concern for details degenerates into a mannerised trick, but very often it strikes the reader with a forceful, concrete effect, making for freshness of perception. It may be pointed out that even before the Pre-Raphaelites, in some poems such as Tennyson's Mariana, Coleridge's Christabel, and Keats's The Eve of St. Mark) this tendency to linger on simple details is discernible.

Did u know? Christabel has rightly been called "the first Pre-Raphaelite poem."

The details we have been talking about are purely visual in painting, but in poetry they may be auditory as well as visual. Pre-Raphaelite poets love both visual and auditory details. Now to take some examples, see the closing lines of Rossetti' A Lost Confession:

She had a mouth
Made to bring death of life-the underlip
Sucked in, as if it strove to kiss itself;
Her face was pearly pale.

Again, note the details in the very first stanza of The Blessed Damozel:

The blessed Damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lillies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

The third and fourth lines are suggestive as well as concrete, but the last two lines could have been written by Defoe himself. Consider, again, the following passage from Morris' Golden Wings:

There were five swans that never did eat
The water-weeds, for ladies came
Each day, and young knights did the same
And gave them cakes and bread for meat.

As an illustration of the abundance of auditory details, see the following passage from Rossetti's My Sister's Sleep:

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Twelve struck. The sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour crept off, and then
The ruffled silence spread again
Like water that a pebble stirs.
Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled; no other noise than that.

6.3.4 Sensuousness

Like Rossetti most Pre-Raphaelites were painters as well as poets. That explains much of the sensuousness of their poetry as well as their loving concern for details. Much of their poetry is as concrete as painting. Referring to Rossetti, Compton-Rickett observes: "That the pictorial element is more insistent in Rossetti than in Keats is obviously due to the fact that Rossetti's outlook on the world is essentially that of the painter. He thinks and feels in pigments." But this thinking and feeling "in pigments" sometimes leads the Pre-Raphaelites to excess, giving rise to two defects:

- Too much concern for detail without thematic relevance or any other functional significance. For instance, see the following lines from Rossetti's My Sister's Sleep:

  Without, there was a cold moon up,
  Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
  The hollow halo it was in
  Was like an icy crystal cup.

- Excessive recourse to colourful decoration which within limits is pleasing enough, but becomes a cloying confection if carried beyond. As a typical instance of the Pre-Raphaelite taste for decoration consider the following lines from Christina Rossetti's Birthday:

  Raise me a dais of silk and down;
  Hang it with vair and purple dyes!
  Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
  And peacocks with a hundred eyes:
  Work it in gold and silver grapes
  In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys.

A quaint feature of Rossetti is his interchange of sensory functions: he appears to be capable, for instance, of hearing with his eyes and seeing with his ears. Thus in Silent Noon we have the phrase "visible silence", and last four (parenthetical) words in The Blessed Damozel are "I heard her tears."

6.3.5 Fleshly School of Poetry

The sensuousness of the Pre-Raphaelites was considered culpable by the prudish Victorians when it came to the beauties of the human body. The Pre-Raphaelites made no bones about the exhibition of their voluptuous tendencies. But it is difficult to charge them with grossness or immorality. Swinburne and others strongly reacted to the charge of Buchanan that the poetry of their school was "fleshly." Such poem as Rossetti's Troy Town and The House of Life are somewhat "fleshly," but Rossetti is not an indecent sensualist as he deals with the physical body as something interfused with the inner character and even the spirit itself. Swinburne, however, was much too daring.

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Grierson and Smith observe: "Never since Venus and Adonis, Hero and Leander and the Songs and Sonnets of Donne had the passion of the senses been presented with such daring frankness." Swinburne struck the readers with as intense a feeling of shock mixed with amazement as Byron had done before him. Indeed, it is to be admitted that the Pre-Raphaelites had an emotional over plus which led them to excessive sensuousness not entirely free from the immoral taint. Swinburne by his "protracted adolescence rather than by adult passion", paints, as A. C. Ward puts it, "the bitter blossoms of fierce kisses, the lips intertwined and bitten, the bruised throats and bosoms, the heaving limbs, the dead desires and barren lusts." All this is "fleshly" enough.

6.3.6 Metre and Music

Pre-Raphaelite poetry is rich not only in pictorial quality but also in music. The trouble is that the Pre-Raphaelites go to excess in both. Swinburne exhibits both the merits and demerits of being over-musical. The excessive use of alliteration and onomatopoeic effects makes often for a cloying sweetness. Legouis observes: "Vowels call to vowels and consonants to consonants, and these links often seem stronger than the links of thought or imagery."

Notes According to Compton-Rickett, Swinburne's effects are harmonic rather than melodic.

As an instance, see the following lines from his Tristram of Lyonesse (1882):

Nor shall they feel or fear, whose date is done,
Aught that made once more dark the living sun
And bitterer in their breathing lips the breath
Than the dark dawn and bitter dust of death

Alliteration is good if it does not become a persistent mannerism, and if it does not "out-sound" the sense.

Task Write a short note on Pre-Raphaelite Poetry.

6.4 Summary

- Those poets who had some connection with the Pre-Raphaelite circle include Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne.
- This dream-world is often provided by the middle Ages which had, even before the Pre-Raphaelites, exercised a strong hold on the minds of some Romantics like Coleridge, Keats, and Scott.
- Referring to Rossetti, Compton-Rickett observes: "That the pictorial element is more insistent in Rossetti than in Keats is obviously due to the fact that Rossetti's outlook on the world is essentially that of the painter. He thinks and feels in pigments.
- The sensuousness of the Pre-Raphaelites was considered culpable by the prudish Victorians when it came to the beauties of the human body.
- Grierson and Smith observe: "Never since Venus and Adonis, Hero and Leander and the Songs and Sonnets of Donne had the passion of the senses been presented with such daring frankness."

Notes

6.5 Keywords

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood : Led by Rossetti some painters organised themselves in London in 1848 into a group which came to be called the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Sensuousness : Like Rossetti most Pre-Raphaelites were painters as well as poets. That explains much of the sensuousness of their poetry as well as their loving concern for details. Much of their poetry is as concrete as painting.

6.6 Review Questions

1. What is Literary Repercussions?
2. What is the antecedents of pre-Raphaelitism?
3. What is medievalism and sensuousness of the pre-Raphaelites?
4. What is Fleshly school of poetry?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Pre-Raphaelite movement
2. Raphael
3. Brotherhood
4. Pre-Raphaelite poetry
5. Romantic Revival

6.7 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 7: The Victorian Age (Oxford Movement)

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define romantic.
- Describe anti-rationalism and anti-erastianism.
- Explain the history of the movement.
- Define the literary aspect of the movement.

Introduction

One only Way to life:
One faith, deliver'd once for all;
One holy Band, endow'd with Heaven's high call;
One earnest, endless strife:
This is the Church, the Eternal framed of old.

These lines from a poem by John Keble give us some help to answer the question as to what the Oxford movement was about. This Movement was, fundamentally, religious in nature, and one of its aims was to rehabilitate the dignity of the Church and to deliver it from the grasp of secular authority.

But that was only one of the manifold issues which the Movement dealt with. Some other issues may also be mentioned here. One of them was the growing strength of Liberalism in religion and politics. The protagonists of this movement came forward to combat tooth and nail all such Liberalism as appeared in the Church as Latitudinarianism. The Oxford movement had nothing to do with politics, but it favoured Conservatism or Toryism (of course, in religion). As W. H. Hutton points out in The Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XII, it "was certainly not a Tory movement, but it was opposed to liberalism in all its aspects. To the philosophy of conservatism the Oxford leaders were much indebted." Further, the Movement was opposed to rationalism in matters concerned with the Church. The Victorian age witnessed a rapid and tremendous expansion of physical science and even more than in the eighteenth century (the age of prose and reason) there was a temptation in the nineteenth to put religion to the test of rational scientific examination. T. H. Huxley, for instance, became an agnostic after failing to be convinced of the truth of Christianity, considered rationally and scientifically. The Oxford movement stressed the absurdity

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of examining the Church in the light of reason. The Oxford men put special emphasis on faith as something superrational. "The main-spring of the Oxford Movement," observes Hugh Walker "was the dread of rationalism." According to the same critic, the "problem" for Newman (the chief force of the Movement) "was how to check the growth of rationalism as he saw it in England."

Task Write a short note on oxford movement.

7.1 Anti-Rationalism

This aggressive anti-rationalism manifested itself in the Oxford men's affirmation of the miracles associated with the history of the ancient church and numerous saints. The people, influenced by science in their age, were already finding it too hard to give credence to the numerous Scriptural miracles, and the Oxford men were adding new ones which had never been seriously believed except perhaps by the very orthodox Roman Catholics. This flagrant anti-rationalism, certainly out of tune with the times, naturally alienated many otherwise sympathetic people.

Romantic

This anti-rationalism was somewhat "romantic." Indeed between the Romantic Movement and the Oxford movement there is something curiously common. The "romantic" interest in the middle Ages for their mystery and splendour is one of these common factors. As Moody and Lovett put it, the Oxford movement stood for "the restoration of the poetry, the mystic ritual and service which had characterised the Catholic Church in the middle Ages." It was this medievalism which was probably responsible for the ultimate entry of Newman into the Roman Catholic fold. The romantic tendency of the protagonists of the Oxford movement is also apparent in a different way-their poetry.

Notes As Eugene R. Fair-weather points out, "their poetic sensibility-which cannot be ignored, in view of the fact that Keble, Newman and Williams were all fluent, if 'minor', poets was 'romantic' in tone."

7.2 Anti-Erastianism

But the fundamental factor which sparked off the Movement and which was taken congnizance of and condemned by almost all the 'brethren" was the increasing interference of secular authority in the affairs of the Church. All of them were at daggers drawn with Erastianism (the control of the Church by the State). The chief aim of the Oxford movement, in the words of one of its protagonists, was to convince the people that "the Church was more than a merely human institution; that it had privileges, sacraments, a ministry, ordained by Christ." Moody and Lovett observe in this connexion: "Newman and his friends wished also to defend the Church, in view of its divine character, against the interference of the state, which was disposed to reform it along with Parliament and other institutions, curtailing its powers and revenues." Thus the Oxford movement stood for Anti-Erastianism.

7.3 The History of the Movement

These were the most important points which shaped the Oxford movement. But the "brethren" were by no means a united lot. A brief survey of the history of this Movement will show this.

Newman was the soul of the Movement. But, generally, the name of John Keble is mentioned as the man who started the Movement. In July 1833 Keble preached a sermon at Oxford before the judges of assize, on national apostasy and against the Erastian and Latitudinarian tendencies of the

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day. His speech formally inaugurated the Movement, and even Newman accepted Keble as its "true and primary author." But it must be noted that Keble only provided the spark; the fuel had already been piling for long. Keble was a quiet, simple, and modest man not of much literary pretension, but known for his anonymous book of sacred poems, The Christian Year, published in 1827. According to Hugh Walker, "there is nothing great in his life or in his works." Anyway, he is the accepted pioneer of the Oxford movement.

Keble's sermon was followed by the generation of intense feeling in like-minded men of Oxford. They included Newman, Froude, Pusey and many more. Their concerted action crystallized in the publication of Tracts for the Times, the first of which came in September 1833. It was entitled Thought on the Ministerial Commission, respectfully addressed to the Clergy. The publication of the tracts continued till 1841 with contributions from many hands. However, Newman who wrote some twenty-nine of them was, as Hugh Walker puts it "the soul of the Tracts." None approached him in the clarity of thought as well as of expression.

The avowed aim of the Tracts was to create public opinion in I favour of "the privileges of the Church and against Popery and Dissent."" However, slowly and steadily the trend of thought as expressed in the Tracts showed evidence of moving towards the Church of Rome and away from the Church of England. Things came to a headiffthe famous (rather notorious) Tract XC, which came from Newman's pen. In it Newman showed his Romish tendency by taking upon himself the task of arguing that the thirtynine Articles were in no way opposed to the Council of Trent. In other words, he was making plea for the Church of Rome and undermining a universally accepted Anglican view. This tract created a tremendous commotion. All the Anglican bishops condemned it vociferously.

Did u know? Newman's conversion was complete after he had read articles by Wiseman, the able leader of the English Roman Catholics.

The general hostility which Newman provoked made it impossible for him to continue staying at Oxford. So he took refuge at Littlemore. He resigned his ecclesiastical living at Oxford in September 1843 and joined lay communion. Some of his ardent followers also joined him at Littlemore.

Meanwhile, W. G. Ward, an ebullient and energetic follower of Newman, published what W. H. Hutton calls "a heavy and exasperating book"-The Idea of a Christian Church. Ward openly favoured the Roman Church pointing to what he described as the "most joyful, most wonderful, most unexpected sight! We find the whole cycle of Roman doctrine gradually possessing members of English churchmen." It was a very provocative book. The scandalised members of the University at a convocation held on February 13, 1845 withdrew from Ward the degrees of B. A. and M. A. The book had a wide influence but it is poor literature. Well did Jenkyns. The Master of Balliol, tell Ward: "Well. Ward, your book is like yourself; fat, awkward, and ungainly."

Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism was formally complete when on October 9, 1845 he became a member of the Church of Rome. Later, in 1879, the Pope made him a cardinal. But after 1845 the Oxford movement spread beyond Oxford. The "brethren" were no longer perfectly united. Some like Ward accepted Roman Catholicism, but others like Pusey continued their work staying within the Anglican fold.

7.4 The Literary Aspect of the Movement

The Oxford movement was basically a religious movement. Directly, it had nothing to do with literature. However, the numerous writings which it threw up had some repercussion on contemporary literary taste and style. Previously also, divines had exerted some influence on literature even when they had written' on purely religious themes. W. H. Hutton maintains in this context: "The Oxford movement certainly belongs to the history of English religion more definitely than to the history of English literature; but it had great influence, outside its own definite members on the literary taste of its age." But out of the whole mass of the literature the Movement gave rise

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to, we can pick out as good literature only a handful of poems and Apologia, which is, in Hugh Walker's words, "eminently and emphatically literature." As for the rest of the works, they are biblia abiblia.

Some Tractarians Considered-Keble

John Keble (1792-1866) was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and an Anglican preacher. It was he, as we have already said, who started the Oxford movement with his famous sermon of 1833. He could boast of no intellectual calibre, though he was a saintly, simple, and humble figure. He, as Compton-Rickett puts it, "gives us the emotional atmosphere of the movement."

Notes John Keble literary merits are negligible, but some of his poetry is enjoyable for its sincerity and emotion.

Newman

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was the spirit behind the Movement. Hurrell Froude called him the "indicating number," the rest of the Tractarians being just so many ciphers. His contribution to literature is also the most considerable. His pellucid sincerity and simplicity, which are his distinguishing marks as both man and as writer, are abundantly visible in his best work Apologia pro Vita Sua (1864) which he wrote in self-defence in reply to Charles Kingsley's charge of dishonesty against both himself and his new Church. Newman was stung into action and immediately took up the task of writing an apology to explain his conduct. As he puts it, he made his fingers "walk twenty miles a day" so as to finish his work quickly. The Apologia is characterised by what Hugh Walker calls a "palpitating humanity which vivifies every line." In this work Newman has poured his heart and soul out. "It has," says W. H. Hutton, "the merits of a letter rather than of a book." But Newman is a finished artist. The greatest recommendation of his prose is its directness and simplicity. This crystalline simplicity, however, is the outcome of a rigorous art and abundant energy in check.

Newman's other works, like the Essay of the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845), The Idea of a University Defined (1873), and religious novels Loss and Gain (1848) and Callista (1856), have also the same qualities of style. Mention may also be made of Newman's verse.

Did u know? John Henry Newman wrote well, but the only memorable poem written by him is the famous prayer poem "Lead Kindly Light."

Hurrell Froude

Richard Hurrell Froude (1803-1836) was a link between Keble and Newman. He was, doubtlessly, a brilliant young man. He is now chiefly known for his posthumous Remains (1836). He wrote two of the Tracts for the Times and some poems. He was, as he himself said, quite "hot-headed," and he offended quite a number of people.

Pusey

Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882) was a man of very wide learning. He gave his name to the protagonists of the Oxford movement (who came to be commonly termed "Puseyites") - But in almost every respect he is inferior to Newman. As Compton-Rickett observes, "he is far less attractive as a personality, more questionable in his methods and immeasurably inferior as a literary craftsman." Considered from the literary point of view, Pusey's work is indeed hopeless.

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Did u know? Edward Bouverie Pusey style is, to quote Hugh Walker, "crude, ungainly and confused."

Ward

William George Ward (1812-1882) was an extremely talented man who followed Newman's lead in conversion to Roman Catholicism. We have already referred to The Idea of a Christian Church (1844) which is his best known work. His Essays on the Philosophy of Theism (collected in 1884) were written to controvert the views of Mill.

Notes William George Ward style is inelegant and cumbrous, but his ideas stirred his times.

Church

Richard William Church (1815-1890) is, after Newman, the best of those connected with the Oxford movement in the literary quality of their work. His clear and vigorous style, his sympathy and eclecticism are apparent in his monographs on writers as diverse in their nature and art as Dante, Spenser, and Bacon. Church also wrote a quite objective history of the Oxford movement, published posthumously in 1891. With a rare degree of self-effacement, he refrains from mentioning his own name in this history, even though he had played an important role in the Movement.

Conclusion

What tangible effect did the Movement produce? To quote Eugene R. Fainveather, "the Oxford Movement, for all its profound conservatism, seriously altered the accepted patterns of Anglican thought and practice." For one thing, it directed the attention of the people to "personal holiness," and was responsible for reviving or confirming the practices of serious prayers, formal piety, and fasting. It re-orientated the common views about apostolic authority, and, with some success, discovered a link between the Church of England and the Pre-Reformation-Church (of Rome). It made the Church of England conscious of the onslaught of Liberalism and Erastianism. Thus the Oxford movement was more than a passing ripple on the surface of "the sea of faith."

Self Assessment

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. …….. was professor of poetry at oxford, and an Anglican preacher.
   (a) John Henry Newman (b) John Keble
   (c) Richard Hurrell Froude (d) Edward Bouverie Pusey
2. …… was the spirit behind the movement.
   (a) John Henry Newman (b) William George Ward
   (c) Richard William Church (d) Edward Bouverie Pusey
3. ……. was a link between Keble and Newman.
   (a) Edward Bouverie Pusey (b) Richard William Church
   (c) Richard Hurrell Froude (d) William George Ward
4. …….. was a man of very wide learning.
   (a) Richard Hurrell Froude (b) William George Ward
   (c) John Keble (d) Edward Bouverie Pusey

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5. ……. was an extremely talented man who followed Newman's lead in conversion to Roman Catholicism.
   (a) William George Ward (b) John Keble
   (c) Edward Bouverie Pusey (d) Richard William Church
6. …….. is, after Newman, the best of those connected with the oxford movement in the literary quality of their work.
   (a) Richard Hurrell Froude (b) Richard William Church
   (c) John Keble (d) Edward Bouverie Pusey

7.5 Summary

- This aggressive anti-rationalism manifested itself in the Oxford men's affirmation of the miracles associated with the history of the ancient church and numerous saints.
- In July 1833 Keble preached a sermon at Oxford before the judges of assize, on national apostasy and against the Erastian and Latitudinarian tendencies of the day.
- W. G. Ward, an ebullient and energetic follower of Newman, published what W. H. Hutton calls "a heavy and exasperating book"-The Idea of a Christian Church.

7.6 Keywords

Romantic : The "romantic" interest in the middle Ages for their mystery and splendour is one of these common factors.

John Keble : John Keble (1792 - 1866) was professor of poetry at oxford, and an Anglican preacher.

7.7 Review Questions

1. What is anti-Rationalism and anti-Erastianism?
2. What is the history of the movement? Explain.
3. Who was Newman and Hurrell Froude?
4. Who was Pusey, Ward and Church?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. (b) John Keble 2. (a) John Henry Newman 3. (c) Richard Hurrell Froude
4. (d) Edward Bouverie Pusey 5. (a) William George Ward 6. (b) Richard William Church

7.8 Further Readings

Books

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

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

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

Online links

www.victorianweb.org/religion/chesterton.html

everything2.com/title/Oxford+Movement

www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=23066

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Unit 8: The Nineteenth Century (Reflection of Changes in the English Society Due to Industrial Revolution in the Nineteenth Century Novel)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define women and child labour.
- Describe growth and profit.
- Explain transition for rural to aristocration.
- Describe origin and rising of merchant class.
- Define plotting of disobedience.
- Explain class struggle.

Introduction

There were many artistic movements during the period of Britain's industrialization, each of which was a reaction to the feelings of the time, as well as to the movement which had preceded it. By the time that the Industrial Revolution really took hold, some artists were at differences with the ideals which it espoused, such as those of discipline, temperance, structure, and views of the Enlightenment. These feelings translated into the Romantic Movement, which encouraged individualism, freedom, and emotion.

During the Industrial Revolution, the social structure of society changed dramatically. Before the Revolution most people lived in small villages, working either in agriculture or as skilled craftsmen. They lived and often worked as a family, doing everything by hand. In fact, three quarters of Britain's population lived in the countryside, and farming was the predominant occupation. With the advent of industrialization, however, everything changed. The new enclosure laws—which required that all grazing grounds be fenced in at the owner's expense—had left many poor farmers bankrupt and unemployed, and machines capable of huge outputs made small hand weavers redundant. As a result, there were many people who were forced to work at the new factories. This required them to move to towns and cities so that they could be close to their new jobs. It also

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meant that they made less money for working longer hours. Add to this the higher living expenses due to urbanization and one can easily see that many families' resources would be extremely stretched.

8.1 Women and Child Labour

As a result, women and children were sent out to work, making up 75% of early workers. Families were forced to do this, since they desperately needed money, while factory owners were happy to employ women and children for a number of reasons. First of all, they could be paid very little, and children could be controlled more easily than adults, generally through violent beatings. Children also had smaller hands, which were often needed to reach in among the parts of a machine. Furthermore, employers found that children were more malleable and adapted to the new methods much better than adults did. Children were also sent to work in mines, being small enough to get more coal and ore from the deep and very often unsafe pits. They could also be forced to work as long as eighteen hours each day. For these reasons, children as young as eight years old were sent to factories—usually those which manufactured textiles—where they became part of a growing and profitable business.

8.2 Growth and Profit

This unprecedented growth and profit was another social change that occurred during the Industrial Revolution. The laissez-faire approach taken by the government—and advocated by philosopher-economist Adam Smith—allowed capitalism to flourish. There were little or no government regulations imposed upon factory policies, and this allowed the wealthy, middle-class owners to pursue whichever path was most profitable, regardless of the safety and well being of their workers. This relentless pursuit of money caused another important social change: the ultimate breakdown of the family unit.

Since workers, especially women and children, were labouring for up to eighteen hours each day, there was very little family contact, and the only time that one was at home was spent sleeping. People also had to share housing with other families, which further contributed to the breakdown of the family unit. As a result, children received very little education, had stunted growth, and were sickly. They also grew up quite maladjusted, having never been taught how to behave properly. The living conditions were indeed horrible; working families often lived in slums with little sanitation, and infant mortality skyrocketed.

Did you know During the early Industrial Revolution, 50% of infants died before the age of two.

However, the social changes that took place were not all negative. Most classes eventually benefited in some way from the huge profits that were being made, and by 1820 most workers were making somewhat better wages. The "widespread poverty and constant threat of mass starvation…lessened, [and] overall health and material conditions of the populace clearly improved". The government, however, did have to eventually intervene in order to put an end to child labour and other unacceptable practices.

8.3 Transition for Rural to Aristocratic

The Pickwick Papers is set in a time prior to the Industrial Era, specifically, before the infiltration of the railroad into the life of British society. Charles Dickens wrote the novel during the early period of the Victorian Era. This was a time which, in contrast to the later periods, was marked by a considerable amount of social turmoil as the nation came to terms with the transition from an existence as an aristocratic, rural society to a rapidly-changing, confusing, urban-based, industrial economy. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* characterizes this period (1830 to 1848) as one in

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which social reform tended to contribute more to the incorporation of the merchant class into the governance of the country than to the improvement of the quality of life of the working class. For example, in 1832, the old electoral system was altered in Britain in such a way that depopulated boroughs were purged from the system, with new, industrial towns taking their places. An implication of this was increased power for the merchant class and recognition of the fact that such a cleansing process of the electoral system was in fact necessary because of the increasing influence of the merchant class. In short, government officially recognized the shift in the British way of life that signs such as the introduction of the railroad had already heralded to the rest of society. However, such early reforms did not help the ever worsening situation of the new urban working class, so that until the 1850s many felt that revolution was imminent.

Many groups in society were confused by this change, notably those ones which did not benefit ostensibly from the rewards of the new economy, those who were not what Gaskell called the "masters" of the merchant class. Those among the less inclined t o deal easily with the transition included the working class, who suffered immensely in the factories, and the old aristocratic ruling class. There was, at least in this context, a source of rapport between the old ruling class and the working class, much of the latter group being one generation descended from the farm labor stock of before 1800. This common area became factor in the relationships that would evolve between the old guard and their servants, as both struggled to define their roles while resisting the undermining impulse to cling to each other as familiar comforts of a yearned for era of safety and comprehension of the environment.

The theme suggested by this, that the imposition of one type of society onto another which was perhaps unwilling to trade for it the benefits of an existing one would challenge social relationships at many levels, including that of master and servant , is forwarded in both Gaskell's *North and South* and Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*. This theme is strengthened in both texts by imagery that uses weather to symbolize the "gathering storm of social change" and equate that storm to the tempests that would transpire between servants and their employers as both groups came to terms with conflicting feelings of fraternity and need for a more formal, traditional relationship based on respect for social position. *North and South* is set in the middle part of the Victorian era, when the "Time of Troubles" of the 1840s was still fresh in the minds of many, but when a series of Factory Acts were, among other actions, in the process of improving conditions of the working class and promising a return to stability. *The Pickwick Papers* was written before many of these problems had begun to be resolved and when there was less call for optimism. However, it was set in a time before the Industrial Age, when social stability still reigned. Clearly, historical context plays a role in the creation of the theme forwarded by both of these examples.

In the following quotation from *North and South*, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell writes from the perspective of one who has seen the difficulties of a people coming to terms with the social change of the first part of the nineteenth century:

"Dixon," she said, in the low tone she always used when much excited, which had a sound as of some distant turmoil, or threatening storm breaking far away. "Dixon you forget to whom you are speaking." She stood upright and firm on her feet now, confronting the waiting-maid, and fixing her with her steady, discerning eye. "I am Mr. Hale's daughter. Go You have made a strange mistake, and one that I am sure your own good feeling will make you sorry for when you think about it."

Margaret's parents cease to command respect from their servant because they rely on the superficial social significator of status, the mere retention of a servant, so much that they are afraid to do what is necessary to perpetuate the dynamic that makes this relationship possible, a control over the lower classes. Accustomed to the softer treatment of older employers, who have come to rely on the sense of security that their rapport with Dixon has afforded them, Dixon fails to maintain the traditional respect for Margaret. If this were to continue for another generation, the aristocratic structure would be lost, and with it all of the securities of the earlier society.

Self Assessment

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Fill in the blanks:

1. During the ....., the social structure of society changed dramatically.
2. This unprecedented ..... and ..... was another social change that occurred during the Industrial Revolution.
3. Charles Dickens wrote the novel during the early period of the ..... .
4. ..... is set in the middle part of the Victorian era.
5. ..... was written before many of these problems had begun to be resolved and when there was less call for optimism.

8.4 Origin and Rising of Merchant Class

Margaret represents part of a new generation which has grown up, if not in the presence of the rising merchant class, then at least with the cognizance that it exists. While her parents lived through the transition from aristocratic to industrial society and as part of the initial change are too close to make adjustments, Margaret has been born into the strange blend of the two which is her view of her time. True, her first-hand experience does not come until she moves to the North, but at least superficially she has been raised with an understanding of her society. She has been born into a more concrete world, and is more able to make adjustments to preserve the integrity of some aspects of her parent's way of life. She is equipped to handle the insubordination of her social inferior and able to assert her dominance. Therefore she can preserve the social structure that her ancestors relied upon, and she is able to realize, with Dixon, the comforts of this order. But to do so she does not have to sacrifice the foundation of that order itself, as her parents have, in order to retain an inferior feeling of security which comes from the superficial possession of a servant. Gaskell's conclusion is that while there is much turmoil inherent to the process of switching from one type of society to another, it can and will be done in such a way that both the working class that serves the aristocracy and the aristocracy will be supplicated. Dixon remains with the Hales because she knows that her way of life with them is better than the industrial alternative, the factory. She responds in a positive manner to Margaret's renewal of discipline because he knows that only through this control can her position be maintained.

Gaskell uses the imagery of the "threatening storm" to remind the reader of the unease created by challenges to stability in people's lives, to indicate that the reaffirmation of the employer-servant status will involve both struggle and a washing away of some old habits, and to allude to the dangers which are part of social change. That the storm becomes a part of Margaret's emotions, and correspondingly of her very being, is representative of the incorporation of the change represented by the rise of the merchant class and all of its ramifications for the consciousness of the generation that is born into this period.

Charles Dickens looks, in the following two passages from *The Pickwick Papers*, at the same theme that is taken up twenty years later by Gaskell:

At these words, Mr Job Trotter inserted an end of the pink handkerchief into the corner of each eye, one after the other, and began to weep copiously.

As the coach rolls swiftly past the fields and orchards which skirt the road, groups of women and children, piling the fruit in sieves, or gathering the scattered ears of corn, pause for an instant from their labour, and shading the sun-burnt face with a still browner hand, gaze upon the passengers with curious eyes, while some stout urchin, too small to work, but too mischievous to be left at home, scrambles over the side of the basket in which he has been deposited for security, and kicks and screams with delight. The reaper stops in his work, and stands with folded arms, looking at the vehicle as it whirls past; and the rough cart horses bestow a sleepy glance upon the smart coach team, which says, as plainly as a horse's glance can, 'It's all very fine to look at, but slow going, over a heavy field, is better than warm work like that, upon a dusty road, after all.'

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8.5 Plotting of Disobedience

Job Trotter, although acting in accordance with his own master's wishes, is essentially plotting disobedience towards Pickwick. *The Pickwick Papers* is set prior to the time of conflict discussed by Gaskell, but it is written in a time when this conflict is approaching an early peak. While Dickens cannot explicitly describe his own society because it would not be in keeping with the setting of his novel, he can comment on the 1830s by creating situations in his fiction representative of those which exist in his life. Trotter's employer, Mr. Jingle, is suggestive of the men who rise to power in the merchant class of the nineteenth century. Like the capitalist merchant class he survives not on established, ancestral authority, but on his wit and ability to scrape by. Also like that class, his education is limited but his cunning is not. He feeds of the social accouterments of the aristocracy while undermining it. His very name, Jingle, calls to mind the sound of money, the acquisition of which is his primary interest and his only hold on his status. This recalls the fissure between the merchant classes and the aristocracy, the latter of which could not afford the merchant class equal status even when many of its members had accumulated more wealth.

Notes Pickwick's struggle with Jingle reflects the struggle between the aristocracy and the merchant class.

8.6 Class Struggle

The class struggle as represented by Jingle and Pickwick, which reflects the fight between the aristocracy and merchant class for status during Britain's transition to an urban economy, allows for a comparison between their servants. The theme is that the integrity and sense of social place of the servant class has been weakened by the Industrial Revolution. Sam Weller, in a novel set before the nineteenth-century, represents the integrity of the servant unspoiled by the social change. Job Trotter represents the reflection of that change in the merchant class servant. He is cunning and disrespectful towards the aristocracy, demonstrated by his willingness to take advantage of Pickwick's good nature. Sam Weller's rejection of Job Trotter and his adherence to Pickwick is similar in motivation to Dixon's ability to overcome the weakening influence of the industrial revolution and retain loyalty to the Hales. Both servants realize that loyalty to the aristocracy offers security. Dickens, like Gaskell, supports the view that the two approaches to life, that of the landowning class and that of the merchant class, must undergo a process of becoming accustomed to the new urban economy in which the master-servant relationship is redefined. Like Gaskell, Dickens takes a standpoint which favors the aristocratic system. Jingle fails ultimately, having to be saved from debtor's prison by Pickwick. This suggests that unless the merchant class heeds the cries of the aristocracy, and observes the success of its employer-employee relationships, the revolution that many fear might actually occur. Pickwick himself finds his way into prison, but his good character, his favor of moral integrity and charitibility, that is, his aristocratic traits, over pursuit of money and success allow him a more comfortable experience in prison and an ability to leave at will.

The imagery employed by Dickens in the two quotations above is similar to that offered by Gaskell also. Dickens uses the image of tears, in the same way that Gaskell uses the storm, as a signifier of the struggle between the old system and the new. As rain marks the cleansing process in Gaskell's image, false tears allow Sam Weller to identify the falsehood of Job Trotter, thus allowing Sam to identify himself with Pickwick and the social order which provides him with a sense of security.

Similarly, Dickens uses the image of good weather to denote life in the country, associated with the aristocracy, and respect of the working class for the ruling class. The farm worker waves as the

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carriage, which denotes an authority figure, passes. The plow horse recognizes that he, like the farm laborer, is happy with his lot, which is depicted as a clean and fulfilling one. There is no conflict with the plow horse and the carriage horse, there is no concern about revolution, as each is happy with his position. This is pitted against the image of the dehumanized urban worker that the reader of *The Pickwick Papers* would have possessed in 1830. In the context of the fear of working class revolution that many held in the 1800s, Dickens suggests that it is not only desirable that the good aspects of the worker-employer relationship of the traditional landowning class be accommodated, but necessary for the survival of the society. In the country before the advent of industrialization, there are no storms brewing, there is tranquility. The only storms suggested are the tears of Job Trotter, who, in his association with the disorder of the merchant class, represents a threat to stability.

It is, of course, apparent that Pickwick was a business man before his retirement and not an aristocrat, just as it is apparent that Margaret and the Hales are not members of the real aristocracy. What both authors suggest by placing their protagonists in a level just below that of the culture that they admire and perpetuate, is that the process of incorporation of the better points of the old and new societies into one coherent whole is possible for everyone who desires stability. Dickens places his work in a past time, for which people were already feeling nostalgia, and in so doing he frees himself from the confusion of his own era, while permitting himself to use this escape as a means for a more successful suggestion of what will and what must occur for social stability. Gaskell has the benefit of writing twenty years later, so that she can describe a change which has already occurred.

Task Write a note on the changes in English Society during Industrial Revolution.

8.7 Summary

- There were many artistic movements during the period of Britain's industrialization, each of which was a reaction to the feelings of the time, as well as to the movement which had preceded it.
- Margaret's parents cease to command respect from their servant because they rely on the superficial social significator of status, the mere retention of a servant, so much that they are afraid to do what is necessary to perpetuate the dynamic that makes this relationship possible, a control over the lower classes.
- Job Trotter, although acting in accordance with his own master's wishes, is essentially plotting disobedience towards Pickwick.
- The class struggle as represented by Jingle and Pickwick, which reflects the fight between the aristocracy and merchant class for status during Britain's transition to an urban economy, allows for a comparison between their servants.
- Dickens uses the image of good weather to denote life in the country, associated with the aristocracy, and respect of the working class for the ruling class.

8.8 Keywords

The Pickwick Papers : The Pickwick Papers is set in a time prior to the Industrial Era, specifically, before the infiltration of the railroad into the life of British society.

Masters : Many groups in society were confused by this change, notably those ones which did not benefit ostensibly from the rewards of the new economy, those who were not what Gaskell called the "masters" of the merchant class.

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8.9 Review Questions

1. Write down the impact of Industrial revolution on Children's Education.
2. How do "Pickwick papers" explicit the changes in society because of Industrial Revolution?
3. What is transition for Rural to Aristocratic?
4. What is origin and rising of merchant class?
5. What is plotting of disobedience?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Industrial Revolution
2. Growth, profit
3. Victorian Era
4. North and South
5. The Pickwick papers

8.10 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 9: The Nineteenth Century (Feminist Movement)

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CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe first, second and third wave.
- Define scope.
- Explain cultural dynamics.

Introduction

The feminist movement (also known as the Women's Movement, Women's Liberation, or Women's Lib) refers to a series of campaigns for reforms on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment and sexual violence. The movement's priorities vary among nations and communities and range from opposition to female genital mutilation in one country or to the glass ceiling in another.

The movement began in the western world in the late 18th century and has gone through three waves: the first wave was oriented around the station of middle or upper-class white women, and involved suffrage and political equality. Second-wave feminism attempted to further combat social and cultural inequalities.

Did u know? Third-wave feminism, includes renewed campaigning for women's greater influence in politics.

The history of feminist movements has been divided into three "waves" by feminist scholars. Each deals with different aspects of the same feminist issues.

The history, events, and structure of the feminist movement is closely related to the individuals at the time, specific protests that took place, and the broader transformations taking place in American culture. The feminist movement worked and continues to work against the status quo in American society. According to bell hooks, "Feminism is a struggle against sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels, as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desires."

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9.1 First Wave

The first wave refers to the feminist movement of the 18th through early 20th centuries, which dealt mainly with the women's suffrage. Writers such as Virginia Woolf are associated with the ideas of the first wave of feminism. In her book A Room of One's Own, Woolf "describes how men socially and psychically dominate women". The argument of the book is that "women are simultaneously victims of themselves as well as victims of men and are upholders of society by acting as mirrors to men". She recognizes the social constructs that restrict women in society and uses literature to contextualize it for other women.

Notes The term "first-wave" was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as further political inequalities.

Feminism is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal rights. Feminism is mainly focused on women's issues, but because feminism seeks gender equality, some feminists argue that men's liberation is therefore a necessary part of feminism, and that men are also harmed by sexism and gender roles. Feminists—that is, persons practicing feminism—may be persons of either sex.

Feminist theory emerged from these feminist movements and includes general theories and theories about the origins of inequality, and, in some cases, about the social construction of sex and gender, in a variety of disciplines. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's rights—such as in contract, property, and voting—while also promoting women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy and reproductive rights. They have opposed domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In economics, they have advocated for workplace rights, including equal pay and opportunities for careers and to start businesses.

Some of the earlier forms of feminism have been criticized for being geared towards white, middle-class, educated perspectives. This led to the creation of ethnically-specific or multiculturalist forms of feminism.

In Britain, the Suffragettes campaigned for the women's vote, which was eventually granted " to some women in 1918 and to all in 1928 " as much because of the part played by British women during the First World War, as of the efforts of the Suffragists. In the United States leaders of this movement included Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who each campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women's right to vote. Other important leaders include Lucy Stone, Olympia Brown, and Helen Pitts. American first-wave feminism involved a wide range of women, some belonging to conservative Christian groups (such as Frances Willard and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union), others resembling the diversity and radicalism of much of second-wave feminism (such as Stanton, Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and the National Woman Suffrage Association, of which Stanton was president). In the United States, first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919) granting women the right to vote.

9.2 Second Wave

The second wave (1960s-1980s) was concerned with gender inequality in laws and culture. It built on what had been achieved in the first wave, and began adapting the ideas to America. Simone de Beauvoir is associated with this wave because of her idea of women as "the other". This idea was touched on in the writing of Woolf, and was adapted to apply not only to the gender roles of women in the household or at work, but also their sexuality. Beauvoir set the tone for later feminist theory.

The second wave of feminist activity began in the early 1960s and lasted through the late 1980s. What helped trigger this second wave was the book written by Betty Friedan.

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"The key event that marked the reemergence of this movement in the postwar era was the surprise popularity of Betty Friedan's 1963 book The Feminine Mystique. Writing as a housewife and mother (though she had had a long story of political activism, as well), Friedan described the problem with no name the dissatisfaction of educated, middle class wives and mothers like herself who, looking at their nice homes and families, wondered guiltily if that was all there was to life was not new; the vague sense of dissatifaction plaguing housewives was a staple topic for women's magazines in the 1950s. But Friedan, instead of blaming individual women for failing to adapt to women's proper role, blamed the role itself and the society that created it".

During this time feminists campaigned against cultural and political inequalities, which they saw as inextricably linked. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. If first-wave feminism focused upon absolute rights such as suffrage, second-wave feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination.

Did u know? The feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Political" which became synonymous with the second wave.

9.3 Third Wave

In the early 1990s, a movement, now termed the third wave of feminism, arose in response to the perceived failures of the second wave feminism. In addition to being a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by second-wave feminism, the third wave was less reactive, and had a greater focus on developing the different achievements of women in America. The feminist movement as such grew during the third wave, to incorporate a greater number of women who may not have previously identified with the dynamics and goals that were established at the start of the movement. Though criticized as merely a continuation of the second wave, the third wave made its own unique contributions.

Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherríe Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other feminists of color, called for a new subjectivity in feminist voice. They sought to negotiate prominent space within feminist thought for consideration of race related subjectivities. This focus on the intersection between race and gender remained prominent through the Hill-Thomas hearings, but began to shift with the Freedom Ride 1992. This drive to register voters in poor minority communities was surrounded with rhetoric that focused on rallying young feminists. For many, the rallying of the young is the emphasis that has stuck within third wave feminism.

9.4 Scope

As a movement, these women produced the deepest transformation in American society and enlisted the largest number of participants. Underlying the specific conflicts in political economy and culture made gender issues matter like never before to activists on all sides of the issue and to millions of other ordinary citizens. Historian Nancy Cott wrote "feminism was an impulse that was impossible to translate into a program without centrifugal results" about the first wave of the movement. What made a change in gender order feel necessary to so much of society was the fate of the family wage system: the male breadwinner/female homemaker idea that shaped government policies and employment in businesses. In the years of the movement women accomplished many of the goals they set out to do. They won protection from employment discrimination, inclusion in affirmative action, abortion law reform, greater representation in media, and equal access to school athletics, congressional passage of an equal rights movement, and more.

Demographic changes started sweeping industrial society; birth rates declined, life expectancy increased, and women were entering the paid labor force in large numbers. New public policies emerged fitted to changing family forms and individual lifecycles.

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Notes The work of women changed the popular understanding of marriage and the very meaning of life; women came to want more out of their marriages and from men, education, and themselves.

The efforts and accomplishments of these women and organizations throughout the women's movement inspired many authors of that time to write about their personal experiences with feminism. Jo Freeman and Sara Evans were two such authors. Both women participated in the movement and wrote about their firsthand knowledge of feminism. Freeman, American feminist and writer, wrote several feminist articles on issues such as social movements, political parties, public policy toward women and many other important pieces about women. Evans wrote her experiences in books such as "The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Right Movement and the New Left" and "Born for Liberty". Her works focused more on young women activists recognizing that the "personal is political" as well as showing how these women used discussion sessions to expand understanding of the social roots of personal problems and worked towards developing different practices to address those issues.

Part of what made feminism so successful was the way women in different situations developed their own variants and organized for the goals most important to them. All women - Native American women, working class women, Jewish women, Catholic women, sex workers, and women with disabilities - described what gender equality would mean for them and worked together to achieve it.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The history of Feminist movements has been divided into three ..... by feminist scholars.
2. ....., instead of blaming individual women for failing to adapt to women's proper role, blamed the role itself and the society that created it.
3. If First-wave Feminism Focused upon absolute rights such as suffrage, ... Feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination.
4. In the early 1990s, a movement, now termed the ..... of feminism, arose in response to the perceived failures of the second wave Feminism.
5. As a movement, these women produced the deepest transformation in ..... and enlisted the largest number of participants.

9.5 Cultural Dynamics

The feminist movement's agenda includes acting as a counter to the putatively patriarchal strands in the dominant culture. While differing during the progression of waves, it is a movement that has sought to challenge the political structure, power holders, and cultural beliefs or practices.

Although antecedents to feminism may be found far back before the 18th century, the seeds of the modern feminist movement were planted during the late part of that century. Christine de Pizan, a late medieval writer, was possibly the earliest feminist in the western tradition. She is believed to be the first woman to make a living out of writing. Feminist thought began to take a more substantial shape during the Enlightenment with such thinkers as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Marquis de Condorcet championing women's education. The first scientific society for women was founded in Middelburg, a city in the south of the Dutch republic, in 1785. Journals for women which focused on issues like science became popular during this period as well.

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The women who made the first efforts towards women's suffrage came from more stable and privileged backgrounds, and were able to dedicate time and energy into making change. Initial developments for women, therefore, mainly benefited white women in the middle and upper classes.

Did u know? The beginning of the feminist movement in America was a specific agenda for a certain group of women.

The different waves of feminism are not only reflective of the cultural evolution in America since the 1920s. It is also the way in which the feminist movement used different social movement tactics to encourage women in America to become active and motivate individuals to make change for all women in America. Although the feminist movement has spanned almost a century, there are ways in which to break down the timeline and recognize how women have framed the ways they have achieved different goals throughout history. "By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective".

The feminist movement has been an ongoing presence in American culture, and the group of women targeted at the beginning has since changed. The beginning of the feminist movement was seen as exclusive in that, according to bell hooks, "[oppressed] women... felt that our only response to white, bourgeois, hegemonic dominance of feminist movement is to trash, reject, or dismiss feminism."

The three waves of Feminism are examples of how values have been identified, shared, and transformed, and the feminist movement as a whole has worked to redefine certain standards of its agenda in order to include a broader spectrum of people. For example, the movement later included women of different races and sexual orientations. It was only in the fall of 1971 that NOW (National Organization of Women) "acknowledged, 'the oppression of lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism'"

The feminist movement continues to support and encourage women to pursue their goals as individuals who deserve equal opportunity. "The Foundation of future feminist struggle must be solidly based on a recognition of the need to eradicate the underlying cultural basis and causes of sexism and other forms of group oppression," according to bell hooks.

Task Write down the origin of Feministic movement.

9.6 Summary

- The feminist movement (also known as the Women's Movement, Women's Liberation, or Women's Lib) refers to a series of campaigns for reforms on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- Feminist theory emerged from these feminist movements and includes general theories and theories about the origins of inequality, and, in some cases, about the social construction of sex and gender, in a variety of disciplines.
- Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldúa, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherríe Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other feminists of color, called for a new subjectivity in feminist voice.
- The feminist movement's agenda includes acting as a counter to the putatively patriarchal strands in the dominant culture.

Notes

9.7 Keywords

First Wave : The first wave refers to the feminist movement of the 18th through early 20th centuries, which dealt mainly with the women's suffrage.

Second Wave : The second wave (1960s-1980s) was concerned with gender inequality in laws and culture.

9.8 Review Questions

1. What is the significance of First wave in Feministic movement?
2. What is second wave and Third wave in Feministic movement? Explain.
3. What is scope in Feministic movement?
4. What is cultural dynamics? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Waves
2. Friedan
3. Second wave
4. Third wave
5. American society

9.9 Further Readings

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Notes

Unit 10: The Nineteenth Century (Dickens, Hardy, Women Novelists)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define charles dickens.
- Describe Journalism and early novels.
- Explain Thomas Hardy.

Introduction

Charles John Huffam Dickens was an English novelist, generally considered the greatest of the Victorian period. Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity and fame than had any previous author during his lifetime, and he remains popular, having been responsible for some of English literature's most iconic novels and characters.

10.1 Charles Dickens

Charles John Huffam Dickens writings were originally published serially, in monthly installments or parts, a format of publication which Dickens himself helped popularize at that time. Unlike other authors who completed entire novels before serialization, Dickens often created the episodes as they were being serialized. The practice lent his stories a particular rhythm, punctuated by cliffhangers to keep the public looking forward to the next installment. The continuing popularity of his novels and short stories is such that they have never gone out of print.

Dickens' work has been highly praised for its realism, comedy, mastery of prose, unique personalities and concern for social reform by writers such as Leo Tolstoy, George Gissing and G.K. Chesterton; though others, such as Henry James and Virginia Woolf, have criticised it for sentimentality and implausibility.

Charles Dickens was born at Landport, in Portsea, on February 7, 1812, the second of eight children, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. His father was a clerk in the Navy Pay-office and was temporarily on duty in the neighbourhood. Very soon after the birth of Charles, however, the family moved for a short period to Norfolk Street, Bloomsbury, and then for a long period to Chatham, in Kent, which thus became the real childhood home, and for all serious purposes, the native place of Dickens. His early years seem to have been idyllic, although he thought himself a "very small and

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not-over-particularly-taken-care-of boy". Charles spent time outdoors, but also read voraciously, especially the picaresque novels of Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding. He spoke, later in life, of his poignant memories of childhood, and of his near-photographic memory of the people and events, which he used in his writing.

Did u know? Charles Dickens father's brief period as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office afforded him a few years of private education at William Giles's School, in Chatham.

This period came to an abrupt end when the Dickens family, because of financial difficulties, moved from Kent to Camden Town, in London in 1822. John Dickens continually lived beyond his means and was eventually imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor's prison in Southwark, London in 1824. Shortly afterwards, the rest of his family joined him - except 12-year-old Charles, who was boarded with family friend Elizabeth Roylance in Camden Town. Mrs. Roylance was "a reduced old lady, long known to our family", whom Dickens later immortalised, "with a few alterations and embellishments", as "Mrs. Pipchin", in Dombey and Son. Later, he lived in a "back-attic...at the house of an insolvent-court agent...in Lant Street in The Borough...he was a fat, good-natured, kind old gentleman, with a quiet old wife"; and he had a very innocent grown-up son; these three were the inspiration for the Garland family in The Old Curiosity Shop.

10.1.1 Journalism and Early Novels

In 1833, Dickens' first story, A Dinner at Poplar Walk was published in the London periodical, Monthly Magazine. The following year he rented rooms at Furnival's Inn becoming a political journalist, reporting on parliamentary debate and travelling across Britain to cover election campaigns for the Morning Chronicle. His journalism, in the form of sketches in periodicals, formed his first collection of pieces Sketches by Boz, published in 1836. This led to the serialisation of his first novel, The Pickwick Papers, in March 1836. He continued to contribute to and edit journals throughout his literary career.

In 1836, Dickens accepted the job of editor of Bentley's Miscellany, a position he held for three years, until he fell out with the owner. At the same time, his success as a novelist continued, producing Oliver Twist (1837-39), Nicholas Nickleby (1838-39), The Old Curiosity Shop and, finally, Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of 'Eighty as part of the Master Humphrey's Clock series (1840-41)-all published in monthly installments before being made into books. During this period Dickens kept a pet raven named Grip, which he had stuffed when it died in 1841. (It is now at the Free Library of Philadelphia).

Did u know? On 2 April 1836, he married Catherine Thomson Hogarth (1816-1879), the daughter of George Hogarth, editor of the Evening Chronicle.

After a brief honeymoon in Chalk, Kent, they set up home in Bloomsbury. They had ten children:

- Dora Annie Dickens Charles Culliford Boz Dickens (C. C. B. Dickens), later known as Charles Dickens, Jr., editor of All the Year Round, and author of the Dickens's Dictionary of London (1879).
- Mary Dickens
- Kate Macready Dickens
- Walter Landor Dickens
- Francis Jeffrey Dickens
- Alfred D'Orsay Tennyson Dickens
- Sydney Smith Haldimand Dickens
- Sir Henry Fielding Dickens
- Edward Dickens

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Dickens and his family lived at 48 Doughty Street, London, from 25 March 1837 until December 1839. Dickens's younger brother Frederick and Catherine's 17-year-old sister Mary moved in with them. Dickens became very attached to Mary, and she died in his arms after a brief illness in 1837. She became a character in many of his books, and her death is fictionalized as the death of Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop.

Task Write a short note on Charles Dickens.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Charles John Huffam Dickens was an English novelist, generally considered the greatest of the ..... .
2. Charles Dickens was born at ....., in portsea, on February 7, 1812.
3. Charles Dickens Father was a clerk in the navy pay-office and was temporarily on duty in the ..... .
4. In 1833, Dickens first story, A Dinner at poplar walk was published in the London periodical ..... .
5. In 1836, Dickens accepted the job of editor of ....., a position he held for three years, until he fell out with the owner.

10.2 Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy, (2 June 1840 - 11 January 1928) was an English novelist and poet. While his works typically belong to the Naturalism movement, several poems display elements of the previous Romantic and Enlightenment periods of literature, such as his fascination with the supernatural.

While he regarded himself primarily as a poet who composed novels mainly for financial gain, he became and continues to be widely regarded for his novels, such as Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Far from the Madding Crowd. The bulk of his fictional works, initially published as serials in magazines, were set in the semi-fictional land of Wessex and explored tragic characters struggling against their passions and social circumstances.

Notes Hardy's poetry, first published in his fifties, has come to be as well regarded as his novels and has had a significant influence over modern English poetry, especially after The Movement poets of the 1950s and 1960s cited Hardy as a major figure.

Thomas Hardy was born at Higher Bockhampton, a hamlet in the parish of Stinsford to the east of Dorchester in Dorset, England. His father Thomas (d.1892) worked as a stonemason and local builder. His mother Jemima (d.1904) was well-read. She educated Thomas until he went to his first school at Bockhampton at age eight. For several years he attended Mr. Last's Academy for Young Gentlemen in Dorchester. Here he learned Latin and demonstrated academic potential. However, a family of Hardy's social position lacked the means for a university education, and his formal education ended at the age of sixteen when he became apprenticed to James Hicks, a local architect. Hardy trained as an architect in Dorchester before moving to London in 1862; there he enrolled as a student at King's College, London. He won prizes from the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architectural Association. Hardy never felt at home in London. He was acutely conscious of class divisions and his social inferiority. However, he was interested in social reform and was familiar with the works of John Stuart Mill. He was also introduced to the works of Charles Fourier and Auguste Comte during this period by his Dorset friend Horace Moule. Five years later, concerned about his health, he returned to Dorset and decided to dedicate himself to writing.

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In 1870, while on an architectural mission to restore the parish church of St Juliot in Cornwall, Hardy met and fell in love with Emma Lavinia Gifford, whom he married in 1874. Although he later became estranged from his wife, her death in 1912 had a traumatic effect on him. After her death, Hardy made a trip to Cornwall to revisit places linked with their courtship, and his Poems 1912-13 reflect upon her passing. In 1914, Hardy married his secretary Florence Emily Dugdale, who was 39 years his junior. However, he remained preoccupied with his first wife's death and tried to overcome his remorse by writing poetry.

Hardy became ill with pleurisy in December 1927 and died at Max Gate just after 9 pm on 11 January 1928, having dictated his final poem to his wife on his deathbed; the cause of death was cited, on his death certificate, as "cardiac syncope", with "old age" given as a contributory factor. His funeral was on 16 January at Westminster Abbey, and it proved a controversial occasion because Hardy and his family and friends had wished for his body to be interred at Stinsford in the same grave as his first wife, Emma. However, his executor, Sir Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, insisted that he be placed in the abbey's famous Poets' Corner. A compromise was reached whereby his heart was buried at Stinsford with Emma, and his ashes in Poets' Corner.

Shortly after Hardy's death, the executors of his estate burnt his letters and notebooks. Twelve records survived, one of them containing notes and extracts of newspaper stories from the 1820s. Research into these provided insight into how Hardy kept track of them and how he used them in his later work.

Notes In the year of Hardy's death Mrs Hardy published The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1841-1891: compiled largely from contemporary notes, letters, diaries, and biographical memoranda, as well as from oral information in conversations extending over many years.

Hardy's work was admired by many writers of a younger generation including D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. In his autobiography, "Goodbye to All that", Robert Graves recalls meeting Hardy in Dorset in the early 1920s. Hardy received him and his new wife warmly, and was encouraging about his work.

10.2.1 Hardy Novel

When we speak of the Victorian novel we do not mean that there was a conscious school of English novel, with a consciously common style and subject-matter, a school which began creating with the reign of Queen Victoria and which came to an end with the end of that reign. The English are too individualistic for such conformity. However, there can be no denying the fact that the English novel during the second half of the 19th century, with the exception of one or two novelists, shows certain common characteristics. The purpose of the chapter is to deal with those characteristics and also to examine how far they are represented in the novels of Hardy.

Adherence to the Fielding Tradition: Loose Plots

For one thing, the Victorian novel continues to be largely in the Fielding tradition. The plot is generally loose and ill-constructed. The main outline of the Victorian novel is the same. The story consists of a large variety of character and incident clustering round the figure of the hero. These characters and incidents are connected together rather loosely by an intrigue, ending with the ringing of wedding bells. Thackeray follows, on the whole, this convention.

A Mixture of Strength and Weakness

Secondly, the Victorian novel is an extraordinary mixture of strength and weakness. There is too much of false sentiment, flashy melodrama and lifeless characters. There is much that is improbable and artificial in character and incident. Speaking generally, the Victorians fail to construct an

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organic plot, a plot in which every incident and character forms an integral part of the whole. Thackeray's plots, though much better constructed than those of Dickens, are still loose and theatrical. There is much superfluity even in Vanity Fair and much that is unconvincing and artificial.

It's Entertainment Value

Still, the Victorian novel makes interesting reading. The novelists may not construct a compact plot, but they tell the story so well. They are so entertaining, that children still love to read and enjoy a novel of Dickens or Thackeray. The plot may be improbable, but there is enough of suspense, and the readers' attention is not allowed to flag even for a single moment. They do not like to give it up unfinished.

Its Panoramic Value

The Victorian novelists may miss the heights and depths of human passion, there may be no probing of the human heart and soul, and no psycho-analysis as in the modern novel, but they cast their nets very wide. Novels like Vanity Fair are not, like most modern novels, concentrated wholly on the life and fortunes of a few principal characters: they also provide panoramas of whole societies. Thus in Vanity Fair the action ranges from the city to the town, from London to Brighton, from England to France, Brussels, and other countries of Europe. "

Did u know? A hundred different types and classes, persons and nationalities, jostle each oilier across the shadow screen of our imagination.

Its Immense Variety

The Victorian novelist is a man of varied moods. His range of mood is as wide as his range of subject. Just as he deals with all aspects of society, so also he renders human moods in all their manifold variety. He is not a specialist in any one mood or temper. The novelists of the age cannot be categorised. As David Cecil puts it, "They write equally for the train journey and for all time; they crowd realism and fantasy, thrills and theories, knockabout farce and effects of pure aesthetic beauty; check by jowl on the same page; they are Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Huxley and Mrs. Woolf, Mrs. Christie and Mr. Woodhouse, all in one. A book like David Copperfield is a sort of vast schoolboy hamper of fiction : with sweets and sandwiches, pots of jam with their greased paper caps, cream and nuts and glossy apples, all packed together in a heterogenous deliciousness."

Imaginative Rendering of Reality

Not only have the Victorian novelists width and range of subject and mood, not only are they entertaining story-tellers, they have also creative imagination in ample measure. Their imagination works on their personal experiences and transforms and transmutes them. Their renderings of the real world are not photographs, but pictures, coloured by their individual idiosyncrasies vivid and vital. Often the picture is fanciful and romantic. At other times, it sticks close to the facts of actual existence, but these facts are always fired and coloured by the writer's individuality. The act of creation is always performed. Dickens is, "the romancer of London streets", and Thackeray, too, transports us to an entirely new world, call it Vanity Fair or Thackeray land, or what you will. His creative imagination works on the selling of his story and transforms it.

Dramatic and Picturesque

This creative imagination is also seen at work on the incidents or the stories of the Victorian writers. They linger long in the memory because they have been made dramatic and picturesque by the imagination of the novelist. We get many such dramatic and picturesque scenes in Hardy.

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Notes As a picture is an invention of line and colour, so are these brilliant inventions of scene and action.

Humour

This creative imagination is also seen in the humour of the Victorian novelists. Each of the great Victorian novelist is a humorist, and each is a humorist in a style of his own. They have created a number of immortal figures of fun, each comic in his own different way. They are hundreds of fine jock and witty remarks spread all over The Victorian novel.

Characterisation

The most important expression of this creative imagination is to be seen in the most important part of the novel, i.e., in the characterisation. The Victorians are all able to make their characters live. Their characters may not always be real, there may be much in them that is improbable and false, but they are amazingly and indomitably alive. They are wonderfully energetic and vital. They are ail individuals, living their own existence, and lingering long in the memory once we have formed an acquaintance with them. They act in their own characteristic way; they have their own tricks of speech, their own way of saying and doing thing. A Victorian novel is a crowd of breathing crying, living, laughing people. For example, Vanity Fair has a crowded canvas, crowded with living, breathing individuals.

Lack of High Artistic Standards

The Victorian novel lacks uniformity. It is extremely unequal; it is an extraordinary mixture of strength and weakness. It is teachnically faulty. This is so because it is still in its infancy, it is still considered as a light entertainment, and not a serious work of art and the laws of its being have not yet evolved. In this connection David Cecil observes, "Because it was in its first stage, it was bound to be technically faulty. It had not yet evolved its own laws; it was still bound to the conventions of the comic stage and heroic romance from which it took its origin, with their artificial intrigues and stock situations and forced happy endings. Because it was looked on as light reading its readers did not expect a high standard of craft, nor did they mind if it had occasional lapses; especially as they themselves had no traditions of tastes by which to estimate it." On the other hand, they strongly objected to spending their hours of light reading on themes that were distressing or put intellectual strain on them.

Lack of Liberalism

Then again the Victorian prudery comes in the way of a free and frank treatment of the animal side of life. In this respect the Victorian novel shows a definite decline from the earlier English novel. Any lapse from virtue as that of little Emily in David Copperfield is shrouded in an atmosphere of, "drawing the blinds and lowering the voice." Free and uninhibited treatment of sex is lacking. Becky's relationship with Lord Steyne is left ambiguous for this reason.

Conclusion

For these reasons, the Victorian novelists cannot be ranked wit the very greatest, yet they have greatness in them. They have their imperfections. Their plots are improbable and melodramatic, their endings arc conventional, and their construction is loose. They do not have any high artistic standards. But their merits also arc many. They are very entertaining, they can capture and hold the attention, they have creative imagination, and they have incomparable gift of humour. And these are qualities which only the great have.

Notes

10.3 Summary

- Thomas Hardy was born at Higher Bockhampton, a hamlet in the parish of Stinsford to the east of Dorchester in Dorset, England.
- Hardy became ill with pleurisy in December 1927 and died at Max Gate just after 9 pm on 11 January 1928, having dictated his final poem to his wife on his deathbed; the cause of death was cited, on his death certificate, as "cardiac syncope", with "old age" given as a contributory factor.
- Hardy's work was admired by many writers of a younger generation including D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf.
- When we speak of the Victorian novel we do not mean that there was a conscious school of English novel, with a consciously common style and subject-matter, a school which began creating with the reign of Queen Victoria and which came to an end with the end of that reign.

10.4 Keywords

Charles Dickens : Charles Dickens was born at Landport, in Portsea, on February 7, 1812, the second of eight children, to John and Elizabeth Dickens.

Thomas Hardy : Thomas Hardy, (2 June 1840 - 11 January 1928) was an English novelist and poet.

10.5 Review Questions

1. Who was Charles Dickens? Explain.
2. Who was Thomas Hardy? Explain.
3. What was Hardy Novel?
4. What is Lack of Liberalism?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Victorian period
2. Landport
3. neighbourhood
4. monthly magazine
5. Bentley's miscellany

10.6 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 11: Twentieth Century (Modern Novel-Lawrence, Stream of Consciousness)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe modernism and modern novel.
- Explain modern drama.

Introduction

The term modernism refers to the radical shift in aesthetic and cultural sensibilities evident in the art and literature of the post-World War One period. The ordered, stable and inherently meaningful world view of the nineteenth century could not, wrote T.S. Eliot, accord with "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." Modernism thus marks a distinctive break with Victorian bourgeois morality; rejecting nineteenth-century optimism, they presented a profoundly pessimistic picture of a culture in disarray. This despair often results in an apparent apathy and moral relativism.

11.1 Modernism and the Modern Novel

In literature, the movement is associated with the works of (among others) Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, H.D., Franz Kafka and Knut Hamsun. In their attempt to throw off the aesthetic burden of the realist novel, these writers introduced a variety of literary tactics and devices:

the radical disruption of linear flow of narrative; the frustration of conventional expectations concerning unity and coherence of plot and character and the cause and effect development thereof; the deployment of ironic and ambiguous juxtapositions to call into question the moral and philosophical meaning of literary action; the adoption of a tone of epistemological self-mockery aimed at naive pretensions of bourgeois rationality; the opposition of inward consciousness to rational, public, objective discourse; and an inclination to subjective distortion to point up the evanescence of the social world of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. (Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment" 68)

Modernism is often derided for abandoning the social world in favour of its narcissistic interest in language and its processes. Recognizing the failure of language to ever fully communicate meaning ("That's not it at all, that's not what I meant at all" laments Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock), the modernists generally downplayed content in favour of an investigation of form.

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Did u know? The fragmented, non-chronological, poetic forms utilized by Eliot and Pound revolutionized poetic language.

Modernist formalism, however, was not without its political cost. Many of the chief Modernists either flirted with fascism or openly espoused it (Eliot, Yeats, Hamsun and Pound). This should not be surprising: modernism is markedly non-egalitarian; its disregard for the shared conventions of meaning make many of its supreme accomplishments largely inaccessible to the common reader. For Eliot, such obscurantism was necessary to halt the erosion of art in the age of commodity circulation and a literature adjusted to the lowest common denominator.

It could be argued that the achievements of the Modernists have made little impact on the practices of reading and writing as those terms and activities are generally understood. The opening of Finnegans Wake, "riverrun, past Eve's and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs," seems scarcely less strange and new than when it was first published in 1939. Little wonder, then, that it is probably the least read of the acknowledged "masterpieces" of English literature. In looking to carry on many of the aesthetic goals of the Modernist project, hypertext fiction must confront again the politics of its achievements in order to position itself anew with regard to reader. With its reliance on expensive technology and its interest in re-thinking the linear nature of The Book, hypertext fiction may find itself accused of the same elitism as its modernist predecessors.

11.2 Modern Drama

This is the most important and popular literary medium in the modern times. It is the only literary form which can compete for popularity with the film and the radio, and it is in this form that a great deal of distinguished work is being produced. The publication of a new novel by a great novelist is received now with the same enthusiastic response as a new comedy by Dryden or Congreve was received in the Restoration period, and a new volume of poems by Tennyson during the Victorian period. Poetry which had for many centuries held the supreme place in the realm of literature has lost that position. Its appeal to the general public is now negligible, and it has been obviously superseded by fiction.

The main reason for this change is that the novel is the only literary form which meets the needs of the modern world. The great merit of poetry is that it has the capacity to convey more than one meaning at a time. It provides compression of meaning through metaphorical expression. It manages to distil into a brief expression a whole range of meanings, appealing to both intellect and emotion. But this compression of metaphor is dependent upon a certain compression in the society. In other words, the metaphor used in poetry must be based on certain assumptions or public truths held in common by both the poet and the audience. For example the word 'home' stood for a settled peaceful life with wife and children, during the Victorian home. So if this word was used as a metaphor in poetry its meaning to the poet as well to the audience was the same. But in the twentieth century when on account of so many divorces and domestic disturbances, home has lost its sanctity, in English society, the word 'home' cannot be used by the poet in that sense because it will convey to different readers different meanings according to their individual experiences.

For poetry to be popular with the public there must exist a basis in the individuals of some common pattern of psychological reaction which has been set up by a consistency in the childhood environment. The metaphors or 'ambiguities' which lend subtlety to poetic expression are dependent on a basis of common stimulus and response which are definite and consistent. This is possible only in a society which in spite of its eternal disorder on the surface, is dynamically functioning on the basis of certain fundamentally accepted value.

The modern period in England is obviously not such a period when society is functioning on the basis of certain fundamental values. This is the age of disintegration and interrogations. Old values have been discarded and they have not been replaced by new values. What Arnold said of

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the Victorian period applies more truly to the modern period—'Caught between two worlds, one dying, the other seeking to be born'. It is the conflict between the two that the common basis of poetry has disappeared. In England of today the society is no longer homogenous; it is divided in different groups who speak different languages. Meanings that are taken for granted in one group are not understood in another. The western man is swayed by conflicting intentions, and is therefore erratic and inconsistent in his behaviour. It is difficult for him to choose between communism and capitalism, between belief in God and scepticism, confidence in science and fear of the atomic bomb, because every belief is riddled with doubts. In no department of life do we find postulates which can be accepted at their face values. In the absence of any common values compression of meaning is impossible. The poets of today find themselves isolated from society, and so they write in a language which cannot be understood by all. Sometimes the isolation of the poet is so extreme that his writing cannot be understood by anyone but himself. That is why poetry has lost its popularity in the modern time. But the very reasons which make the writing of poetry difficult have offered opportunity to fiction to flourish. In prose the ambiguity can be clarified. Those things which are no longer assumed can be easily explained in a novel.

But it is not merely on account of the loss of common pattern of psychological response, and the absence of common basis of values, that the novel has come into ascendancy. Science, which is playing a predominant role today, and which insists on the analytical approach, has also helped the novel to gain more popularity, because the method of the novel is also analytical as opposed to the synthetical. The modern man also under the influence of science is not particularly interested in metaphorical expression which is characteristic of poetry. He prefers the novel form because here the things are properly explained and clarified. Moreover the development of psychology in the twentieth century has made men so curious about the motivation of their conduct, that they feel intellectually fascinated when a writer exposes the inner working of the mind of a character. This is possible only in the novel form.

After discussing the various reasons which have made the novel the most popular literary form today, let us consider the main characteristics of the modern novel. In the first place, we can say that it is realistic as opposed to idealistic. The 'realistic' writer is one who thinks that truth to observed facts—facts about the outer world, or facts about his own feelings is the great thing, while the 'idealistic' writer wants rather to create a pleasant and edifying picture. The modern novelist is 'realistic' in this sense and not in the sense of an elaborate documentation of fact, dealing often with the rather more sordid side of contemporary life, as we find in the novels of Zola. He is 'realistic' in the wider sense, and tries to include within the limits of the novel almost everything the mixed, average human nature and not merely one-sided view of it. Tolstoy's War and Peace and George Eliot's Middle March had proved that the texture of the novel can be made as supple and various as life itself. The modern novelists have continued this experiment still further, and are trying to make the novel more elegant and flexible. Under the influence of Flaubert and Turgeniev, some modern novelists like Henry James have taken great interest in refining the construction of the novel so that there will be nothing superfluous, no phrase, paragraph, or sentence which will not contribute to the total effect. They have also tried to avoid all that militates against plausibility, as Thackeray's unwise technique of addressing in his own person, and confessing that it is all a story. They have introduced into the novel subtle points of view, reserved and refined characters, and intangible delicacies, of motive which had never been attempted before by any English novelist.

In the second place, the modern novel is psychological. The psychological problem concerns the nature of consciousness and its relation to time. Modern psychology has made it very difficult for the novelist to think of consciousness, as moving in a straight chronological line from one point to the next. He tends rather to see it as altogether fluid, existing simultaneously at several different levels. To the modern novelists and readers who look at consciousness in this way, the presentation of a story in a straight chronological line becomes unsatisfactory and unreal. People are what they are because of what they have been. We are memories, and to describe as truthfully at any given moment means to say everything about our past. This method to describe this consciousness in operation is called the 'stream of consciousness' method. The novelist claims complete omniscience

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and moves at once right inside the characters' minds. In this kind of a novel a character's change in mood, marked externally by a sigh or a flicker of an eyelid, or perhaps not perceived at all, may mean more than his outward acts, like his decision to marry or the loss of a fortune. Moreover, in such a novel the main characters are not brought through a series of testing circumstances in order to reveal their potentialities. Everything about the character is always there, at some level of his consciousness, and it can be revealed by the author by probing depth wise rather than proceeding lengthwise.

Since the 'stream of consciousness' novelists, like Virginia Woolf, believe that the individual's reaction to any given situation is determined by the sum of his past experience, it follows that everyone is in some sense a prisoner of his own individuality. It therefore means that 'reality' itself is a matter of personal impression rather than public systematisation, and thus real communication between individuals is impossible. In such a world of loneliness, there is no scope for love, because each personality, being determined by past history, is unique. This idea is further strengthened on account of disintegration of modern society in which there is no common basis of values. That is why the modern novelist regards love as a form of selfishness or at least as something much more complicated and problematical than simple affection between two persons. D. H. Lawrence believes that true love begins with the lover's recognition of each others' true separateness.

Notes Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway rejected Peter Welsh, the man she really loved, because of the fear that his possessive love would destroy her own personality.

It is in the technique of characterisation that the 'stream of consciousness' novelist is responsible for an important development. Previously two different methods were adopted by the novelists in the delineation of character. Either the personalities of characters in fiction emerge from a chronological account of a group of events and the character's reaction to it; or we are given a descriptive portrait of the character first, so that we know what to expect, and the resulting actions and reactions of characters fill in and elaborate that picture. The first method we see in Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge, where in the beginning there is no hint of Michael's real nature or personality. That emerges from the story itself. The second method is seen in Trollope's Barchester Towers, where in the early chapter we get general sketches of the characters of Dr. Proudie and Mrs. Proudie, and in the later chapter we see the application to particular events of the general principle already enunciated. Some time both these methods are adopted as in the case of Emma Woodhouse by Jane Austen. Though the methods adopted in all these cases are different, we find that consistent character-portrait emerges. The 'stream of consciousness' novelist, on the other hand, is dissatisfied with these traditional methods. He has realised that it is impossible to give a psychologically accurate account of what a man is at any given moment, either by static description of his character, or by describing a group of chronologically arranged reactions to a series of circumstances. He is interested in those aspects of consciousness which are essentially dynamic rather than static in nature and are independent of the given moment. For him the present moment is sufficiently specious, because it denotes the ever fluid passing of the 'already' into the 'not yet'. It not merely gives him the reaction of the person to a particular experience at the moment, but also his previous as well as future reactions. His technique, therefore, is a means of escape from the tyranny of the time dimension. By it the author is able to kill two birds with one stone; he can indicate the precise nature of the present experience of his character, and give, incidentally, facts about the character's life previous to this moment, and thus in a limited time, one day for example, he gives us a complete picture of the character both historically and psychologically.

This 'stream of consciousness' technique not only helps to reveal the character completely, historically as well as psychologically, it also presents development in character, which is in itself very difficult. Thus James Joyce in Ulysses is not only able, while confining his chronological framework to the events of a single day, to relate so much more than merely the events of that single day, and to make his hero a complete and rounded character, but by the time the book closes, he had made the reader see the germ of the future in the present without looking beyond

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the present. Similarly Virginia Woolf in Mrs. Dalloway by relating the story of one day in the life of a middle-aged woman, and following her 'stream of consciousness' up and down in the past and the present, has not only given complete picture of Mrs. Dalloway's character, but also she has made the reader feel by the end of the book that he knows not only what Mrs. Dalloway is, and has been, but what she might have been—he knows all the unfulfilled possibilities in her character. Thus what the traditional method achieves by extension, the 'stream of consciousness' method achieves by depth. It is a method by which a character can be presented outside time and place. It first separates the presentation of consciousness from the chronological sequence of events, and then investigates a given state of mind so completely, by pursuing to their end the remote mental associations and suggestions, that there is no need to wait for time in order to make the potential qualities in the character take the form of activity.

Besides being psychological and realistic, the novelist is also frank especially about sexual matters. This was rather an inevitable result of the acceptance of the 'stream of consciousness' technique. Some time a striking sexual frankness is used by writers like D. H. Lawrence to evade social and moral problems.

Notes An elaborate technique for catching the flavour of every moment helps to avoid coming into grips with acute problems facing the society.

Moreover, on account of the disintegration of society, and an absence of a common basis of values, the modern novelist cannot believe that his impressions hold good for others. The result is that whereas the earlier English novel generally dealt with the theme of relation between gentility and morality, the modern novel deals with the relation between loneliness and love. So whereas Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray wrote for the general public, the modern novelist considers it as an enemy, and writes for a small group of people who share his individual sensibilities and are opposed to the society at large. E. M. Forster calls it the 'little society' as opposed to the 'great society'. D. H. Lawrence was concerned with how individuals could fully realise themselves as individuals as a preliminary to making true contact with the 'otherness of other individuals'. He deals with social problems as individual problems. Virginia Woolf, who was particularly sensitive to the disintegration of the public background of belief, was concerned with rendering experience in terms of private sensibility. Thus the novel in the hands of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence, Dorothy Richardson or Katherine Mansfield, borrowed some of the technique of lyrical poetry on account of emphasis on personal experience. There are such fine delicacies of description and narrative in modern novels, that they remind us of the works of great English poets.

Task Write a short note on Modern Drama.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... is often derided for abandoning the social world in favour of its narcissistic interest in language and its processes.
2. Modernist formalism, however, was not without its ..... .
3. Little wonder, then, that it is probably the least read of the acknowledged ..... of English literature.
4. The modern period in ..... is obviously not such a period when society is functioning on the basis of certain fundamental values.
5. Besides being psychological and realisti, the novelist is also Frank especially about ..... .

Notes

11.3 Summary

- The term modernism refers to the radical shift in aesthetic and cultural sensibilities evident in the art and literature of the post-World War One period.
- This is the most important and popular literary medium in the modern times. It is the only literary form which can compete for popularity with the film and the radio, and it is in this form that a great deal of distinguished work is being produced.
- Under the influence of Flaubert and Turgeniev, some modern novelists like Henry James have taken great interest in refining the construction of the novel so that there will be nothing superfluous, no phrase, paragraph, or sentence which will not contribute to the total effect.
- This 'stream of consciousness' technique not only helps to reveal the character completely, historically as well as psychologically, it also presents development in character, which is in itself very difficult

11.4 Keywords

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.

Stream of Consciousness : In literary criticism, stream of consciousness is a narrative mode that seeks to portray an individual's point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character's thought processes, either in a loose interior monologue, or in connection to his or her actions.

11.5 Review Questions

1. What is modernism and the modern novel?
2. What is modem drama? Explain.
3. What is stream of consciousness? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Modernism
2. Political cost
3. Masterpieces
4. England
5. Sexual matters

11.6 Further Readings

Books

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

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Unit 12: Twentieth Century (Poetic Drama and Problem Play)

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define poetic drama.
- Describe yeats and the irish movement.
- Define Dr. Gordon Bottomley and T.S. eliot.
- Explain problem play.

Introduction

The problem play (also called "thesis play," "discussion play," and "the comedy of ideas") is a comparatively recent form of drama. It originated in nineteenth-centuryFrance but was effectively practised and popularized by the Norwegian playwright Ibsen. It was introduced into England by Henry Arthur Jones and A. W. Pinero towards the end of the nineteenth century. G. B. Shaw and Galsworthy took the problem play to its height in the twentieth century. H. Granvi lie-Barker was the last notable practitioner of this dramatic type. Thus the problem play flourished in England in the period between the last years of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth.

12.1 Poetic Drama

Like the rest of the literature of the twentieth century, drama is marked by excessive realism-almost naturalism. In the early years of the century English drama under the influence of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy was too realistic and too involved in contemporary social problems to be tolerant of any poetry-least of all, poetic expression. Prose-witty, serious, pathetic, or ironical-was the accepted medium of drama.

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But that does not mean that poetic drama was dead beyond hope. At least a few early twentieth-century dramatists like Stephen Philips did write poetic drama. In the later years of the century, thanks to Yeats, Abercrombie, Bottomley, and most of all, T. S. Eliot, poetic drama came to its own once again and could thereafter compete with prose drama without needing any special excuses. In fact, in the twenties of our century there is a clear evidence of a marked reaction against the naturalistic drama of the earlier years; there is, conversely what Allardyce Nicoll in British Drama calls, "a renascence of imagination." The ascendency of imagination and the challenge to realism took in the field of drama three divergent directions as below:

(*i*) The establishment of poetic drama.

(*ii*) The coming into its own of the modernistic Continental School.

(*iii*) The arrival of the historical dramatists.

12.1.1 Stephen Phillips (1864-1915)

But even before this "renascence of imagination" we find some dramatists writing verse drama in the early years of the twentieth century. Of these dramatist Stephen Phillips deserves the first mention. Paolo and Francesco was his greatest achievement, though he wrote some other verse plays also, like Herod, Ulysses, The Sin of David, and Nero. His work is not original, for unlike T. S. Eliot, he does not try to subject an old traditional style to the needs of the modern age. "He," says Nicoll, "looks backward always and can think of nothing save the continuance of the wornout nineteenth century styles based on uncritical admiration of the Elizabethans." Now that is just not sufficient. Phillips is a fossilized Elizabethan. In spite of their flamboyantly melodramatic elements and wooden characters, his plays dazzled nis contemporaries, at least for a time, but could not succeed in creating an appreciable public demand for poetic drama.

His Followers

Nor did he found a tradition, though some dramatists like Rudolf Besier and J. E. Flecker tended somewhat in his direction. Besier's The virgin Goddess is written much in the same style as Phillips'. Flecker's Hassan (published in 1922 and staged in 1923) is different in the sense that it is related to the Middle East. It does capture much of the gorgeous splendour of the East with its hedonistic lustfulness and grotesque sadism, but its characterisation and incidents (mostly of the melodramatic kind) are quite crude and incapable of interesting the more discerning of readers and spectators. There is some really splendid poetry also no doubt, but, to quote Allardyce Nicoll, it is "a mere patchwork of heterogeneous elements without harmony and without form."

Did u know? Edward Knoblock's Kismet (1912) is another Eastern phantasmagoria.

12.1.2 John Masefield (1878-1967)

John Masefield was not affected by the Middle East, but he was influenced a great deal-especially in his later dramatic work-by the Japanese drama which was introduced in English for the first time in 1913. In the beginning Masefield tried his hand at domestic and historical themes, in such plays as The Tragedy of Nan, the prose play The Tragedy of Pompey the Great, and Philip the King (written in heroic couplets). The Japanese influence is perceptible first in The Faithful (1915). His later plays mostly on religious and historical themes, show an appreciable evidence of the Japanese influence. Good Friday(1915), A King's Daughter (1923), The Trial of' Jesus (1925), Tristran and Isolt (1927), and The Coming of Christ (1928) are his important later plays. In them he skilfully combines prose and verse, and, following the precedent of the ancient classical stage, introduces choral interludes. His language is well-wrought but lucid. His Christianity is quite conventional and as such unacceptable to the moderns. But there is a childlike quality in his conception and presentation which cannot go unobserved and uncommended.

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12.1.3 John Drinkwater (1882-1937)

John Drinkwater is best known for his prose historical drama Abraham Lincoln (1918) which secured for him international fame. But here we are concerned with his poetic dramas which came only before 1918 and which include The Storm (1915), The God of Quiet (1916), and X=O: A Night of the Trojan War (1917). These plays were not as popular as Abraham Lincoln and even his other historical dramas like Mary Stuart and Oliver Cromwell, but they helped to promote and preserve the vogue of poetic play. The Storm is indeed very effective and puts one in mind of Synge's Riders to the Sea. A young woman is waiting fearfully for her husband who has been overtaken by a furious storm. Her mind, torn between hope and fear, comes to a settlement with the bringing in of the dead body of her husband. The play is meditative rather than expressive of action. The storm in the soul of the young woman going to be bereaved is given more importance than the physical storm raging outside her cottage. Her tragedy which she takes with an agonized silence is really pathetic and heart-writing. X-O attempts a smart exposure of the evils of war. Even the most expensive war yields no profit in the end: it comes to zero. Drinkwater has presented in the play an imaginary episode during the course of the Trojan War. The chief characters of the play are four—two Trojan friends and two Greek friends. At night one of the Trojans leaves his friend behind to kill some Greek straggler, and, likewise one of the Greeks goes to ambush some unwary Trojan. The Greek and the Trojan left behind happen to become the victims. It is discovered by the Greek and the Trojan assasins when they come back from their respective errands. Drinkwater, aware as he was of the tragedy of war, was not yet a pacifist-as his Abraham Lincoln shows.

Notes Lincoln turned to war when things went out of hand, though John Drinkwater did so with a deep spiritual agony.

12.1.4 Yeats and the Irish Movement

The Irish Movement contributed a lot to English drama, both prose and verse. The leaders of the Irish Movement were W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and Synge. Their followers were many and included some very talented writers. Synge wrote plays in a poetic language all his own. but it was prose not verse. Hence he will not detain us here.

Yeats was a poet of considerable powers. His poetic plays posed a serious challenge to the products of the realistic prose school. They were poetic not only in form but spirit also. They were full of rich symbolism, mystic esotericism. and delicate refinements which characterise much of his poetry. Yeats "deprecated the conversion of the theatre into the lecture-platform and the pulpit by realistic playwrights." His was, say Moody and Lovett, "the first dramatic verse since Jacobean days that was really related to human impulse and expression and was not a mere decoration; he took the new Anglo-Irish poetry, with its tendency towards rhetoric and its gleams of racial imaginativeness, and he gave it an aesthetic form that was to be the greatest influence on the next generation of Irish writers." The Countess Cathleen (which came towards the end of the nineteenth century), The Land of Heart's Desire, The King's Threshold, On Baile's Strand, and Deirdre are his chief plays. For sheer poetry and emotional effectiveness The Countess Cathleen occupies the most prominent place. It is the story of a Christ-like countess who offers her own soul for hell in return for the release of many others. She is a benevolent Faustus. On finding her dead even the unsophisticated peasants express themselves poetically:

A Peasant. She was the great white lily of the world. A Peasant. She was more beautiful than pale stars. An Old Peasant Woman. The little plant I love is broken in two.

The grief of Aleel, the Countess's lover, finds a Shakesperean expression. He breaks the Countess's mirror and exclaims:

I shatter you in fragments, for the face
That brimmed you up with beauty is no more:
And die, dull heart, for she whose mournful words
Made you a living spirit has passed away

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And left you but a ball of passionate dust.

And you proud earth and plumy sea, fade out!

For you may hear no more her faltering feet,

But are left only amid the clamorous war

Of angels upon devils.

Yeats was a dramatist of visions and symbols which were to him

Forms more real than living men;

Nurslings of immortality.

"I had unshakable conviction", he once remarked, "arising how or whence I cannot tell, that invisible gates would open as they did for Blake, as they opened for Swedenborg." The "gates" might not have opened wide for Yeats, but at least some wickets did.

12.1.5 Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938)

Abercrombie's verse plays, like Deborah (1913), The Adder (1913), The Endofthe World(1914), Staircase (1920), The Deserter (1922), and Phoenix (1923), struck a note of departure from the fanciful and symbolical plays of Yeats. Abercrombie had nothing to do with the land of fairies or mysticism. He was a poet, no doubt, but he was also a realist. He took upon himself the task of adapting the blank verse of the Elizabethan age to the contingencies of the modern times. Refering to Abercrombie's work, Moody and Lovett maintain: "fundamentally, Abercrombie endeavoured to bring his poetry into close contact with reality. He was not another singer from fairyland as was Yeats: he deliberately departed from the Elizabethan tradition which kept so many writers of the past in its thraldom. Consciously he sought to find a form of blank verse expression which might adequately convey to modern spectators or readers the immediate emotions of our times in terms of poetry. The powerful resonance of his verse, with its peculiar welding of highly imaginative language and common expressions presents a notable contribution to dramatic form." Abercrombie's plays are poor in characterisation and stage effects. Moreover, there is a sizable proportion of narrative which does not fit well into the dramatic framework.

Did u know? Abercrombie scored an advance upon the unthinking Elizabethanism of Stephen Philips by showing a much greater awareness of contemporary taste and conditions.

12.1.6 Dr. Gordon Bottomley

Whereas Abercrombie tried to poetise ordinary speech and thus combine poetry with realism, Dr. Gordon Bottomley endeavoured to ake an altogether new start. In his search for a new poetic medium he did not turn to the Elizabethans or their Victorian imitators, but the No drama of Japan and the classical drama of Greece. In his youth Bottomley was an enthusiastic admirer of D. G. Rossetti in whom he found, to quote himself,

The lost Italian vision, the passionate

Vitality of art more rich than life,

More real than the day s reality.

Later, however, his enthusiasm for aestheticism dwindled considerably. His plays can be roughly divided into two groups as follows:

- The earlier group; and
- the lyric, choral plays.

What attracts our attention in the plays of the earlier group is the solidity of Bottomley's characterisation and his pleasing inventiveness. These plays include some with Shakespearean

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themes-such as King Lear's Wife and Gruach-which are extremely interesting. Gruach tries to show the background of Lady Macbeth and succeeds in convincing us psychologically.

In the choral plays Bottomley further removed dramatic dialogue from common speech. His experiments are quite interesting even though hey could not excite much emulation.

12.1.7 T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

T. S. Eliot has been the greatest shaping force in the literature of the twentieth century-in poetry, criticism, and drama. Long before he came forward with a poetic play of his own, he had started defending poetic drama. In The Possibility of Poetic Drama, The Need for Poetic Drama, Aims of Poetic Drama, and Poetry and Drama he strongly advocated the cause of poetic drama. At one point, comparing prose and verse as the media of drama, he conveyed his belief that "poetry is the natural and complete medium of drama, that the prose play is a kind of abstraction capable of giving you only a part of what the theatre can give, and that the verse play is capable of something much more intense and exciting."

But all this verbal pleading would have been of little avail if Eliot had not, with his own practice, proved the potentialities of poetic drama in the modern age. He wrote some seven poetic plays which are:

Sweeney Agonistes

The Rock

Murder in the Cathedral

The Family Reunion

The Cocktail Party

The Confidential Clerk

The Elder Statesman

Of all of them Murder in the Cathedral is the most outstanding. Bamber Gascoigne observes in Twentieth Century Drama: "It is the highest tribute to a poetic drama to say, as one can of Murder in the Cathedral, that it is both intensely dramatic and inconceivable in prose."

Notes Eliot's plays are quite complex (like his poetry), but they are satisfying in their poetry and the evocation of the desired moods by a wonderful handling of the verse medium.

Others

W. H. Auden in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood wrote some good poetic plays—TTze Dog Beneath the Skin, The Ascent of, F6, and Frontier. Miss Dorothy Sayers in The Zeal of Thy House and The Devil to Pay followed T. S. Eliot's lead in handling religious subject-matter. Stephen Spender with The Trial of a Judge came out with a powerful poetic play depicting the fate of Liberals and Socialists in the Nazi Germany of Hitler. This play, as Nicoll points out, "despite its brilliance in execution, exhibits a burning emotion so consuming as to destroy that simple structure from which a stage play must be built." Christopher Fry in his poetic plays imported some mystical suggestions and philosophical speculations. For this very purpose he preferred verse to prose. His verse is quite suggestive but is sometimes marred by a little immaturity and incomprehensibility. Consider an instance showing both his excellence and weakness:

The world is an arrow

Or larksong, shot from the earth's bow and falling

In a stillborn sunrise.

Task Write a short note on Poetic Drama.

Self Assessment

Notes

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. ..... is a fossilized Elizabethan.
   (a) John Masefield (b) Stephen Phillips
   (c) Dr. Gordon Bottomley (d) John Drinkwater
2. ..... is best known for his prose historical drama Abraham Lincoln (1918) which secured for him international fame.
   (a) John Drinkwater (b) John Masefield
   (c) Stephen Phillips (d) W.B. Yeats
3. The leaders of the Irish movement and ..... (1865 - 1939) and synge.
   (a) Dr. Gordon Bottomley (b) Stephen Phillips
   (c) W.B. Yeats (d) John Drinkwater
4. Whereas Abercrombie tried to poetise ordinary speech and thus combine poetry with realism, ... endeavoured to ake an altogether new start.
   (a) John Masefield (b) W.B. Yeats
   (c) Stephen Phillips (d) Dr. Gordon Bottomley
5. ..... has been the greatest shaping force in the literature of the twentieth century in poetry.
   (a) W.B. Yeats (b) T.S. Eliot
   (c) John Drinkwater (d) John Masefield

12.2 Problem Play

The problem play is a form of drama that emerged during the 19th century as part of the wider movement of realism in the arts. It deals with contentious social issues through debates between the characters on stage, who typically represent conflicting points of view within a realistic social context.

The critic F. S. Boas adapted the term to characterise certain plays by Shakespeare that he considered to have characteristics similar to Ibsen's 19th-century problem plays. Boas's term caught on, and Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, Timon of Athens, Troilus and Cressida, and All's Well That Ends Well are still referred to as "Shakespeare's problem plays". As a result, the term is used more broadly and retrospectively to describe pre-19th-century, tragicomic dramas that do not fit easily into the classical generic distinction between comedy and tragedy.

While social debates in drama were nothing new, the problem play of the 19th century was distinguished by its intent to confront the spectator with the dilemmas experienced by the characters. The earliest forms of the problem play are to be found in the work of French writers such as Alexandre Dumas, fils, who dealt with the subject of prostitution in The Lady of the Camellias (1852). Other French playwrights followed suit with dramas about a range of social issues, sometimes approaching the subject in a moralistic, sometimes in a sentimental manner.

The most important exponent of the problem play, however, was the Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen, whose work combined penetrating characterisation with emphasis on topical social issues, usually concentrated on the moral dilemmas of a central character. In a series of plays Ibsen addressed a range of problems, most notably the restriction of women's lives in A Doll's House (1879), sexually-transmitted disease in Ghosts (1882) and provincial greed in An Enemy of the People (1882).

Did u know? Ibsen's dramas proved immensely influential, spawning variants of the problem play in works by George Bernard Shaw and other later dramatists.

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12.2.1 Shakespearean Problem Play

In Shakespeare studies, the term problem plays normally refers to three plays that William Shakespeare wrote between the late 1590s and the first years of the seventeenth century: All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure and Troilus and Cressida, although some critics would extend the term to other plays, most commonly The Winter's Tale, Timon of Athens, and The Merchant of Venice. The term was coined by critic F. S. Boas in Shakespeare and his Predecessors (1896), who lists the first three plays and adds that "Hamlet, with its tragic close, is the connecting-link between the problem-plays and the tragedies in the stricter sense." The term can refer to the subject matter of the play, or to a classification "problem" with the plays themselves.

The term derives from a type of drama that was popular at the time of Boas' writing. It was most associated with the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. In these problem plays the situation faced by the protagonist is put forward by the author as a representative instance of a contemporary social problem. For Boas this modern form of drama provided a useful model with which to study works by Shakespeare that had previously seemed to be uneasily situated between the comic and the tragic, though nominally the three plays identified by Boas are all comedies. For Boas, Shakespeare's "problem plays" set out to explore specific moral dilemmas and social problems through their central characters. Boas writes, throughout these plays we move along dim untrodden paths, and at the close our feeling is neither of simple joy nor pain; we are excited, fascinated, perplexed, for the issues raised preclude a completely satisfactory outcome, even when, as in All's Well and Measure for Measure, the complications are outwardly adjusted in the fifth act. In Troilus and Cressida and Hamlet no such partial settlement of difficulties takes place, and we are left to interpret their enigmas as best we may. Dramas so singular in theme and temper cannot be strictly called comedies or tragedies. We may therefore borrow a convenient phrase from the theatre of today and class them together as Shakspere's problem plays.

The problem plays are characterised by their complex and ambiguous tone, which shifts violently between dark, psychological drama and more straightforward comic material; All's Well and Measure for Measure have happy endings that seem awkward, artificial and perfunctory, while Troilus ends with neither a tragic death, nor a happy ending. Boas used the term for plays in which the resolution of the themes and debates seems inadequate, and in the final act the deliverance of justice and completion one expects does not occur. Other definitions have followed, but all center on the fact that the plays cannot be easily assigned to the traditional categories of comedy or tragedy.

Notes The three plays are referred to as the dark comedies, since despite ending on a generally happy note for the characters concerned, the darker, more profound issues raised cannot be fully resolved or ignored.

Many critics have suggested that this sequence of plays marked a psychological turning point for Shakespeare, during which he lost interest in the romantic comedies he had specialized in and turned towards the darker worlds of Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth. The term has also been applied to other odd plays from various points in his career, as the term has always been somewhat vaguely defined and is not accepted by all critics.

Far from being plays with fatal flaws, as one might imagine from the name, problem plays are actually plays which are designed to confront viewers with modern social problems. Typically, the theme of the play is socially relevant, and the characters confront the issue in a variety of ways, presenting viewers with different approaches and opinions. After seeing a problem play, one is supposed to be filled with interest in the topic at hand, and hopefully inspired to enact social change.

Notes

The concept of problem plays arose in the 19th century, as part of an overall movement known as Realism. Prior to the 19th century, many people turned to art as a mode of escape which allowed them to look outside the world they lived in. In the 19th century, however, art began to take on a more introspective, realistic air, with a conscious focus on ongoing issues such as the social inequalities exacerbated by the Industrial Revolution.

Although the idea of creating problem plays was popularized in the 19th century, numerous works have been retroactively termed problem plays. Several Greek playwrights, for example, addressed ongoing social issues like war, in the case of *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes. Several works of Shakespeare are also considered to be problem plays, like *Measure for Measure*, which has very Biblical themes of justice and truth, or *Troilus and Cressida*, which confronts viewers with infidelity, sexuality, and betrayal.

Many people regard Henrik Ibsen as a master of the problem play, along with authors like George Bernard Shaw and some 19th century French playwrights, many of whom were also authors. Problem plays can cover a wide variety of topics, ranging from women's rights to greed and inequality, and they can tell their stories in a wide variety of ways. For example, it is common to have a tragic protagonist who ultimately suffers as a result of his or her refusal to confront social problems.

Essentially, problem plays are a form of commentary on the societies they are performed in. Because social problems are often universal across cultures and eras, many people find something to appreciate in problem plays, whether they are contemporary or not, and such plays tend to be popular in performance. They can also be difficult to watch, as many people find something of themselves in the characters, and struggle with this revelation.

12.3 Summary

- Like the rest of the literature of the twentieth century, drama is marked by excessive realism-almost naturalism.
- But even before this "renascence of imagination" we find some dramatists writing verse drama in the early years of the twentieth century.
- The Irish Movement contributed a lot to English drama, both prose and verse.
- W. H. Auden in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood wrote some good poetic plays—TTze Dog Beneath the Skin, The Ascent of, F6, and Frontier.
- The concept of problem plays arose in the 19th century, as part of an overall movement known as Realism.

12.4 Keywords

John Masefield (1878-1967) : John Masefield was not affected by the Middle East, but he was influenced a great deal-especially in his later dramatic work-by the Japanese drama which was introduced in English for the first time in 1913.

Abercrombie's : Abercrombie's verse plays, like Deborah (1913), The Adder (1913), The End of the World(1914), Staircase (1920), The Deserter (1922), and Phoenix (1923), struck a note of departure from the fanciful and symbolical plays of Yeats.

Problem Play : The problem play is a form of drama that emerged during the 19th century as part of the wider movement of realism in the arts.

Notes

12.5 Review Questions

1. What is poetic Drama?
2. Who was Stephen Phillips, John Mase field and John Drinkwater? Explain.
3. What is yeats and the Irish movement?
4. Who was Lascelles Abercrombie, Dr. Gordon Bottom by and T.S. Eliet? Explain
5. What is problem play?
6. What is Shakespearean problem play? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. (b) Stephen Phillips
2. (a) John Drinkwater
3. (c) W.B. Yeats
4. (d) Dr. Gordon Bottomley
5. (b) T.S. Eliot

12.6 Further Readings

Books

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

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Notes

Unit 13: Realism, Naturalism, Imagism and Surrealism

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe realism and naturalism.
- Define imagism.
- Explain surrealism.

Introduction

Realism in the visual arts and literature refers to the general attempt to depict subjects "in accordance with secular, empirical rules", as they are considered to exist in third person objective reality, without embellishment or interpretation. As such, the approach inherently implies a belief that such reality is ontologically independent of man's conceptual schemes, linguistic practices and beliefs, and thus can be known (or knowable) to the artist, who can in turn represent this 'reality' faithfully. As Ian Watt states, modern realism "begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through the senses" and as such "it has its origins in Descartes and Locke, and received its first full formulation by Thomas Reid in the middle of the eighteenth century."

13.1 Realism

Realism often refers more specifically to the artistic movement, which began in France in the 1850s. Realism in France appears after the 1848 Revolution. These realists positioned themselves against romanticism, a genre dominating French literature and artwork in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Seeking to be undistorted by personal bias, Realism believed in the ideology of objective reality and revolted against the exaggerated emotionalism of the Romantic Movement. Truth and accuracy became the goals of many Realists. Many paintings depicted people at work, underscoring the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution and Commercial Revolutions. The popularity of such 'realistic' works grew with the introduction of photography — a new visual source that created a desire for people to produce representations which look "objectively real."

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The term is also used to refer to works of art which, in revealing a truth, may emphasize the ugly or sordid, such as works of social realism, regionalism or Kitchen sink realism.

Literary realism most often refers to the trend, beginning with certain works of nineteenth-century French literature and extending to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century authors in various countries, towards depictions of contemporary life and society "as they were." In the spirit of general "realism," Realist authors opted for depictions of everyday and banal activities and experiences, instead of a romanticized or similarly stylized presentation.

Did u know? Jorge Luis Borges, in an essay entitled "The Scandinavian Destiny", attributed the earliest discovery of Realism in literature to the Northmen in the Icelandic Sagas, although it was soon lost by them along with the continent of North America.

13.2 Naturalism

Naturalism was a literary movement taking place from the 1880s to 1940s that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had inescapable force in shaping human character. It was depicted as a literary movement that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism or Surrealism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment. Naturalism is the outgrowth of literary realism, a prominent literary movement in mid-19th-century France and elsewhere. Naturalistic writers were influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. They believed that one's heredity and social environment determine one's character. Whereas realism seeks only to describe subjects as they really are, naturalism also attempts to determine "scientifically" the underlying forces (e.g. the environment or heredity) influencing the actions of its subjects. Naturalistic works often include uncouth or sordid subject matter; for example, Emile Zola's works had frankness about sexuality along with a pervasive pessimism. Naturalistic works exposed the dark harshness of life, including poverty, racism, sex, violence, prejudice, disease, corruption, prostitution, and filth. As a result, naturalistic writers were frequently criticized for focusing too much on human vice and misery.

There are defining characteristics of literary naturalism. One of these is pessimism. Very often, one or more characters will continue to repeat one line or phrase that tends to have a pessimistic connotation, sometimes emphasizing the inevitability of death.

For example Bernard Bonnejean quotes this passage of Huysmans where the symbolism of death is visible, such an allegory, in a portrait of old woman:

une vieille bique de cinquante ans, une longue efflanquee qui belait a la lune, campee sur ses maigres tibias crevant les draps de ses os en pointe

Another characteristic of literary naturalism is detachment from the story. The author often tries to maintain a tone that will be experienced as 'objective.' Also, an author will sometimes achieve detachment by creating nameless characters (though, strictly speaking, this is more common among modernists such as Ernest Hemingway). This puts the focus on the plot and what happens to the character, rather than the characters themselves. Another characteristic of naturalism is determinism. Determinism is basically the opposite of the notion of free will. For determinism, the idea that individual characters have a direct influence on the course of their lives is supplanted by a focus on nature or fate. Often, a naturalist author will lead the reader to believe a character's fate has been pre-determined, usually by environmental factors, and that he/she can do nothing about it. Another common characteristic is a surprising twist at the end of the story. Equally,

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there tends to be in naturalist novels and stories a strong sense that nature is indifferent to human struggle. These are only a few of the defining characteristics of naturalism, however.

Naturalism is an extension of realism, and may be better understood by study of the basic precepts of that literary movement. The term naturalism itself may have been used in this sense for the first time by Emile Zola. It is believed that he sought a new idea to convince the reading public of something new and more modern in his fiction. He argued that Naturalism innovation in fiction-writing was the creation of characters and plots based on the scientific method.

Task Write a short note on realism.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... often refers more specifically to the artistic movement, which began in France in the 1850S.
2. Realism in France appears after the 1848 ..... .
3. ..... is the outgrowth of literary realism, a prominent literary movement in mid-19th- century France and elsewhere.
4. Naturalistic writers were influenced by ..... theory of evolution.
5. Naturalism is an extension of realism and may be better understood by study of the basic precepts of that ..... .

13.3 Imagism

Imagism was a movement in early 20th-century Anglo-American poetry that favored precision of imagery and clear, sharp language. The Imagists rejected the sentiment and discursiveness typical of much Romantic and Victorian poetry. This was in contrast to their contemporaries, the Georgian poets, who were by and large content to work within that tradition. Group publication of work under the Imagist name appearing between 1914 and 1917 featured writing by many of the most significant figures in Modernist poetry in English, as well as a number of other Modernist figures prominent in fields other than poetry.

Based in London, the Imagists were drawn from Great Britain, Ireland and the United States. Somewhat unusually for the time, the Imagists featured a number of women writers among their major figures. Imagism is also significant historically as the first organised Modernist English language literary movement or group. In the words of T. S. Eliot: "The point de repere usually and conveniently taken as the starting-point of modern poetry is the group denominated 'imagists' in London about 1910."

At the time Imagism emerged, Longfellow and Tennyson were considered the paragons of poetry, and the public valued the sometimes moralising tone of their writings. In contrast, Imagism called for a return to what were seen as more Classical values, such as directness of presentation and economy of language, as well as a willingness to experiment with non-traditional verse forms. The focus on the "thing" as "thing" (an attempt at isolating a single image to reveal its essence) also mirrors contemporary developments in avant-garde art, especially Cubism. Although Imagism isolates objects through the use of what Ezra Pound called "luminous details", Pound's Ideogrammic Method of juxtaposing concrete instances to express an abstraction is similar to Cubism's manner of synthesizing multiple perspectives into a single image.

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13.4 Surrealism

Surrealism is a cultural movement that began in the early 1920s, and is best known for the visual artworks and writings of the group members. Surrealist works feature the element of surprise, unexpected juxtapositions and non sequitur; however, many Surrealist artists and writers regard their work as an expression of the philosophical movement first and foremost, with the works being an artifact. Leader Andre Breton was explicit in his assertion that Surrealism was above all a revolutionary movement.

Did u know? Surrealism developed out of the Dada activities during World War I and the most important center of the movement was Paris.

From the 1920s onward, the movement spread around the globe, eventually affecting the visual arts, literature, film and music of many countries and languages, as well as political thought and practice, philosophy and social theory.

The word surrealist was coined by Guillaume Apollinaire and first appeared in the preface to his play Les Mamelles de Tiresias, which was first performed in 1917. World War I scattered the writers and artists who had been based in Paris, and in the interim many became involved with Dada, believing that excessive rational thought and bourgeois values had brought the conflict of the war upon the world. The Dadaists protested with anti-art gatherings, performances, writings and art works. After the war, when they returned to Paris, the Dada activities continued.

During the war, Andre Breton, who had trained in medicine and psychiatry, served in a neurological hospital where he used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic methods with soldiers suffering from shell-shock. Meeting the young writer Jacques Vache, Breton felt that Vache was the spiritual son of writer and pataphysics founder Alfred Jarry. He admired the young writer's anti-social attitude and disdain for established artistic tradition. Later Breton wrote, "In literature, I was successively taken with Rimbaud, with Jarry, with Apollinaire, with Nouveau, with Lautreamont, but it is Jacques Vaché to whom I owe the most."

Back in Paris, Breton joined in Dada activities and started the literary journal Littérature along with Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault. They began experimenting with automatic writing—spontaneously writing without censoring their thoughts—and published the writings, as well as accounts of dreams, in the magazine.

Notes Breton and Soupault delved deeper into automatism and wrote The Magnetic Fields (1920).

Continuing to write, they attracted more artists and writers; they came to believe that automatism was a better tactic for societal change than the Dada attack on prevailing values. The group grew to include Paul Eluard, Benjamin Peret, Rene Crevel, Robert Desnos, Jacques Baron, Max Morise, Pierre Naville, Roger Vitrac, Gala Eluard, Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, Man Ray, Hans Arp, Georges Malkine, Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Antonin Artaud, Raymond Queneau, Andre Masson, Joan Miro, Marcel Duchamp, Jacques Prevert, and Yves Tanguy.

As they developed their philosophy, they believed that Surrealism would advocate the idea that ordinary and depictive expressions are vital and important, but that the sense of their arrangement must be open to the full range of imagination according to the Hegelian Dialectic. They also looked to the Marxist dialectic and the work of such theorists as Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse.

Notes

Freud's work with free association, dream analysis, and the unconscious was of utmost importance to the Surrealists in developing methods to liberate imagination. They embraced idiosyncrasy, while rejecting the idea of an underlying madness. Later, Salvador Dalí explained it as: "There is only one difference between a madman and me. I am not mad."

Beside the use of dream analysis, they emphasized that "one could combine inside the same frame, elements not normally found together to produce illogical and startling effects." Breton included the idea of the startling juxtapositions in his 1924 manifesto, taking it in turn from a 1918 essay by poet Pierre Reverdy, which said: "a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be — the greater its emotional power and poetic reality."

The group aimed to revolutionize human experience, in its personal, cultural, social, and political aspects. They wanted to free people from false rationality, and restrictive customs and structures. Breton proclaimed that the true aim of Surrealism was "long live the social revolution and it alone!" To this goal, at various times Surrealists aligned with communism and anarchism.

In 1924 they declared their philosophy in the first "Surrealist Manifesto". That same year they established the Bureau of Surrealist Research, and began publishing the journal La Revolution surrealiste.

13.5 Summary

- Realism in the visual arts and literature refers to the general attempt to depict subjects "in accordance with secular, empirical rules", as they are considered to exist in third person objective reality, without embellishment or interpretation.
- The focus on the "thing" as "thing" (an attempt at isolating a single image to reveal its essence) also mirrors contemporary developments in avant-garde art, especially Cubism.
- During the war, Andre Breton, who had trained in medicine and psychiatry, served in a neurological hospital where he used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic methods with soldiers suffering from shell-shock.
- Freud's work with free association, dream analysis, and the unconscious was of utmost importance to the Surrealists in developing methods to liberate imagination.

13.6 Keywords

Imagism : Imagism was a movement in early 20th-century Anglo-American poetry that favored precision of imagery and clear, sharp language.

Surrealism : Surrealism is a cultural movement that began in the early 1920s, and is best known for the visual artworks and writings of the group members.

Naturalism : Naturalism was a literary movement taking place from the 1880s to 1940s that used detailed realism to suggest that social conditions, heredity, and environment had in escapable force in shaping human character

13.7 Review Questions

1. What is the relationship between realism and naturalism?
2. What is Imagism?
3. What is surrealism? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Realism
2. Revolution
3. Naturalism
4. Charles Darwin's
5. Literary movement

Notes

13.8 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 14: Didacticism, Symbolism, Impressionism and Expressionism

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe didacticism and symbolism.
- Define impressionism.
- Explain expressionism.

Introduction

Didacticism - communication that is suitable for or intended to be instructive; "the didacticism expected in books for the young"; "the didacticism of the 19th century gave birth to many great museums"

A symbol is something that represents something else, either by association or by resemblance. It can be a material object or a written sign used to represent something invisible.

In writing, symbolism is the use of a word, a phrase, or a description, which represents a deeper meaning than the words themselves. This kind of extension of meaning can transform the written word into a very powerful instrument.

Impressionism is a movement in French painting, sometimes called optical realism because of its almost scientific interest in the actual visual experience and effect of light and movement on appearance of objects.

Expressionism developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Expressionis was opposed to academic standards that had prevailed in Europe and emphasized artist's subjective emotion, which overrides fidelity to the actual appearance of things. The subjects of expressionist works were frequently distorted, or otherwise altered.

The term “symbolism” is derived from the word “symbol” which derives from the Latin symbolum, a symbol of faith, and symbolus, a sign of recognition, in turn from classical Greek symbolon, an object cut in half constituting a sign of recognition when the carriers were able to reassemble the two halves.

Notes

14.1 Didacticism

Much of romantic poetry is marked by an egregious lack of realism amounting at times to sheer escapism. Classicism, on the other hand, puts special emphasis on concrete reality and aims pre-eminently at edification and improvement of the reader. That is why much of classical poetry is realistic, didactic, and satiric. Almost all classical poets were men of action very much in the thick of life and its pressing affairs. They wrote with a very clear and concrete purpose, not just for the fun of it or for fulfilling a pressing necessity of self-revelation. Political, religious, and even personal satire became in the Augustan era the vogue of the day. If the neo-classical poet was not satiric, he was, at least, sure to be didactic. It is very rarely that we come across in this age such a poem as Pope's Eloisa to Abelard, which is "a poem without a purpose" aiming neither at instruction nor at ridicule nor chastisement through satire. To quote some instances, Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel and The Medal are political satires, and his Mac Flecknoe a personal satire. Pope's most important poems, like The Dunciad, The Rape of the Lock, and The Epistle to Afbuthnot, are all satires. Most of the rest of his poems, like his "Moral Essays", are didactic in aim. A subject on which neo-classical poets showed much brilliance was dullness—the dullness of some specific rivals or the collective dullness of all of them put together. The Dunciad and Mac Flecknoe show how dullness can serve as a target of brilliant satire. Some of neo-classical poems are too much topical in nature, and all of them are full of contemporary references, and they need exhaustive annotation to become comprehensible to the reader of today who is unfamiliar with the atmosphere out of which these poems grew and which was very well known to the readers of that age. The poem of the romantics, on the other hand, are largely free from contemporary references, for the romantic poet, generally speaking, is not a man of action and affairs and scarcely lives on the common, humdrum earth. He lives, instead, in a world of his own fancy with magic casements, opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

14.2 Symbolism

Symbolism was a late nineteenth-century art movement of French, Russian and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts. In literature, the style had its beginnings with the publication Les Fleurs du mal (The Flowers of Evil, 1857) by Charles Baudelaire. The works of Edgar Allan Poe, which Baudelaire admired greatly and translated into French, were a significant influence and the source of many stock tropes and images. The aesthetic was developed by Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine during the 1860s and '70s. In the 1880s, the aesthetic was articulated by a series of manifestoes and attracted a generation of writers. The name "symbolist" itself was first applied by the critic Jean Moréas, who invented the term to distinguish the symbolists from the related decadents of literature and of art.

Distinct from, but related to, the style of literature, symbolism of art is related to the gothic component of Romanticism.

Notes In ancient Greece, the symbolon, was a shard of pottery which was inscribed and then broken into two pieces which were given to the ambassadors from two allied city states as a record of the alliance.

Symbolism was largely a reaction against naturalism and realism, anti-idealistic styles which were attempts to represent reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal. Symbolism was a reaction in favour of spirituality, the imagination, and dreams. Some writers, such as Joris-Karl Huysmans, began as naturalists before becoming symbolists; for Huysmans, this change represented his increasing interest in religion and spirituality. Certain of the characteristic subjects of the decadents represent naturalist interest in

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sexuality and taboo topics, but in their case this was mixed with Byronic romanticism and the world-weariness characteristic of the fin de siècle period.

The symbolist poets have a more complex relationship with Parnassianism, a French literary style that immediately preceded it. While being influenced by hermeticism, allowing freer versification, and rejecting Parnassian clarity and objectivity, it retained Parnassianism's love of word play and concern for the musical qualities of verse. The symbolists continued to admire Theophile Gautier's motto of "art for art's sake", and retained — and modified — Parnassianism's mood of ironic detachment. Many symbolist poets, including Stephane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine, published early works in Le Parnasse contemporain, the poetry anthologies that gave Parnassianism its name. But Arthur Rimbaud publicly mocked prominent Parnassians, and published scatological parodies of some of their main authors, including François Coppee — misattributed to Coppee himself — in L'Album zutique.

Task Write a short note on symbolism.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. Political, religious and even personal satire became in the ..... the vogue of the day.
2. In literature, the style had its beginnings with the publication Les Fleurs du mal (The flowers of Evil, 1857) by ..... .
3. The aesthetic was developed by Stephane Mallarme and ..... during the 1860s and 1870s.
4. ..... was a reaction in favour of spirituality, the imagination and dreams.
5. The ..... have a more complex relationship with parnassianism, a French literary style that immediately preceded it.

14.3 Impressionism

Impressionism was a 19th-century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists whose independent exhibitions brought them to prominence during the 1870s and 1880s. The name of the style is derived from the title of a Claude Monet work, Impression, soleil levant (Impression, Sunrise), which provoked the critic Louis Leroy to coin the term in a satiric review published in the Parisian newspaper Le Charivari.

Characteristics of Impressionist paintings include relatively small, thin, yet visible brush strokes; open composition; emphasis on accurate depiction of light in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time); common, ordinary subject matter; the inclusion of movement as a crucial element of human perception and experience; and unusual visual angles. The development of Impressionism in the visual arts was soon followed by analogous styles in other media which became known as Impressionist music and Impressionist literature.

Did u know? The term "Impressionism" can be used to describe art created in this style, but not during the late 19th century.

Radicals in their time, early Impressionists violated the rules of academic painting. They began by constructing their pictures from freely brushed colours that took precedence over lines and contours, following the example of painters such as Eugene Delacroix. They also painted realistic scenes of modern life, and often painted outdoors. Previously, still lifes and portraits as well as

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landscapes had usually been painted in the studio. The Impressionists found that they could capture the momentary and transient effects of sunlight by painting en plein air. They portrayed overall visual effects instead of details, and used short "broken" brush strokes of mixed and pure unmixed colour—not blended smoothly or shaded, as was customary—in order to achieve the effect of intense colour vibration.

Although the emergence of Impressionism in France happened at a time when a number of other painters, including the Italian artists known as the Macchiaioli, and Winslow Homer in the United States, were also exploring plein-air painting, the Impressionists developed new techniques that were specific to the style. Encompassing what its adherents argued was a different way of seeing; it was an art of immediacy and movement, of candid poses and compositions, of the play of light expressed in a bright and varied use of colour.

Did u know? The public, at first hostile, gradually came to believe that the Impressionists had captured a fresh and original vision, even if the new style did not receive the approval of the art critics and establishment.

By recreating the sensation in the eye that views the subject, rather than delineating the details of the subject, and by creating a welter of techniques and forms, Impressionism.

14.4 Expressionism

Expressionism was a modernist movement, initially in poetry and painting, originating in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. Its typical trait is to present the world solely from a subjective perspective, distorting it radically for emotional effect in order to evoke moods or ideas. Expressionist artists sought to express meaning or emotional experience rather than physical reality.

Expressionism was developed as an avant-garde style before the First World War. It remained popular during the Weimar Republic, particularly in Berlin. The style extended to a wide range of the arts, including painting, literature, theatre, dance, film, architecture and music.

The term is sometimes suggestive of emotional angst. In a general sense, painters such as Matthias Grunewald and El Greco are sometimes termed expressionist, though in practice the term is applied mainly to 20th-century works.

Notes The Expressionist emphasis on individual perspective has been characterized as a reaction to positivism and other artistic styles such as naturalism and impressionism.

The term was invented by Czech art historian Antonin Matejcek in 1910 as the opposite of impressionism: "An Expressionist wishes, above all, to express himself... (an Expressionist rejects) immediate perception and builds on more complex psychic structures... Impressions and mental images that pass through mental peoples soul as through a filter which rids them of all substantial accretions to produce their clear essence [...and] are assimilated and condense into more general forms, into types, which he transcribes through simple short-hand formulae and symbols." (Gordon, 1987)

Notes The term "Expressionism" is usually associated with paintings, graphic work, and other forms of artistic practice in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century that challenged academic traditions, particularly the Die Brucke and Der Blaue Reiter groups.

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Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had a role in originating modern Expressionism. In the publication The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche presented his theory of the ancient dualism between two types of aesthetic experience—the Apollonian and the Dionysian; a dualism between the plastic "art of sculpture", of lyrical dream-inspiration, identity (the principium individuationis), order, regularity, and calm repose; and, on the other hand, the non-plastic "art of music", of intoxication, forgetfulness, chaos, and the ecstatic dissolution of identity in the collective. Nietzsche argues that classical tragedy is formed generally by both principles (later, he argues, it degenerates as Socratic reason replaces the Apollonian principle). The basic characteristics of Expressionism are Dionysian: bold colours, distorted forms-in-dissolution, two-dimensional, without perspective.

More generally, the term refers to art that expresses intense emotion. It is arguable that all artists are expressive but there are many examples of art production in Europe from the 15th century onward which emphasize emotion. Such art often occurs during times of social upheaval, such as the Protestant Reformation, German Peasants' War, Eight Years' War, and Spanish Occupation of the Netherlands, when the rape, pillage and disaster associated with periods of chaos and oppression are presented in the documents of the printmaker. Often the work is unimpressive aesthetically, but almost without exception has the capacity to cause the viewer to experience strong emotions with the drama and often horror of the scenes depicted.

Expressionism has been likened to Baroque by critics such as art historian Michel Ragon and German philosopher Walter Benjamin. A difference between the two is that "Expressionism doesn't shun from the violently unpleasant effect, while baroque does. Expressionism throws some terrific "Fuck you"s, baroque doesn't. Baroque is well-mannered.

14.5 Summary

- Much of romantic poetry is marked by an egregious lack of realism amounting at times to sheer escapism.
- Symbolism was largely a reaction against naturalism and realism, anti-idealistic styles which were attempts to represent reality in its gritty particularity, and to elevate the humble and the ordinary over the ideal.
- Expressionism was a modernist movement, initially in poetry and painting, originating in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century.
- Expressionism was developed as an avant-garde style before the First World War. It remained popular during the Weimar Republic, particularly in Berlin.
- The basic characteristics of Expressionism are Dionysian: bold colours, distorted forms-in-dissolution, two-dimensional, without perspective.

14.6 Keywords

Symbolism : Symbolism was a late nineteenth-century art movement of French, Russian and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts.

Impressionism : Impressionism was a 19th-century art movement that originated with a group of Paris-based artists whose independent exhibitions brought them to prominence during the 1870s and 1880s.

14.7 Review Questions

1. What is Didactism?
2. What is symbolism? Explain.
3. What is difference between Impressionism and Expressionism? Explain.

Notes

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Augustan era
2. Charles Baudelaire
3. Paul verlaine
4. Symbolism
5. Symbolist poets

14.8 Further Readings

Books

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Unit 15: Absurd Drama

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define absurd theatre.
- Describe relationship with existentialism.
- Explain history of the Absurd.
- Define theatrical features.
- Describe characters of the absurd.
- Explain plot of the absurd.

Introduction

The notion of the Absurd contains the idea that there is no meaning to be found in the world beyond what meaning we give to it. This meaninglessness also encompasses the amorality or "unfairness" of the world. This contrasts with "karmic" ways of thinking in which "bad things don't happen to good people"; to the world, metaphorically speaking, there is no such thing as a good person or a bad thing; what happens, and it may just as well happen to a "good" person as to a "bad" person.

Because of the world's absurdity, at any point in time, anything can happen to anyone, and a tragic event could plummet someone into direct confrontation with the Absurd. The notion of the absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. Soren Kierkegaard, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and many of the literary works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus contain descriptions of people who encounter the absurdity of the world. Albert Camus studied the issue of "the absurd" in his essay The Myth of Sisyphus.

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15.1 Absurd Theatre

The Theatre of the Absurd (French: Théâtre de l'Absurde) is a theatrical style originating in France in the late 1940's. It relies heavily on existential philosophy, and is a category for plays of absurdist fiction, written by a number of playwrights from the late 1940s to the 1960s, as well as the theatre which has evolved from their work. It expresses the belief that, in a godless universe, human existence has no meaning or purpose and therefore all communication breaks down. Logical construction and argument give way to irrational and illogical speech and as its ultimate conclusion, silence.

Theatre of the Absurd follows the concepts of existential philosophy. The theatrical style aims to show a world where man is born with only himself and nothing else (no God), and must earn his place in the metaphysical world. Often Absurdist works utilise theatrical conventions such as - but not limited to - Mime, Gibberish, Heightened Language, Codified Language and Vignette. The pieces generally lack conflict, and involve high levels of contrast, alienation, and irony, for example, a funeral scene performed by actors happily, or a birthday scene performed somberly.

Critic Martin Esslin coined the term "Theatre of the Absurd" in his 1960 essay and, later, book of the same name. He related these plays based on a broad theme of the Absurd, similar to the way Albert Camus uses the term in his 1942 essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus". The Absurd in these plays takes the form of man's reaction to a world apparently without meaning, and/or man as a puppet controlled or menaced by invisible outside forces. Though the term is applied to a wide range of plays, some characteristics coincide in many of the plays: broad comedy, often similar to Vaudeville, mixed with horrific or tragic images; characters caught in hopeless situations forced to do repetitive or meaningless actions; dialogue full of clichés, wordplay, and nonsense; plots that are cyclical or absurdly expansive; either a parody or dismissal of realism and the concept of the "well-made play".

Did u know? Playwrights commonly associated with the Theatre of the Absurd include Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Fernando Arrabal, and Edward Albee.

15.2 Origin

The term was coined by the critic Martin Esslin, who made it the title of a book on the subject first published in 1961 and in two later revised editions; the third and final edition appeared in 2004. In the first edition of The Theatre of the Absurd, Esslin saw the work of these playwrights as giving artistic meaning to Albert Camus' philosophy that life is inherently without meaning, as illustrated in his work The Myth of Sisyphus. In the first (1961) edition, Esslin presented the four defining playwrights of the movement as Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, and Jean Genet, and in subsequent editions he added a fifth playwright, Harold Pinter–although each of these writers has unique preoccupations and characteristics that go beyond the term "absurd." Other writers associated with this group by Esslin and other critics include Tom Stoppard, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Fernando Arrabal, Edward Albee, Boris Vian, and Jean Tardieu.

15.3 Elizabethan — Tragicomedy

The mode of most "absurdist" plays is tragicomedy. As Nell says in Endgame, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness ... it's the most comical thing in the world". Esslin cites William Shakespeare as an influence on this aspect of the "Absurd drama." Shakespeare's influence is acknowledged directly in the titles of Ionesco's Macbeth and Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead. Friedrich Dürrenmatt says in his essay "Problems of the Theatre", "Comedy alone is suitable for us ... But the tragic is still possible even if pure tragedy is not. We can achieve the tragic out of comedy. We can bring it forth as a frightening moment, as an abyss

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that opens suddenly; indeed, many of Shakespeare's tragedies are already really comedies out of which the tragic arises."

Though layered with a significant amount of tragedy, the Theatre of the Absurd echoes other great forms of comedic performance, according to Esslin, from Commedia dell'arte to Vaudeville. Similarly,

Notes Esslin cites early film comedians and music hall artists such as Charlie Chaplin, The Keystone Cops and Buster Keaton as direct influences.

15.4 Formal Experimentation

As an experimental form of theatre, Theatre of the Absurd employs techniques borrowed from earlier innovators. Writers and techniques frequently mentioned in relation to the Theatre of the Absurd include the 19th-century nonsense poets, such as Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear; Polish playwright Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz; the Russians Daniil Kharms, Nikolai Erdman, Mikhail Volokhov and others; Bertolt Brecht's distancing techniques in his "Epic theatre"; and the "dream plays" of August Strindberg.

One commonly cited precursor is Luigi Pirandello, especially Six Characters in Search of an Author. Pirandello was a highly regarded theatrical experimentalist who wanted to bring down the fourth wall presupposed by the realism of playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen. According to W. B. Worthen, Six Characters and other Pirandello plays use "Metatheater - role-playing, plays-within-plays, and a flexible sense of the limits of stage and illusion—to examine a highly theatricalized vision of identity".

Another influential playwright was Guillaume Apollinaire whose The Breasts of Tiresias was the first work to be called "surreal".

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Theatre of the Absurd is a ..... originating in France in the late 1940s.
2. Critic Martin Esslin coined the term "....." in his 1960 essay and, later, book of the same name.
3. The mode of most "....." plays is tragicomedy.
4. Esslin cites William Shakespeare as an influence on this aspect of the ..... .
5. One commonly cited precursor is ....., especially six characters in search of an Author.

15.5 Relationship with Existentialism

The Theatre of the Absurd is commonly associated with Existentialism, and Existentialism was an influential philosophy in Paris during the rise of the Theatre of the Absurd; however, to call it Existentialist theatre is problematic for many reasons. It gained this association partly because it was named (by Esslin) after the concept of "absurdism" advocated by Albert Camus, a philosopher commonly called Existentialist though he frequently resisted that label. Absurdism is most accurately called Existentialist in the way Franz Kafka's work is labeled Existentialist: it embodies an aspect of the philosophy though the writer may not be a committed follower. As Tom Stoppard said in an interview, "I must say I didn't know what the word 'existential' meant until it was applied to Rosencrantz. And even now existentialism is not a philosophy I find either attractive or plausible. But it's certainly true that the play can be interpreted in existential terms, as well as in other terms."

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Many of the Absurdists were contemporaries with Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosophical spokesman for Existentialism in Paris, but few Absurdists actually committed to Sartre's own Existentialist philosophy, as expressed in being and Nothingness, and many of the Absurdists had a complicated relationship with him. Sartre praised Genet's plays, stating that for Genet "Good is only an illusion. Evil is a Nothingness which arises upon the ruins of Good".

Ionesco, however, hated Sartre bitterly. Ionesco accused Sartre of supporting Communism but ignoring the atrocities committed by Communists; he wrote Rhinoceros as a criticism of blind conformity, whether it be to Nazism or Communism; at the end of the play, one man remains on Earth resisting transformation into a rhinoceros Sartre criticized Rhinoceros by questioning: "Why is there one man who resists? At least we could learn why, but no, we learn not even that. He resists because he is there".[55][56] Sartre's criticism highlights a primary difference between the Theatre of the Absurd and Existentialism: The Theatre of the Absurd shows the failure of man without recommending a solution. In a 1966 interview, Claude Bonnefoy, comparing the Absurdists to Sartre and Camus, said to Ionesco, "It seems to me that Beckett, Adamov and yourself started out less from philosophical reflections or a return to classical sources, than from first-hand experience and a desire to find a new theatrical expression that would enable you to render this experience in all its acuteness and also its immediacy. If Sartre and Camus thought out these themes, you expressed them in a far more vital contemporary fashion". Ionesco replied, "I have the feeling that these writers – who are serious and important — were talking about absurdity and death, but that they never really lived these themes that they did not feel them within themselves in an almost irrational, visceral way that all this was not deeply inscribed in their language. With them it was still rhetoric, eloquence. With Adamov and Beckett it really is a very naked reality that is conveyed through the apparent dislocation of language".

In comparison to Sartre's concepts of the function of literature, Samuel Beckett's primary focus was on the failure of man to overcome "absurdity"; as James Knowlson says in Damned to Fame, Beckett's work focuses "on poverty, failure, exile and loss — as he put it, on man as a 'non-knower' and as a 'non-can-er' ." Beckett's own relationship with Sartre was complicated by a mistake made in the publication of one of his stories in Sartre's journal Les Temps Modernes. Beckett said, though he liked Nausea, he generally found the writing style of Sartre and Heidegger to be "too philosophical" and he considered himself "not a philosopher".

15.6 History

The "Absurd" or "New Theater" movement was originally a Paris-based (and a Rive Gauche) avant-garde phenomenon tied to extremely small theaters in the Quartier Latin. Some of the Absurdists were born in France such as Jean Genet, Jean Tardieu, and Boris Vian. Many other Absurdists were born elsewhere but lived in France, writing often in French: Samuel Beckett from Ireland; Eugene Ionesco from Romania; Arthur Adamov from Russia; and Fernando Arrabal from Spain. As the influence of the Absurdists grew, the style spread to other countries–with playwrights either directly influenced by Absurdists in Paris or playwrights labeled Absurdist by critics. In England some of whom Esslin considered practitioners of "the Theatre of the Absurd" include: Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, N. F. Simpson, James Saunders, and David Campton; in the United States, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, Jack Gelber, and John Guare; in Poland and Tadeusz Kantor; in Italy, Dino Buzzati; and in Germany, Peter Weiss, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, and Günter Grass. In India, both Mohit Chattopadhyay and Mahesh Elkunchwar have also been labeled Absurdists. Other international Absurdist playwrights include: Tawfiq el-Hakim from Egypt; Hanoch Levin from Israel; Miguel Mihura from Spain; José de Almada Negreiros from Portugal; Mikhail Volokhov from Russia; Yordan Radichkov from Bulgaria; and playwright and former Czech President Václav Havel, and others from the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

15.7 Theatrical Features

Plays within this group are absurd in that they focus not on logical acts, realistic occurrences, or traditional character development; they, instead, focus on human beings trapped in an incomprehensible world subject to any occurrence, no matter how illogical. The theme of

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incomprehensibility is coupled with the inadequacy of language to form meaningful human connections. According to Martin Esslin, Absurdism is "the inevitable devaluation of ideals, purity, and purpose" Absurdist drama asks its viewer to "draw his own conclusions, make his own errors". Though Theatre of the Absurd may be seen as nonsense, they have something to say and can be understood". Esslin makes a distinction between the dictionary definition of absurd ("out of harmony" in the musical sense) and drama's understanding of the Absurd: "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose.... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, and useless".

15.8 Characters

The characters in Absurdist drama are lost and floating in an incomprehensible universe and they abandon rational devices and discursive thought because these approaches are inadequate. Many characters appear as automatons stuck in routines speaking only in cliche.

Notes Characters are frequently stereotypical, archetypal, or flat character types as in Commedia dell'arte.

The more complex characters are in crisis because the world around them is incomprehensible. Many of Pinter's plays, for example, feature characters trapped in an enclosed space menaced by some force the character can't understand. Pinter's first play was The Room – in which the main character, Rose, is menaced by Riley who invades her safe space though the actual source of menace remains a mystery – and this theme of characters in a safe space menaced by an outside force is repeated in many of his later works. In Friedrich Dürrenmatt's The Visit the main character, Alfred, is menaced by Claire Zachanassian; Claire, richest woman in the world with a decaying body and multiple husbands throughout the play, has guaranteed a payout for anyone in the town willing to kill Alfred. Characters in Absurdist drama may also face the chaos of a world that science and logic have abandoned. Ionesco's recurring character Berenger, for example, faces a killer without motivation in The Killer, and Berenger's logical arguments fail to convince the killer that killing is wrong. In Rhinoceros, Berenger remains the only human on Earth who hasn't turned into a rhinoceros and must decide whether or not to conform. Characters may find themselves trapped in a routine or, in a metafictional conceit, trapped in a story; the titular characters in Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead, for example, find themselves in a story (Hamlet) in which the outcome has already been written.

The plots of many Absurdist plays feature characters in interdependent pairs, commonly either two males or a male and a female. Some Beckett scholars call this the "pseudocouple". The two characters may be roughly equal or have a begrudging interdependence; one character may be clearly dominant and may torture the passive character; the relationship of the characters may shift dramatically throughout the play.

15.9 Language

Despite its reputation for nonsense language, much of the dialogue in Absurdist plays is naturalistic. The moments when characters resort to nonsense language or clichés–when words appear to have lost their denotative function, thus creating misunderstanding among the characters, making the Theatre of the Absurd distinctive. Language frequently gains a certain phonetic, rhythmical, almost musical quality, opening up a widerange of often comedic playfulness. Jean Tardieu, for example, in the series of short pieces Theatre de Chambre arranged the language as one arranges music. Distinctively Absurdist language will range from meaningless clichés to Vaudeville-style word play to meaningless nonsense. The Bald Soprano, for example, was inspired by a language book in which characters would exchange empty clichés that never ultimately amounted to true communication or true connection. Likewise, the characters in The Bald Soprano–like many other Absurdist characters–go through routine dialogue full of clichés without actually communicating anything substantive or making a human connection. In

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other cases, the dialogue is purposefully elliptical; the language of Absurdist Theater becomes secondary to the poetry of the concrete and objectified images of the stage. Many of Beckett's plays devalue language for the sake of the striking tableau. Harold Pinter–famous for his "Pinter pause"–presents more subtly elliptical dialogue; often the primary things characters should address is replaced by ellipsis or dashes. Much of the dialogue in Absurdist drama reflects this kind of evasiveness and inability to make a connection. When language that is apparently nonsensical appears, it also demonstrates this disconnection.

15.10 Plot

Traditional plot structures are rarely a consideration in The Theatre of the Absurd. Plots can consist of the absurd repetition of cliché and routine, as in Godot or The Bald Soprano. Often there is a menacing outside force that remains a mystery; in The Birthday Party, for example, Goldberg and McCann confront Stanley, torture him with absurd questions, and drag him off at the end, but it is never revealed why.

Did u know? Pinter plays, such as The Caretaker and The Homecoming, the menace is no longer entering from the outside but exists within the confined space.

Absence, emptiness, nothingness, and unresolved mysteries are central features in many Absurdist plots: for example, in The Chairs an old couple welcomes a large number of guests to their home, but these guests are invisible so all we see is empty chairs, a representation of their absence. Likewise, the action of Godot is centered around the absence of a man named Godot, for whom the characters perpetually wait. In many of Beckett's later plays, most features are stripped away and what's left is a minimalistic tableau: a woman walking slowly back and forth in Footfalls, for example, or in Breath only a junk heap on stage and the sounds of breathing.

The plot may also revolve around an unexplained metamorphosis, a supernatural change, or a shift in the laws of physics. For example, in Ionesco's Amedee, or How to Get Rid of It, a couple must deal with a corpse that is steadily growing larger and larger; Ionesco never fully reveals the identity of the corpse, how this person died, or why it's continually growing, but the corpse ultimately – and, again, without explanation – floats away.

Notes In Jean Tardieu's "The Keyhole" a lover watches a woman through a keyhole as she removes her clothes and then her flesh.

Like Pirandello, many Absurdists use meta-theatrical techniques to explore role fulfillment, fate, and the theatricality of theatre. This is true for many of Genet's plays: for example, in The Maids, two maids pretend to be their masters; in The Balcony brothel patrons take on elevated positions in role-playing games, but the line between theatre and reality starts to blur. Another complex example of this is Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead: it's a play about two minor characters in Hamlet; these characters, in turn, have various encounters with the players who perform The Mousetrap, the play-with-in-the-play in Hamlet. In Stoppard's Travesties, James Joyce and Tristin Tzara slip in and out of the plot of The Importance of Being Earnest.

Plots are frequently cyclical: for example, Endgame begins where the play ended – at the beginning of the play, Clov says, "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" – and themes of cycle, routine, and repetition are explored throughout.

Task Write a short note on the Absurd Drama.

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15.11 Summary

- The notion of the Absurd contains the idea that there is no meaning to be found in the world beyond what meaning we give to it.
- The term was coined by the critic Martin Esslin, who made it the title of a book on the subject first published in 1961 and in two later revised editions; the third and final edition appeared in 2004.
- As an experimental form of theatre, Theatre of the Absurd employs techniques borrowed from earlier innovators.
- The Theatre of the Absurd is commonly associated with Existentialism, and Existentialism was an influential philosophy in Paris during the rise of the Theatre of the Absurd; however, to call it Existentialist theatre is problematic for many reasons.
- The "Absurd" or "New Theater" movement was originally a Paris-based (and a Rive Gauche) avant-garde phenomenon tied to extremely small theaters in the Quartier Latin.
- The plots of many Absurdist plays feature characters in interdependent pairs, commonly either two males or a male and a female. Some Beckett scholars call this the "pseudocouple".

15.12 Keywords

Surreal : Another influential playwright was Guillaume Apollinaire whose The Breasts of Tiresias was the first work to be called "surreal".

Theatre of Absurd : It is a theatrical style originating in France in the late 1940s.

15.13 Review Questions

1. What is Absurd Theatre?
2. What is origin of the absurd?
3. What is Relationship with Existentialism?
4. What is character of the Absurd?
5. What is the plot of the Absurd? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Theatrical style
2. Theatre of the Absurd
3. Absurdist
4. Absurd drama
5. Luigi Pirandello

15.14 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 16: Existentialism

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Define existential themes.
- Describe history and origin of existentialism.
- Explain concepts of existentialism.

Introduction

Existentialism is the philosophy that places emphasis on individual existence, freedom, and choice. Existentialism stresses the individuality of existence, and the problems that arise with said existence. Because there is so much diversity in the philosophy of existentialism, a concrete definition is hard to put down. Certain themes are common to almost all existential writing, which helps mark the writing as such. The term itself suggests one major theme, the stress on concrete, individual existence, and on subjectivity, individual freedom and choice.

The idea of the highest ethical good can be found in philosophy since the days of Socrates and Plato. It was generally held that this good was the same for everybody; as a person approached this moral perfection, she/he became morally like the next person approaching this moral perfection. Kierkegaard reacted to this way of thinking by saying that it was up to the individual to find his or her own moral perfection and his or her own way there. "I must find the truth that is the truth for me. . .the idea for which I can live or die" he wrote. Other Existentialists have followed along this way of thinking, one must choose one's own way, make their own individual paths without the aid of universal ideas or guidance.

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Subjectivity is also important to Existentialism. Passionate choices and actions are important. Personal experience and acting on one's own convictions are essential to arriving at personal truths. A better understanding of a situation is gained when one is in the middle then watching from the sidelines with a detached view. Systematic reasoning and acting is avoided at all costs in Existential thought. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are noted for their random, unsystematic way of exploring their ideas, using many different literary styles to express themselves.

Choice is also very important. One learns from making choices and committing to those choices. According to Existentialists, humanity's primary distinction is its freedom to choose. There is no fixed instinct that drives humanity to do what it does. Choice is inescapable; not making choices is choosing to not choose.

16.1 Existential Themes

Existentialism is an extremely diverse and varied philosophy. Even though it is so varied, there are some themes that can be found throughout it. (1) Existence precedes essence, in other words, you need existence to have essence. There is no predetermined "true" thing; it has to already exist in order to become what it is. (2) Anxiety and anguish. The fear or dread which is not directed at any specific object, it's just there. Anguish is the dread of the nothingness of human existence, the meaningless of it. According to Kierkegaard, anguish is the underlying, all-pervasive, universal condition of man's existence. (3) Absurdity. "Granted I am my own existence, but this existence is absurd." Everybody is here, everybody exists, but there is no reason as to why. We're just here, that's it, no excuses. (4) Nothingness. There is nothing that structures this world's existence, man's existence, or the existence of my computer. There is no essence that these things are drawn from, since existence precedes essence, then that means there is nothing. (5) Death. The theme of death follows along with the theme of nothingness. Death is always there, there is no escaping from it. To think of death, as everybody does sooner or later, causes anxiety. The only sure way to end anxiety once and for all is death.

Existentialism is the term applied to the work of a number of philosophers since the 19th century who, despite large differences in their positions, generally focused on the condition of human existence, and an individual's emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts, or the meaning or purpose of life. Existential philosophers often focused more on what they believed was subjective, such as beliefs and religion, or human states, feelings, and emotions, such as freedom, pain, guilt, and regret, as opposed to analyzing objective knowledge, language, or science.

The early 19th century philosopher Soren Kierkegaard is regarded as the father of existentialism. He maintained that the individual is solely responsible for giving his or her own life meaning and for living that life passionately and sincerely, in spite of many existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation, and boredom.

Subsequent existentialist philosophers retain the emphasis on the individual, but differ, in varying degrees, on how one achieves and what constitutes a fulfilling life, what obstacles must be overcome, and what external and internal factors are involved, including the potential consequences of the existence or non-existence of God. Many existentialists have also regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophy, in both style and content, as too abstract and remote from concrete human experience.

Did u know? Existentialism became fashionable in the post-World War years as a way to reassert the importance of human individuality and freedom.

Existentialism is sometimes referred to as a continental philosophy, referring to the continental part of Europe, as opposed to that practiced in Britain at that time, which was called analytic philosophy, and mostly dealt with analyzing language.

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Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. ..... is the philosophy that places emphasis on individual existence, Freedom and Choice.
2. The idea of the highest ethical good can be found in philosophy since the days of Socrates and ..... .
3. ..... is also important to Existentialism.
4. The early 19th century philosopher ..... is regarded as the Father of existentialism.
5. Existentialism is an extremely diverse and ..... .

16.2 History

Existentialism is foreshadowed most notably by 19th century philosophers Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, though it had forerunners in earlier centuries. In the 20th century, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger influenced other existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and (absurdist) Albert Camus. Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Franz Kafka also described existentialist themes in their literary works. Although there are some common tendencies amongst "existentialist" thinkers, there are major differences and disagreements among them (for example, the divide between atheist existentialists like Sartre and theistic existentialists like Martin Buber and Paul Tillich); not all of them accept the validity of the term as applied to their own work.

16.3 Origins

The term "existentialism" seems to have been coined by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the mid-1940s and adopted by Jean-Paul Sartre who, on October 29, 1945, discussed his own existentialist position in a lecture to the Club Maintenant in Paris. The lecture was published as L'existentialisme est un humanisme, a short book which did much to popularize existentialist thought.

The label has been applied retrospectively to other philosophers for whom existence and, in particular, human existence were key philosophical topics. Martin Heidegger had made human existence (Dasein) the focus of his work since the 1920s, and Karl Jaspers had called his philosophy "Existenzphilosophie" in the 1930s. Both Heidegger and Jaspers had been influenced by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. For Kierkegaard, the crisis of human existence had been a major theme. He came to be regarded as the first existentialist, and has been called the "father of existentialism". In fact he was the first to explicitly make existential questions a primary focus in his philosophy. In retrospect, other writers have also implicitly discussed existentialist themes throughout the history of philosophy and literature. Due to the exposure of existentialist themes over the decades, when society was officially introduced to existentialism, the term became quite popular almost immediately.

16.4 Concepts

16.4.1 Focus on Concrete Existence

Existentialist thinkers focus on the question of concrete human existence and the conditions of this existence rather than hypothesizing a human essence, stressing that the human essence is determined through life choices. However, even though the concrete individual existence must have priority in existentialism, certain conditions are commonly held to be "endemic" to human existence.

What these conditions are is better understood in light of the meaning of the word "existence," which comes from the Latin "existere," meaning "to stand out" (according to the OED, "existere"

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translates as "come into being"; the other definition presented here allows for a slanted view and false implications as seen in the following passage.) Humans exist in a state of distance from the world that they nonetheless remain in the midst of. This distance is what enables humans to project meaning into the disinterested world of in-itselfs. This projected meaning remains fragile, constantly facing breakdown for any reason — from a tragedy to a particularly insightful moment. In such a breakdown, humans are put face to face with the naked meaninglessness of the world, and the results can be devastating.

It is in relation to the concept of the devastating awareness of meaninglessness that Albert Camus claimed that "there is only one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" in his The Myth of Sisyphus. Although "prescriptions" against the possibly deleterious consequences of these kinds of encounters vary, from Kierkegaard's religious "stage" to Camus' insistence on persevering in spite of absurdity, the concern with helping people avoid living their lives in ways that put them in the perpetual danger of having everything meaningful break down is common to most existentialist philosophers. The possibility of having everything meaningful breaks down poses a threat of quietism, which is inherently against the existentialist philosophy. It has been said that the possibility of suicide makes all humans existentialists.

16.4.2 Existence Precedes Essence

A central proposition of existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the actual life of the individual is what constitutes what could be called his or her "essence" instead of there being a predetermined essence that defines what it is to be a human. Thus, the human being – through their own consciousness – creates their own values and determines a meaning to their life.

Notes Existentialism was Sartre who explicitly coined the phrase, similar notions can be found in the thought of many existentialist philosophers, from Mulla Sadra, to Kierkegaard, to Heidegger.

Existentialism is often claimed in this context that a person defines him or herself, which is often perceived as stating that they can "wish" to be something — anything, a bird, for instance — and then be it. According to most existentialist philosophers, however, this would constitute an inauthentic existence. Instead, the phrase should be taken to say that the person is (1) defined only insofar as he or she acts and (2) that he or she is responsible for his or her actions. For example, someone who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel person. Furthermore, by this action of cruelty such persons are themselves responsible for their new identity (a cruel person). This is as opposed to their genes, or 'human nature', bearing the blame.

As Sartre puts it in his Existentialism is Humanism: "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards." Of course, the more positive, therapeutic aspect of this is also implied: A person can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person. Here it is also clear that since humans can choose to be either cruel or good, they are, in fact, neither of these things essentially.

16.4.3 Angst

"Existential" Angst, sometimes called dread, anxiety or even anguish is a term that is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be a negative feeling arising from the experience of human freedom and responsibility. The archetypal example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. In this experience that "nothing is holding me back", one senses the lack

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of anything that predetermines one to either throw oneself off or to stand still, and one experiences one's own freedom.

It can also be seen in relation to the previous point how angst is before nothing, and this is what sets it apart from fear which has an object. While in the case of fear, one can take definitive measures to remove the object of fear, in the case of angst, no such "constructive" measures are possible. The use of the word "nothing" in this context relates both to the inherent insecurity about the consequences of one's actions, and to the fact that, in experiencing one's freedom as angst, one also realizes that one will be fully responsible for these consequences; there is no thing in a person (their genes, for instance) that acts in their stead, and that they can "blame" if something goes wrong.

Not every choice is perceived as having dreadful possible consequences (and, it can be claimed, human lives would be unbearable if every choice facilitated dread), but that doesn't change the fact that freedom remains a condition of every action.

Did u know? One of the most extensive treatments of the existentialist notion of Angst is found in Soren Kierkegaard's monumental work Begrebet Angest.

16.4.4 Freedom

The existentialist concept of freedom is often misunderstood as a sort of liberum arbitrium where almost anything is possible and where values are inconsequential to choice and action. This interpretation of the concept is often related to the insistence on the absurdity of the world and the assumption that there exist no relevant or absolutely good or bad values. However, that there are no values to be found in the world in-itself does not mean that there are no values: We are usually brought up with certain values, and even though we cannot justify them ultimately, they will be "our" values.

In Kierkegaard's Judge Vilhelm's account in Either/Or, making choices without allowing one's values to confer differing values to the alternatives, is, in fact, choosing not to make a choice — to flip a coin, as it were, and to leave everything to chance. This is considered to be a refusal to live in the consequence of one's freedom; an inauthentic existence. As such, existentialist freedom isn't situated in some kind of abstract space where everything is possible: since people are free, and since they already exist in the world, it is implied that their freedom is only in this world, and that it, too, is restricted by it.

What is not implied in this account of existential freedom, however, is that one's values are immutable; a consideration of one's values may cause one to reconsider and change them. A consequence of this fact is that one is not only responsible for one's actions, but also for the values one holds. This entails that a reference to common values doesn't excuse the individual's actions: Even though these are the values of the society the individual is part of, they are also her/his own in the sense that she/he could choose them to be different at any time. Thus, the focus on freedom in existentialism is related to the limits of the responsibility one bears as a result of one's freedom: the relationship between freedom and responsibility is one of interdependency, and a clarification of freedom also clarifies that for which one is responsible.

16.4.5 Facticity

A concept closely related to freedom is that of facticity, a concept defined by Sartre in Being and Nothingness as that "in-itself" of which humans are in the mode of not being. This can be more easily understood when considering it in relation to the temporal dimension of past: One's past is what one is in the sense that it co-constitutes oneself. However, to say that one is only one's past would be to ignore a large part of reality (the present and the future), while saying that one's past is only what one was would entirely detach it from them now. A denial of one's own

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concrete past constitutes an inauthentic lifestyle, and the same goes for all other kinds of facticity (having a body (e.g. one that doesn't allow a person to run faster than the speed of sound), identity, values, etc.).

Facticity is both a limitation and a condition of freedom. It is a limitation in that a large part of one's facticity consists of things one couldn't have chosen (birthplace, etc.), but a condition in the sense that one's values most likely will depend on it. However, even though one's facticity is "set in stone" (as being past, for instance), it cannot determine a person: The value ascribed to one's facticity is still ascribed to it freely by that person. As an example, consider two men, one of whom has no memory of his past and the other remembers everything. They have both committed many crimes, but the first man, knowing nothing about this, leads a rather normal life while the second man, feeling trapped by his own past, continues a life of crime, blaming his own past for "trapping" him in this life. There is nothing essential about his committing crimes, but he ascribes this meaning to his past.

However, to disregard one's facticity when one, in the continual process of self-making, projects oneself into the future, would be to put oneself in denial of oneself, and would thus be inauthentic. In other words, the origin of one's projection will still have to be one's facticity, although in the mode of not being it (essentially).

Notes Aspect of facticity is that it entails angst, both in the sense that freedom "produces" angst when limited by facticity, and in the sense that the lack of the possibility of having facticity to "step in" for one to take responsibility for something one has done also produces angst.

16.4.6 Authenticity and Inauthenticity

The theme of authentic existence is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is often taken to mean that one has to "find oneself" and then live in accordance with this self. A common misunderstanding is that the self is something one can find if one looks hard enough, that one's true self is substantial.

What is meant by authenticity is that in acting, one should act as oneself, not as one acts or as one's genes or any other essence require. The authentic act is one that is in accordance with one's freedom. Of course, as a condition of freedom is facticity, this includes one's facticity, but not to the degree that this facticity can in any way determine one's choices (in the sense that one could then blame one's background for making the choice one made). The role of facticity in relation to authenticity involves letting one's actual values come into play when one makes a choice (instead of, like Kierkegaard's Aesthete, "choosing" randomly), so that one also takes responsibility for the act instead of choosing either-or without allowing the options to have different values.

In contrast to this, the inauthentic is the denial to live in accordance with one's freedom. This can take many forms, from pretending choices are meaningless or random, through convincing oneself that some form of determinism is true, to a sort of "mimicry" where one acts as "One should." How "One" should act is often determined by an image one has of how one such as oneself acts. This image usually corresponds to some sort of social norm, but this does not mean that all acting in accordance with social norms is inauthentic: The main point is the attitude one takes to one's own freedom and responsibility, and the extent to which one acts in accordance with this freedom.

16.4.7 Despair

Commonly defined as a loss of hope, Despair in existentialism is more specifically related to the reaction to a breakdown in one or more of the defining qualities of one's self or identity. If a person is invested in being a particular thing, such as a bus driver or an upstanding citizen, and then finds their being-thing compromised, they would normally be found in state of despair—

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a hopeless state. For example, an athlete who loses his legs in an accident may despair if he has nothing else to fall back on, nothing on which to rely for his identity. He finds himself unable to be that which defined his being.

What sets the existentialist notion of despair apart from the dictionary definition is that existentialist despair is a state one is in even when they aren't overtly in despair. So long as a person's identity depends on qualities that can crumble, they are considered to be in perpetual despair. And as there is, in Sartrean terms, no human essence found in conventional reality on which to constitute the individual's sense of identity, despair is a universal human condition. As Kierkegaard defines it in his either/or: "Any life-view with a condition outside it is despair." In other words, it is possible to be in despair without despairing.

16.4.8 Reason

Emphasizing action, freedom, and decision as fundamental, existentialists oppose themselves to rationalism and positivism. That is, they argue against definitions of human beings as primarily rational. Rather, existentialists look at where people find meaning. Existentialism asserts that people actually make decisions based on the meaning to them rather than rationally. The rejection of reason as the source of meaning is a common theme of existentialist thought, as is the focus on the feelings of anxiety and dread that we feel in the face of our own radical freedom and our awareness of death. Kierkegaard saw strong rationality as a mechanism humans use to counter their existential anxiety, their fear of being in the world: "If I can believe that I am rational and everyone else is rational then I have nothing to fear and no reason to feel anxious about being free." However, Kierkegaard advocated rationality as means to interact with the objective world (e.g. in the natural sciences), but when it comes to existential problems, reason is insufficient: "Human reason has boundaries".

Like Kierkegaard, Sartre saw problems with rationality, calling it a form of "bad faith", an attempt by the self to impose structure on a world of phenomena — "the Other" — that is fundamentally irrational and random. According to Sartre, rationality and other forms of bad faith hinder people from finding meaning in freedom. To try to suppress their feelings of anxiety and dread, people confine themselves within everyday experience, Sartre asserts, thereby relinquishing their freedom and acquiescing to being possessed in one form or another by "the Look" of "the Other" (i.e. possessed by another person — or at least one's idea of that other person). In a similar vein, Camus believed that society and religion falsely teach humans that "the other" has order and structure. For camus, when an individual's consciousness, longing for order, collides with the Other's lack of order, a third element is born: absurdity.

Task Write a short note on Existentialism.

16.5 Summary

- Existentialism is foreshadowed most notably by 19th century philosophers Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, though it had forerunners in earlier centuries.
- Existentialist thinkers focus on the question of concrete human existence and the conditions of this existence rather than hypothesizing a human essence, stressing that the human essence is determined through life choices.
- A central proposition of existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the actual life of the individual is what constitutes what could be called his or her "essence" instead of there being a predetermined essence that defines what it is to be a human.
- "Existential" Angst, sometimes called dread, anxiety or even anguish is a term that is common to many existentialist thinkers.

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- A concept closely related to freedom is that of facticity, a concept defined by Sartre in Being and Nothingness as that "in-itself" of which humans are in the mode of not being.
- Commonly defined as a loss of hope, Despair in existentialism is more specifically related to the reaction to a breakdown in one or more of the defining qualities of one's self or identity.

16.6 Keywords

Nothingness : There is nothing that structures this world's existence, man's existence, or the existence of my computer. There is no essence that these things are drawn from, since existence precedes essence, then that means there is nothing.

Death : The theme of death follows along with the theme of nothingness. Death is always there, there is no escaping from it. To think of death, as everybody does sooner or later, causes anxiety. The only sure way to end anxiety once and for all is death.

16.7 Review Questions

1. What is existential themes?
2. What is history and origins of existentialism?
3. What is focus on concrete existence and existence precedes essence?
4. What is Angst, Freedom and Facticity?
5. What is difference between Authenticity and Inauthenticity?
6. What is Despair and Reason? Explain.

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Existentialism
2. Plato
3. Subjectivity
4. Soren Kierkegaard
5. Varied philosophy

16.8 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

literarism.blogspot.com/2011/10/sartre-existentialism.htm

www.online-literature.com/periods/existentialism.php

www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definitions/EXISTENTIALISM?

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Unit 17: Black Comedy, Angry Young Men and Kitchen Sink Drama

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe history and etymology of black comedy.
- Define angry young men.
- Explain kitchen sink drama.

Introduction

A form of comedy in which serious issues such as cannibalism, rape, genocide, terminal illnesses, etc., are treated humorously. Often more disturbing than funny. Black Comedy is not a racial or urban issue. It is a genre of comedy. A type of comedy that makes things that you wouldn't usually laugh at funny. "Man, I watched American Beauty last night and realised 'This is a great black comedy.'"

The "angry young men" were a group of mostly working and middle class British playwrights and novelists who became prominent in the 1950s. The group's leading members included John Osborne and Kingsley Amis.The phrase was originally coined by the Royal Court Theatre's press officer to promote John Osborne's Look Back in Anger. It is thought to be derived from the autobiography of Leslie Paul, founder of the Woodcraft Folk, whose Angry Young Man was published in 1951.

Kitchen sink realism (or kitchen sink drama) is a term coined to describe a British cultural movement which developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s in theatre, art, novels, film and television plays, whose 'heroes' usually could be described as angry young men. It used a style of social realism, which often depicted the domestic situations of working-class Britons living in rented accommodation and spending their off-hours drinking in grimy pubs, to explore social issues and political controversies.

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17.1 Black Comedy

A black comedy, or dark comedy, is a comic work that employs black humor or gallows humor. The definition of black humor is problematic; it has been argued that it corresponds to the earlier concept of gallows humor; and that, as humor has been defined since Freud as a comedic act that anesthetizes an emotion, all humor is "black humor," and that there is no such thing as "non-black humor".

17.1.1 History and Etymology

Coinage in France by André Breton

Black humor (from the French humour noir) is a term coined by Surrealist theoretician André Breton in 1935, to designate a sub-genre of comedy and satire in which laughter arises from cynicism and skepticism, often about the topic of death.

Breton coined the term for his book Anthology of Black Humor (Anthologie de l'humour noir), in which he credited Jonathan Swift as the originator of black humor and gallows humor, and included excerpts from 45 other writers. Breton included both examples in which the wit arises from a victim, with which empathizes, as it's more typical in the tradition of gallows humor, and examples in which the comic is used to mock the victim, whose suffering is trivialized, and leads to sympathizing with the victimizer, as is the case with Sade. Black humor is related to that of the grotesque genre.

Did u know? Breton identified Swift as the originator of black humor and gallows humor, particularly in his pieces Directions to Servants (1731), A Modest Proposal (1729), A Meditation Upon a Broom-Stick (1710), and a few aphorisms.

The terms black comedy or dark comedy have been later derived as alternatives to Breton's term. In black humor, topics and events that are usually regarded as taboo, specifically those related to death, are treated in an unusually humorous or satirical manner while retaining their seriousness; the intent of black comedy, therefore, is often for the audience to experience both laughter and discomfort, sometimes simultaneously

Adoption in Literary Criticism

An English-language anthology edited by Bruce Jay Friedman, titled Black Humor, imported the concept to the United States, labeling with it very different authors and works, arguing that they shared the same literary genre. The Friedman label came to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s. Early American writers who employed black humor were Nathanael West and Vladimir Nabokov. In 1965 a mass-market paperback, titled Black Humor, was released. Containing work by a myriad of authors, which included J.P. Donleavy, Edward Albee, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Vladimir Nabokov, Bruce Jay Friedman, who also edited the book, and Louis-Ferdinand Celine, this was one of the first American anthologies devoted to the conception of black humor as a literary genre; the publication also sparked nationwide interest in black humor. Among the writers labeled as black humorists by journalists and literary critics are Roald Dahl, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Warren Zevon, John Barth, Joseph Heller, and Philip Roth. The rationale for applying the label black humorist to all the writers cited above is that they have written novels, poems, stories, plays and songs in which profound or horrific events were portrayed in a comic manner.

Black comedy employs a form of humor that may be known as 'black humor', 'dark humor', or, if specifically relating to death, 'morbid humor.' The purpose of black humor is to make light of serious and often taboo subject matter, and some comedians use it as a tool for exploring vulgar

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issues, thus provoking discomfort and serious thought as well as amusement in their audience. Popular themes of the genre include murder, suicide, depression, abuse, mutilation, war, barbarism, drug abuse, terminal illness, domestic violence, sexual violence, paedophilia, insanity, nightmare, disease, racism, disability (both physical and mental), chauvinism, corruption, and crime. A related theme is frustrated suicide.

By contrast, blue comedy focuses more on crude topics, such as nudity, sex and bodily fluids. Although the two are interrelated, black comedy is different from straightforward obscenity in that it is more subtle and does not necessarily have the explicit intention of offending people. In obscene humor, much of the humorous element comes from shock and revulsion, while black comedy might include an element of irony, or even fatalism. For example, the archetypal black-comedy self-mutilation in English appears in the novel Tristram Shandy. Tristram, five years old at the time, starts to urinate out of an open window for lack of a chamber pot. The sash falls and circumcises him; his family reacts with both chaotic action and philosophic digression.

Comedians, like Lenny Bruce, that since the late 1950s have been labeled "sick comedy" by mainstream journalists, have also been labeled with "black comedy." After Lenny Bruce, others have been Sam Kinison, Richard Pryor, George Carlin, Bill Hicks, Jimmy Carr, Chris Morris and the Monty Python team, and more recently Bo Burnham, Tim Minchin, Louis C.K., and The Whitest Kids U' Know. Popular cartoon shows such as South Park, The Simpsons, The Boondocks, Family Guy, Futurama, Robot Chicken, and Aqua Teen Hunger Force are known for their black humor, and have sparked numerous controversies as a result.

17.2 Angry Young Men

The term Angry Young Men often applied to the British 'kitchen sink' playwrights of the 1950s and also anyone, particularly young men obviously, who rails against the establishment.

17.2.1 Origin

The term was applied most notably to John Osbourne and it was from comments about his *Look Back in Anger*, first performed in 1956, that the phrase became known. That wasn't its first use though. In 1941, the writer Rebecca West used it in her *Black lamb and grey falcon: the record of a journey through Yugoslavia in 1937*:

"Their [the Dalmatians] instinct is to brace themselves against any central authority as if it were their enemy. The angry young men run about shouting."

Notes West wasn't using the phrase in the quite specific way it became used in the 1950s. She was just referring to young men who were angry.

John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* was first performed in 1956. The term doesn't appear in the play but it was in the reporting of it later that it became known. In October 1957 George Fearon, Press Officer for the Royal Court Theatre, wrote this piece for the *Daily Telegraph*:

"I had read John Osborne's play. When I met the author I ventured to prophesy that his generation would praise his play while mine would, in general, dislike it... 'If this happens,' I told him, 'you would become known as the Angry Young Man.' In fact, we decided then and there that henceforth he was to be known as that."

The "angry young men" were a group of mostly working and middle class British playwrights and novelists who became prominent in the 1950s. The group's leading members included John Osborne and Kingsley Amis. The phrase was originally coined by the Royal Court Theatre's press officer to promote John Osborne's Look Back in Anger. It is thought to be derived from the autobiography of Leslie Paul, founder of the Woodcraft Folk, whose Angry Young Man was published in 1951. Following the success of the Osborne play, the label was later applied by British

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newspapers to describe young British writers who were characterised by disillusionment with traditional English society. The term, always imprecise, began to have less meaning over the years as the writers to whom it was originally applied became more divergent, and many of them dismissed the label as useless.

Angry Young Men were various British novelists and playwrights who emerged in the 1950s and expressed scorn and disaffection with the established sociopolitical order of their country. Their impatience and resentment were especially aroused by what they perceived as the hypocrisy and mediocrity of the upper and middle classes.

The Angry Young Men were a new breed of intellectuals who were mostly of working class or of lower middle-class origin. Some had been educated at the postwar red-brick universities at the state's expense, though a few were from Oxford. They shared an outspoken irreverence for the British class system, its traditional network of pedigreed families, and the elitist Oxford and Cambridge universities. They showed an equally uninhibited disdain for the drabness of the postwar welfare state, and their writings frequently expressed raw anger and frustration as the postwar reforms failed to meet exalted aspirations for genuine change.

The trend that was evident in John Wain's novel *Hurry on Down* (1953) and in *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis was crystallized in 1956 in the play Look Back in Anger, which became the representative work of the movement. When the Royal Court Theatre's press agent described the play's 26-year-old author John Osborne as an "angry young man," the name was extended to all his contemporaries who expressed rage at the persistence of class distinctions, pride in their lower-class mannerisms, and dislike for anything highbrow or "phoney."

Did u know? Sir Laurence Olivier played the leading role in Osborne's second play, *The Entertainer* (1957), the Angry Young Men were acknowledged as the dominant literary force of the decade.

Their novels and plays typically feature a rootless, lower-middle or working-class male protagonist who views society with scorn and sardonic humour and may have conflicts with authority but who is nevertheless preoccupied with the quest for upward mobility.

Among the other writers embraced in the term are the novelists John Braine (*Room at the Top*, 1957) and Alan Sillitoe (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1958) and the playwrights Bernard Kops (*The Hamlet of Stepney Green*, 1956) and Arnold Wesker (*Chicken Soup with Barley*, 1958). Like that of the Beat movement in the United States, the impetus of the movement was exhausted in the early 1960s.

Task Write a short note on Angry Young Men.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. A ..... is a comic work that employs black humor or gallows humor.
2. The terms black comedy or dark comedy have been later derived as alternatives to ..... .
3. Black comedy employs a form of humor that may be known as ..... .
4. The ..... were a group of mostly working and middle class British playwrights and novelists who became prominent in the 1950s.
5. The Angry young men were a new breed of intellectuals who were mostly of ..... .

17.3 Kitchen Sink Drama

The kitchen-sink drama is placed in an ordinary domestic setting and typically tells a relatively mundane family story. Family tensions often come to the fore with realistic conflict between

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husband and wife, parent and child, between siblings and with the wider community. The family may also pull together in unity against outer forces that range from the rent-collector to rival families.

Example

- Look Back in Anger
- A Taste of Honey
- The Glass Menagerie

17.3.1 Discussion

Kitchen sink dramas can be rather dismal and unrelentingly negative, so what is their value? Perhaps they may resonate with us as they remind us of our own humdrum lives. Perhaps they will wake us up and prod us to get out of the rut and see a wider world. Maybe they will make us grateful that we do not have to live in such social squalor.

Kitchen sink dramas may also framed as 'serious art', intending to impress rather than entertain. They may capture social setting for posterity and gain admiration in later days by students of history. They may even be a cathartic act by their authors, expunging the traumas of a deprived childhood.

This is a genre in which the British seem to specialize. Americans prefer their soaps and dramas to be a bit less dismal. There was in particularly a group of 'angry young men' in the 1960s UK playwright scene that specialised in such plays.

17.3.2 Perspectives and Criticism

The 1950's through the 1970's saw the rise of one of the most important movements in modern British theater: the Kitchen Sink drama. These types of plays had several characteristics that distinguished them as a break from the forms of theater before them. They can be compared against theatrical movements such as Avant Garde Theater, or the theater of the absurd, characterized by the plays of authors such as Samuel Beckett.

Perhaps the first, and most notable, characteristic of these Kitchen Sink dramas was the way in which they advanced a particular social message or ideology. This ideology was most often leftist. The settings were almost always working class. The previous trend in Victorian theater had been to depict the lives of the wealthy members of the ruling classes. These classes of people were often conservative in their politics and their ideologies. This was not the case for Kitchen Sink Theater. The Kitchen Sink drama sought, instead, to bring the real lives and social inequality of ordinary working class people to the stage. The lives of these people were caught between struggles of power, industry, politics, and social homogenization.

Another chief characteristic of the Kitchen Sink drama was the way in which its characters expressed their unvarnished emotion and dissatisfaction with the ruling class status quo. This can be seen clearly in the play considered to be the standard bearer of this Kitchen Sink genre: John Osborne's Look Back in Anger. In Osborne's play, Jimmy Porter plays the role of the Angry Young Man. He is angry and dissatisfied at a world that offers him no social opportunities and a dearth of emotion. He longs to live a "real life." He feels, however, that the trappings of working class domesticity keep him from reaching this better existence. His anger and rage are thus channeled towards those around him. Osborne's play is a study in how this pent up frustration and social anger can wreak havoc on the ordinary lives of the British people.

Some critics have noted the irony in the term "Kitchen Sink drama." The domestic world during this time was believed to be the domain of the feminine. Almost all of the major Kitchen Sink works which take place in the mid-twentieth century, however, are centered around a masculine point of view. These plays rarely centered around the emotions and tribulations of its women characters. The power dynamic between male and female often assumed to be masculine and is an unexamined critical component in many of these plays. Women are often assumed to serve the

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men of their household and, when conflicts do arise, it is often the man who is portrayed as the suffering protagonist.

Did u know? Women's suffering is always a result of the suffering of the male.

Though Kitchen Sink dramas gained notoriety in twentieth century British culture for their unflinching anger and criticism directed towards the social, political, and economic establishment, the plays were also significant for the way they depicted the most intimate aspects of domestic life. This was in stark contrast to popular classical or Victorian dramas and comedies which largely centered around the public lives of socially established characters. Before the Kitchen Sink dramas, commentators have noted that in the mid-twentieth century, British theater still produced plays as if it were the nineteenth century. The Kitchen Sink drama, in contrast, moved the action and emotion of the theater from depictions of the public space of people's lives into the most intimate of settings. The kitchen was considered to be the realm of the domestic, of females and servants, and Victorian drama often excluded any mention of it. Kitchen Sink dramas, however, turned this notion around and made the kitchen the center of familial and social life. In the case of the Porter's attic apartment, the kitchen and living spaces were all one room on the stage.

Notes The boundaries of intimate domestic life and public life were blurred and created a realism not seen before in British theater.

Whether social or domestic, the Kitchen Sink drama changed the trajectory of British theater. Though many of the authors considered to have written in this genre such as Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Shelagh Delaney, and John Arden never claimed the title of Kitchen Sink dramatist, these authors's plays contained themes of common life that deeply resonated with British culture of the period. These types of plays signaled a resolute shift of British theater into the 20th century.

17.4 Summary

- Black humor (from the French humour noir) is a term coined by Surrealist theoretician André Breton in 1935, to designate a sub-genre of comedy and satire in which laughter arises from cynicism and skepticism, often about the topic of death.
- The term Angry Young Men often applied to the British 'kitchen sink' playwrights of the 1950s and also anyone, particularly young men obviously, who rails against the establishment.
- Angry Young Men were various British novelists and playwrights who emerged in the 1950s and expressed scorn and disaffection with the established sociopolitical order of their country.
- The 1950's through the 1970's saw the rise of one of the most important movements in modern British theater: the Kitchen Sink drama.
- Though Kitchen Sink dramas gained notoriety in twentieth century British culture for their unflinching anger and criticism directed towards the social, political, and economic establishment, the plays were also significant for the way they depicted the most intimate aspects of domestic life.

17.5 Keywords

Kitchen Sink Drama : The kitchen-sink drama is placed in an ordinary domestic setting and typically tells a relatively mundane family story.

Black Comedy : A form of comedy in which serious issues such as cannibalism, rape, genocide, terminal illness, etc., are treated humorously. Often more disturbing than funny.

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17.6 Review Questions

1. What is history and etymology of black comedy?
2. What is origin of Angry young men?
3. What is discussion of Kitchen sink Drama?
4. What is perspectives and criticism of kitchen sink Drama?

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Black comedy
2. Breton's term
3. black humor
4. angry young men
5. working class

17.7 Further Readings

Books

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Notes

Unit 18: Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction and Cultural Studies

CONTENTS

Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe post structuralism and deconstruction.
- Define growth and development.
- Explain importance and salient features.

Introduction

Post-structuralism is a label formulated by American academics to denote the heterogeneous works of a series of French intellectuals who came to international prominence in the 1960s and '70s. The label primarily encompasses the intellectual developments of prominent mid-20th-century French and continental philosophers and theorists.

18.1 Post-Structuralism

The post-structuralist movement is difficult to summarize, but may be broadly understood as a body of distinct responses to Structuralism. An intellectual movement developed in Europe from the early to mid-20th century, Structuralism argued that human culture may be understood by means of a structure-—modeled on language (ie., structural linguistics)—that is distinct both from the organizations of reality and the organization of ideas and imagination—a "third order." The precise nature of the revision or critique of structuralism differs with each post-structuralist author, though common themes include the rejection of the self-sufficiency of the structures that structuralism posits and an interrogation of the binary oppositions that constitute those structures. Writers whose work is often characterised as post-structuralist include Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva.

The movement is closely related to postmodernism. As with structuralism, antihumanism, as a rejection of the enlightenment subject, is often a central tenet. Existential phenomenology is a significant influence; one commentator has argued that post-structuralists might just as accurately be called "post-phenomenologists."

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Some have argued that the term "post-structuralism" arose in Anglo-American academia as a means of grouping together continental philosophers who rejected the methods and assumptions of analytical philosophy. Further controversy owes to the way in which loosely-connected thinkers tended to dispense with theories claiming to have discovered absolute truths about the world. Although such ideas generally relate only to the metaphysical (for instance, metanarratives of historical progress, such as those of dialectical materialism), many commentators have criticized the movement as relativist, nihilist, or simply indulgent to the extreme. Many so-called "post-structuralist" writers rejected the label and there is no manifesto.

Post-structuralism emerged in France during the 1960s as an antinomian movement critiquing structuralism. According to J.G. Merquior a love–hate relationship with Structuralism developed amongst many leading French thinkers in the 1960s.

The period was marked by political anxiety, as students and workers alike rebelled against the state in May 1968, nearly causing the downfall of the French government. At the same time, however, the support of the French Communist Party (FCP) for the oppressive policies of the USSR contributed to popular disillusionment with orthodox Marxism. As a result, there was increased interest in alternative radical philosophies, including feminism, western Marxism, anarchism, phenomenology, and nihilism. These disparate perspectives, which Michel Foucault later labeled "subjugated knowledges," were all linked by being critical of dominant Western philosophy and culture. Post-structuralism offered a means of justifying these criticisms, by exposing the underlying assumptions of many Western norms.

Two key figures in the early post-structuralist movement were Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. In a 1966 lecture "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science", Jacques Derrida presented a thesis on an apparent rupture in intellectual life. Derrida interpreted this event as a "decentering" of the former intellectual cosmos. Instead of progress or divergence from an identified centre, Derrida described this "event" as a kind of "play."

Although Barthes was originally a structuralist, during the 1960s he increasingly favored post-structuralist views. In 1968, Barthes published "The Death of the Author" in which he announced a metaphorical event: the "death" of the author as an authentic source of meaning for a given text. Barthes argued that any literary text has multiple meanings, and that the author was not the prime source of the work's semantic content.

Notes The "Death of the Author," Barthes maintained, was the "Birth of the Reader," as the source of the proliferation of meanings of the text.

Post-structuralist philosophers like Derrida and Foucault did not form a self-conscious group, but each responded to the traditions of phenomenology and structuralism. Phenomenology, often associated with two German philosophers Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, rejected previous systems of knowledge and attempted to examine life "just as it appears" (as phenomena). Both movements rejected the idea that knowledge could be centred on the human knower, and sought what they considered a more secure foundation for knowledge.

In phenomenology this foundation would be experience itself; in structuralism, knowledge was to be founded on the "structures" that make experience possible: concepts, and language or signs. Post-structuralism, in turn, argued that founding knowledge either on pure experience (phenomenology) or systematic structures (structuralism) was impossible. This impossibility was meant not to be a failure or loss, but a cause for "celebration and liberation."

18.2 Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a term introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 1967 book Of Grammatology. Although he carefully avoided defining the term directly, he sought to apply Martin Heidegger's concept of Destruktion or Abbau, to textual reading. Heidegger's term referred to a process of exploring the categories and concepts that tradition has imposed on a word, and the

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history behind them. Derrida opted for deconstruction over the literal translation destruction to suggest precision rather than violence. The term "deconstructionism" is sometimes applied as a title for Derrida's school of thought, but Derrida is more often classified as a post-structuralist. Derrida's work can be reduced to ontological politics.

In describing deconstruction, Derrida famously observed that "there is nothing outside the text." That is to say, all of the references used to interpret a text are themselves texts, even the "text" of reality as a reader knows it. There is no truly objective, non-textual reference from which interpretation can begin. Deconstruction, then, can be described as an effort to understand a text through its relationships to various contexts.

According to Rodolphe Gasche, Derrida's method consisted in demonstrating all the forms and varieties of this originary complexity, and their multiple consequences in many fields. His way of achieving this was by conducting thorough, careful, sensitive, and yet transformational readings of philosophical and literary texts, with an ear to what in those texts runs counter to their apparent systematicity (structural unity) or intended sense (authorial genesis). By demonstrating the aporias and ellipses of thought, Derrida hoped to show the infinitely subtle ways that this originary complexity, which by definition cannot ever be completely known, works its structuring and destructuring effects.

Deconstruction denotes the pursuing the meaning of a text to the point of exposing the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions upon which it is founded—supposedly showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. It is an approach that may be deployed in philosophy, literary analysis, or other fields. Deconstruction generally tries to demonstrate that any text is not a discrete whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings; that any text therefore has more than one interpretation; that the text itself links these interpretations inextricably; that the incompatibility of these interpretations is irreducible; and thus that an interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point.

Did u know? Derrida refers to this point as an aporia in the text, and terms deconstructive reading "aporetic."

Derrida initially resisted granting to his approach the overarching name "deconstruction," on the grounds that it was a precise technical term that could not be used to characterize his work generally. Nevertheless, he eventually accepted that the term had come into common use to refer to his textual approach, and Derrida himself increasingly began to use the term in this more general way.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks:

1. The post-structuralist movement is difficult to summarize, but may be broadly understood as a body of distinct responses to ..... .
2. The movement is closely related to ..... .
3. ..... emerged in France during the 1960s as an antinomian movement critiquing structuralism.
4. The term ..... is sometimes applied as a title for derridas' school of thought but Derrida is more often classified as a post-structuralist.
5. ..... work can be reduced to ontological politics.

18.3 Cultural Studies

Modernist literature is sub-genre of Modernism, a predominantly European movement beginning in the early-to-mid-20th century that was characterized by a self-conscious break with traditional aesthetic forms. Representing the radical shift in cultural sensibilities surrounding World War I,

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modernist literature struggled with the new realm of subject matter brought about by an increasingly industrialized and globalized world.

In its earliest incarnations, modernism fostered a utopian spirit, stimulated by innovations happening in the fields of anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political theory, and psychoanalysis. Writers as Ezra Pound and other poets of the Imagist movement characterized this exuberant spririt, rejecting the sentiment and discursiveness typical of Romanticism and Victorian literature for poetry that instead favored precision of imagery and clear, sharp language.

This new idealism ended, however, with the outbreak of war, when writers began to generate more cynical postwar works that reflected prevailing sense disillusionment and fragmented thought. Many modernist writers shared a mistrust of institutions of power such as government and religion, and rejected the notion of absolute truths. Like T.S. Eliot's masterpiece, The Wasteland, later modernist works were increasingly self-aware, introspective, and often embraced the unconscious fears of a darker humanity.

18.3.1 Growth and Development

Cultural studies is an academic field grounded in critical theory and literary criticism. It generally concerns the political nature of contemporary culture, as well as its historical foundations, conflicts, and defining traits. It is, to this extent, largely distinguished from cultural anthropology and ethnic studies in both objective and methodology. Researchers concentrate on how a particular medium or message relates to matters of ideology, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and/or gender.

Cultural studies approaches subjects holistically, combining feminist theory, social theory, political theory, history, philosophy, literary theory, media theory, film/video studies, communication studies, political economy, translation studies, museum studies and art history/criticism to study cultural phenomena in various societies.

Notes Cultural studies seeks to understand the ways in which meaning is generated, disseminated, and produced through various practices, beliefs, institutions, and political, economic, or social structures within a given culture.

Scholars in the United Kingdom and the United States developed somewhat different versions of cultural studies after the field's inception in the late 1970s. The British version of cultural studies was developed in the 1950s and 1960s mainly under the influence first of Richard Hoggart, E. P. Thompson, and Raymond Williams, and later Stuart Hall and others at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. This included overtly political, left-wing views, and criticisms of popular culture as 'capitalist' mass culture; it absorbed some of the ideas of the Frankfurt School critique of the "culture industry" (i.e. mass culture). This emerges in the writings of early British cultural-studies scholars and their influences: see the work of (for example) Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Paul Willis, and Paul Gilroy.

In contrast, "cultural studies was grounded in a pragmatic, liberal-pluralist tradition" in the United States. The American version of cultural studies initially concerned itself more with understanding the subjective and appropriative side of audience reactions to, and uses of, mass culture; for example, American cultural-studies advocates wrote about the liberatory aspects of fandom. The distinction between American and British strands, however, has faded.

In Canada, cultural studies has sometimes focused on issues of technology and society, continuing the emphasis in the work of Marshall McLuhan and others. In Australia, there has sometimes been a special emphasis on cultural policy. In South Africa, human rights and Third World issues are among the topics treated. There were a number of exchanges between Birmingham and Italy, resulting in work on Italian leftism, and theories of postmodernism. On the other hand, there is a debate in Latin America about the relevance of cultural studies, with some researchers calling for

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more action-oriented research. Cultural Studies is relatively undeveloped in France, where there is a stronger tradition of semiotics, as in the writings of Roland Barthes. Also in Germany it is undeveloped, probably due to the continued influence of the Frankfurt School, which has developed a body of writing on such topics as mass culture, modern art and music.

18.3.2 Importance

The importance for Cultural Studies of participating in oppositional public spheres is an underlying premise of this essay. A counter disciplinary praxis undertaken by resisting intellectuals would not be effective if it had as its only audience people in universities. Rather, it should take place more extensively in public. Although many universities are public institutions, we rarely consider them part of the public sphere.

If Cultural Studies is to be understood as an oppositional public sphere, it should not be conceived as a 'department' or as part of the boundary separating professional activities from those of amateurs. Instead of thinking of Cultural Studies in terms which more properly characterize disciplines, we should reconceive traditional rationales in an effort to create counter practices. The classroom, to take one instance, is viewed traditionally as a place where information is transmitted to students. Experts in a discipline impart to apprentices the received knowledge about a particular subject matter; students are not agents in this process, but passive and overtly uncritical receptacles. However, as we have argued, if we grant students an active role in the process of cultural formation, they can become agents in the production of social practices. To accomplish this we should become involved in fostering forms of resistance; a critical pedagogy is required which will promote the identification and analysis of the underlying ideological interests at stake in the text and its readings. We are then engaged together as resisting intellectuals in a social practice that allows both parties to construe themselves as agents in the process of their own cultural formation. An obvious concretization of this praxis might be a woman resisting the view of women proffered in a canonical novel. This instance is a reflection of resistance to large-scale social practices that oppress women. Such resistance needs to be produced. Rather than abandon scholarship, resisting intellectuals need to repoliticize it. Scholarly publications, the disciplinary criterion used to establish the merit of professional opinions against those of a public made up of amateurs, do not reach the public. Though it is not appropriate to argue the point here, we contend that the disciplines presently concerned with the study of culture are unduly bound to the premise that their task is to do disciplinary research, that is, to accumulate and store in a retrievable way descriptions of cultural phenomenon. But, if we reconceive our activity as the production of rather than the description of social practices, then what we do in our classrooms is easily extended into public spheres. We cannot capitulate to the disciplinary notion that research has as its only audience other experts in the field. Resisting intellectuals must legitimate the notion of writing reviews and books for the general public, and they must create a language of critique balanced by a language of possibility that will enable social change.

This means that we need to become involved in the political reading of popular culture. As Stanley Aronowitz remarks in 'Colonized Leisure, Trivialized Work,' 'It remains for us to investigate in what way mass culture becomes constitutive of social reality.' Training in disciplinary practices leads us away from the study of the relation between culture and society and toward the accumulation of descriptions of cultural material cut off from its connection to everyday life. As Aronowitz points out:

To fully understand the ideological impact and manipulative functions of current media presentations, it is necessary to appreciate the multi-layered character of contemporary mass culture. In addition to the overt ideological content of films and television--transmitting new role models, values life styles to be more or less consciously emulated by a mass audience--there is also a series of covert messages contained within them which appeal to the audience largely on the unconscious level ....Typically, [these] define the character of the spectator's experience of the spectacle in terms of the...gratification of his or her unconscious desires....By creating a system of pseudo-gratifications, mass culture functions as a sort of social regulator, attempting to absorb

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tensions arising out of everyday life and to detect frustrations which might otherwise actualize themselves in opposition to the system into channels which serve the system.

It is because the effects of culture are so often unconsciously absorbed, that the need for a Cultural Studies emphasising critique arises. As we pointed out earlier in this essay, the disciplines that claim selected aspects of culture as their subject restrict that subject arbitrarily--for instance, by constituting the field of literary study as a canon. Simultaneously, they have placed a wedge between professionals and the public in the service of the ruling classes as in the case of literary study where so-called, 'low' culture is excluded from the research domain. Nor should we now continue to be fooled by the admission of films, popular novels, soap operas and the like into the curricula of literature departments. As long as such cultural artifacts are examined as merely the materials that make up a fixed culture, their disciplinary descriptions will do no more than create storehouses of knowledge having almost nothing to do with lived culture, much less its transformation. Only a counter-disciplinary praxis developed by intellectuals who resist disciplinary formation is likely to produce emancipatory social practices.

The problem with suggesting that Cultural Studies be counter disciplinary is that it cannot be housed in universities as they are presently structured. Hence, the need for counter-institutions. There would be various sorts of collectives, variously membered study groups, counter-disciplinary research groups, even societies and institutes.

It is unlikely that the disciplinary structures and mechanisms of universities will disappear in the near future. However, it would be a mistake to locate Cultural Studies within them. Our alternative would be to treat disciplines as peripheral to our main concerns while nonetheless obtaining some important concessions from their administrators. This is a tactical matter which has to be negotiated situation by situation. However, we can go even further and develop models of collaborative inquiry that extend beyond the university in order to combat hegemonic public spheres and to form alliances with other oppositional public spheres. In the context of Cultural Studies it will not be appropriate simply to generate idiosyncratic interpretations of cultural artifacts.

Did u know? The most important aim of a counter-disciplinary praxis is radical social change.

We should not be resigned to the roles that universities assign us. The resisting intellectual can develop a collective, counter-disciplinary praxis within the university that has a political impact outside it. The important tactical question at this moment in the history of North American universities is how to get Cultural Studies established as a form of cultural critique. Our suggestion has been the formation of institutes for cultural studies that can constitute an oppositional public sphere.

18.3.3 Salient Features

Some researchers, especially in early British cultural studies, apply a Marxist model to the field. This strain of thinking has some influence from the Frankfurt School, but especially from the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser and others. The main focus of an orthodox Marxist approach concentrates on the production of meaning. This model assumes a mass production of culture and identifies power as residing with those producing cultural artifacts. In a Marxist view, those who control the means of production (the economic base) essentially control a culture.

Other approaches to cultural studies, such as feminist cultural studies and later American developments of the field, distance themselves from this view. They criticize the Marxist assumption of a single, dominant meaning, shared by all, for any cultural product. The non-Marxist approaches suggest that different ways of consuming cultural artifacts affect the meaning of the product. This view is best exemplified by the book Doing Cultural Studies: The Case of the Sony Walkman, which seeks to challenge the notion that those who produce commodities control the meanings that people attribute to them. Feminist cultural analyst, theorist and art historian Griselda Pollock contributed to cultural studies from viewpoints of art history and psychoanalysis. The writer Julia

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Kristeva was an influential voice in the turn of the century, contributing to cultural studies from the field of art and psychoanalytical French feminism.

Ultimately, this perspective criticizes the traditional view assuming a passive consumer, particularly by underlining the different ways people read, receive, and interpret cultural texts. On this view, a consumer can appropriate, actively reject, or challenge the meaning of a product. These different approaches have shifted the focus away from the production of items. Instead, they argue that consumption plays an equally important role, since the way consumers consume a product gives meaning to an item. Some closely link the act of consuming with cultural identity. Stuart Hall and John Fiske have become influential in these developments.

In the context of cultural studies, the idea of a text not only includes written language, but also films, photographs, fashion or hairstyles: the texts of cultural studies comprise all the meaningful artifacts of culture. Similarly, the discipline widens the concept of "culture". "Culture" for a cultural studies researcher not only includes traditional high culture and popular culture, but also everyday meanings and practices. The last two, in fact, have become the main focus of cultural studies. A further and recent approach is comparative cultural studies, based on the discipline of comparative literature and cultural studies.

Task Write a short note on cultural studies.

18.4 Summary

- In a 1966 lecture "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science", Jacques Derrida presented a thesis on an apparent rupture in intellectual life.
- Modernist literature is sub-genre of Modernism, a predominantly European movement beginning in the early-to-mid-20th century that was characterized by a self-conscious break with traditional aesthetic forms.
- Scholars in the United Kingdom and the United States developed somewhat different versions of cultural studies after the field's inception in the late 1970s.
- The importance for Cultural Studies of participating in oppositional public spheres is an underlying premise of this essay.
- The problem with suggesting that Cultural Studies be counter disciplinary is that it cannot be housed in universities as they are presently structured.

18.5 Keywords

Post-phenomenologists : Existential Phenomenology is a significant influence; one commentator has argued that post-structuralists might just as accurately be called post-phenomenologists.

Deconstruction : Deconstruction is a term introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 1967 book of Grammatology.

18.6 Review Questions

1. What is post-structuralism?
2. What is Deconstruction? Explain.
3. What is growth and development in cultural studies?
4. What is importance and salient features in cultural studies?

Notes

Answers : Self Assessment

1. Structuralism
2. Postmodernism
3. Post-structuralism
4. deconstructionism
5. Derrida's

18.7 Further Readings

Books

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